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A speculative archaeology of excess

Exploring the afterlife of a derelict landscape garden

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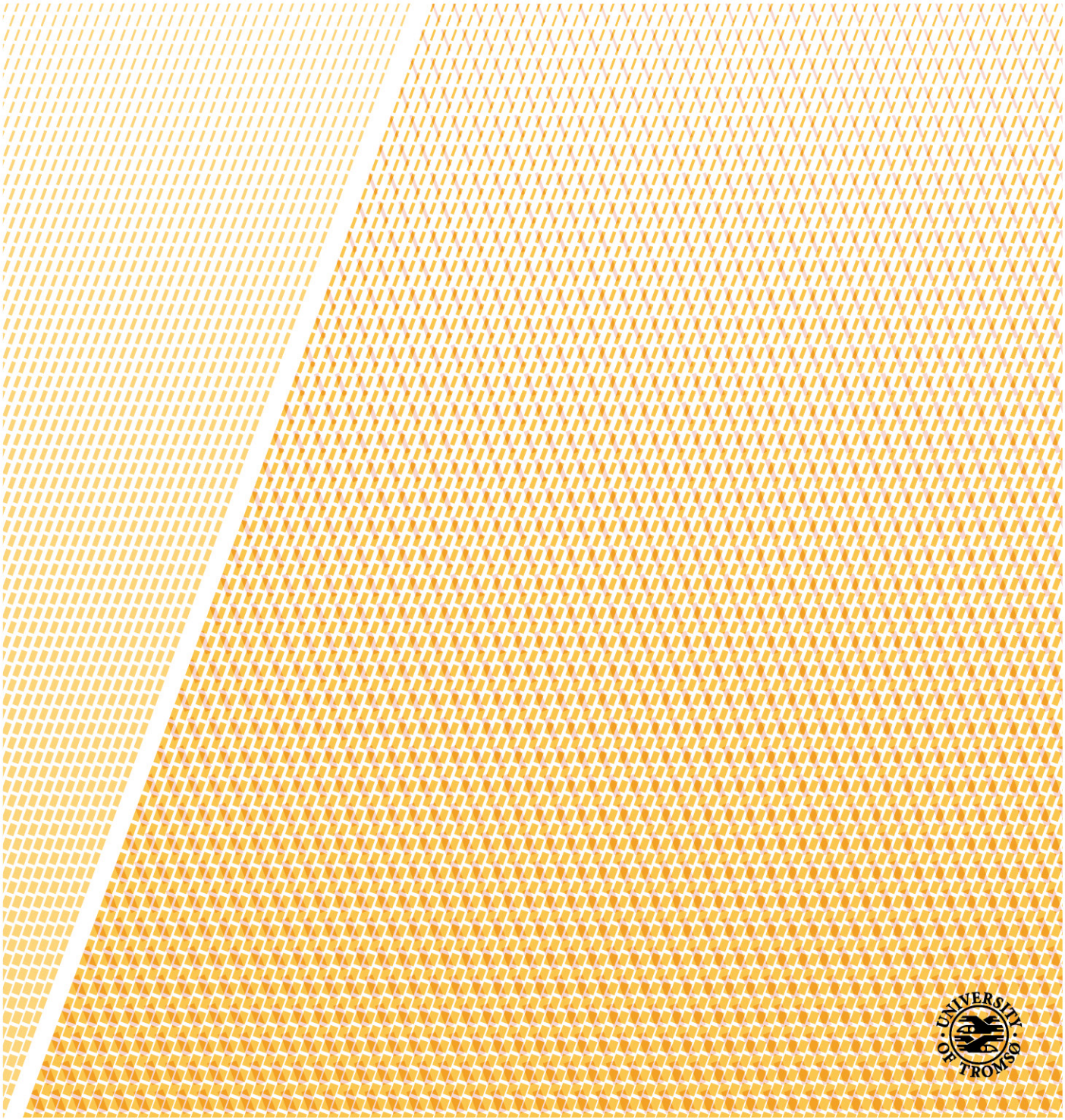

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Cover photo: Author inspecting the needles of a silver fir. 19.10.2018, 15:46. All the photographs in this document belong to and were shot by the author.

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Abstract

This dissertation explores the contemporary archaeological record of Retiro, a derelict 19th century landscape garden and summer estate located in the town of Molde on the north-western coast of Norway. The main topic that this thesis investigates is the consequences of acknowledging Retiro with its excess of unruly and apparently ruinous characteristics, as heritage. This involves focusing on the concrete characteristics of Retiro's contemporary environment, from the garbage littering the forest floor to the plants that cover its undulating topography. An underlying motivation for this inquiry is to investigate an alternative, or more precisely, oblique way to approach and describe Retiro. This investigation is not founded on the ambition of improving conventional historical research or cultural heritage management, but instead explore a way of observing and including things that are usually overlooked in these ways of representing and handling the material past in the present. Thus, the goal is not to be reductive and instead focusing on expanding horizons based on on-site surveys. To do this the research relies on empirical observation and experience derived from repeated on-site surveys of Retiro.

One of the central conclusions of the research is that concern for material heritage sites like Retiro, through oblique and inclusive approaches, can be a foundation for an environmentally oriented archaeology of the contemporary world. This is by no means a revolutionary or radically new assertion, as archaeology has always in some form dealt with the environment; i.e. things that are not human or outside our control. Nevertheless, my hope is to demonstrate how archaeology can contribute to unique ways of describing a contemporary environment, on track with how other academic disciplines have contributed to the development of ecological and environmental studies in the humanities and social sciences. To achieve this, it is necessary to include the apparently natural and non-human aspects of heritage sites, and acknowledge that anthropogenic heritage is also partly constituted by – and exists in constant dialogue with – non-humans, like plants, fungi, and polypropylene. Our material legacies are not only inherited by humans, but also by non-humans. Importantly, a focus on these non-human aspects does not necessarily side-line human concerns. Rather, I argue, such focus serves to inform our understanding of how our heritage experience is formed and inform through the vibrant afterlife of the past.

The thesis does not have a clear linear disposition, but is instead a thematical gathering of discussions, descriptions, topics, and speculations. While some linearity is unavoidable in a textual medium, many of the chapters and subchapters can be read independently and randomly. The chapters begin with a contemplating vignette that alludes to the overall theme for that part of the thesis. Such an arrangement can put a strain on the reader; however, I hope that the thematic coherence will help to make sense of the research. In the end, I wish it will open doors instead of closing off and locking things away. Some parts are admittedly indulgent, but nevertheless, I hope people can trace overlooked and unforeseen threads of relevance. The work represents an unprecedented privilege of being allowed to immerse myself in a case study like Retiro over four years – such opportunities are something that ought to be available to all researchers.

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In the end, I want to express my eternal gratitude to my partner, who patiently and without complaint has tolerated my inconvenient absences and incoherent ramblings about my work. Even more, she has also had the patience to read the manuscript and given advice on how to improve the text. I love you.

All the errors and mistakes in this thesis are mine alone.

1 Introduction

Figure 1 The gate: first picture from my first visit to Retiro in 2011. 24.09.2011, 13:49.

Most of my observations of and experiences with Retiro – the abandoned 19th century summer estate and landscape garden – have been done on foot. Throughout the project, I visited Retiro eight times; that is, two times each year I worked on my PhD. The surveys were conducted in all kinds of weather. Preparing for this material immersion involved putting on clothing that fit the weather and season; rubber boots, waterproof jacket, woollen shirt and socks in the autumn, and a brimmed hat, hiking boots and an expedition shirt during warm midsummer days. Since I had from the very beginning chosen not to employ any intrusive methods in my research, in other words no excavations or collecting things, I could travel light. There was no need for trowels, spades, sieves, or any other heavy equipment. The toolkit fit into a small backpack: a camera with the appropriate lenses, a notebook, audio recorder, and a lunch pack. Accordingly, the research and descriptive work were focussed on recording surface presences and the character of things that made themselves apparent.

My first encounters with Retiro happened during childhood. I did not grow up close to it, nevertheless being situated next to the main road leading into the neighbouring town of Molde from the east, made a visual encounter almost inevitable. At first glance, it might not be regarded as an eye-catching site; the bourgeoning and overgrown terrain look mostly like a common copse, but keener eyes would pick out more peculiar details, such as the high amount of non-native plants among the greenery. One structure that sometimes caught my eye was the ruin of a greenhouse sitting on one of the artificial terraces facing the road. The hard vertical and horizontal contours broke away from the cacophony of organic shapes, creating an alluring contrast to the otherwise vegetative landscape. This ruin, with glassless window sash and crumbling plasterwork, alluded to something more, something untold; a wordless gravitational pull. Each time I drove past Retiro, my gaze was irresistibly drawn towards the structure hiding in the foliage. As such, it was never the history that drew me towards Retiro, rather it was its sheer physicality and immediate presence. This is the origin of my interest and orientation towards Retiro.

It was only many years after these silent encounters that I stepped into its lush embrace for the first time – lured in by lingering memories of ruinous contours. By chance, taking part in an excavation on the other side of town, I was lodged in a cabin not far from Retiro. My first visit was not through the main entrance, the carriageway, but through the old western entrance. The entrance was, and still is, guarded by an iron gate – locked tight by chain and padlock worn smooth by rain and wind. Today, the chain-link fence providing the rationale for the gate is broken by several wide-open holes, effectively making it useless apart from the memory it holds of a previous order. The gate itself, thus, has become redundant, turned into an example of "hyperart", a vestige from a time when the garden was closed off to the public.

One of the first features encountered during my first trek into the garden, was parallel dug trenches, about two and a half meters wide, evenly spread out over a small field by the northwestern edge of the property. Traces of an archaeological survey may seem beneficial and reassuring for most archaeologist, but it can also herald change and erasure. The trenches were dug to detect possible legally protected archaeological vestiges that may be affected by development in the park. Vestiges dating earlier than the year 1537 are assigned automatic protection according to the Norwegian Cultural Heritage Act. Finds younger than this date would normally fall outside this category of valued heritage, such as the glass shard discarded on top of a pile of soil next to one of the trenches. In this piece of apparently valueless glass, I first experienced the beginning of my scholarly interest in Retiro and doing research on the place. Its significant banality drew me in and begged for attention.

Figure 2 Archaeological survey trenches. 24.09.2011, 15:07.

Despite being set in an urban landscape, Retiro was not teeming with visitors during my semi-annual surveys. When I encountered people, it was on the well-travelled paths cutting through the property; usually people exercising or walking their dogs. Outside the paths, I never really encountered people, but frequently I saw traces of their presence also in these less travelled sections of the garden. These were traces of persons who had camped and lived for some time in the garden, hidden behind the dense and overgrown foliage. These scattered material remains are also part of the present Retiro. Together with the ruining vestiges of its former glory, including its lush and wild post-garden vegetation of non-native sycamores (Acer pseudoplatanus) and periwinkles (Vinca minor), they form its present landscape. A landscape that had become so othered and unruly that it seemed difficult or impossible to properly grasp and understand without restoring it to its original order; a task which would require reliance on trusted historical sources and biographies of the people that that once created and helped maintain the place. However, what would happen if one avoided the natural urge to warp the place in historical narratives of what it once was and ought to be, and instead focused wholeheartedly on its contemporaneity – on what Retiro had become?

1.1 Project background and objectives

To understand the project's development, it is helpful to return to its point of departure. The research started out with an aim to investigate things that can be described as "abjected", that is things that are rejected from the everyday; in short, material "out-casts". This idea was formed by my first visit to Retiro in the autumn of 2011, and the material jettison I saw in the survey trenches and under Retiro's overgrown canopy. Here is the summary from the initial project outline:

> *"The goal of this project is to investigate the aesthetics and materiality of abject things in the contemporary world. … The cases and things that will be examined normally lie outside the care and categories of modern heritage management, such as artifacts, assemblages and structures that don't fit the contemporary heritage values and the perception of legacy, authenticity and materiality. This might include things deemed non-consumable, profitless, unseemly, disorderly, childish, embarrassing, uninteresting, ugly, trite, fragmented, chaotic, impure etc. The aim is not to categorize anti-heritage, it is instead an effort to breach the usual border separating the desirable from the unwanted and neglected. By using heritage management as contrast, the intention is to link familiar practices to the topic of abjection. One important ambition is to explore the idea of abject things that intersect and transgress the familiar categories of consumption, garbage and waste. In summary: the project aspires to illuminate the materiality and memories that inhabit abandoned, unwanted, ruinous and rejected things, and is grounded in the conviction that archaeology is uniquely equipped with the tools, methods and theory to approach this goal."*

Accordingly, the project wanted to scrutinize the matter of abjection concerning things described *as* "*unwanted*" (Olsen 2010:167), "*stigmatized*" (Lucas 2012:33-35), "*bad matter*" (Olsen *et al.* 2012:206), "*excremental culture*" (Shanks 1992:55-59), "*impure*" or "*matter out of place*" (Douglas 1966; Olsen *et al*. 2012:206). Thus, the object of this research is things that have an unforeseen and contingent material legacy. This also rests on a definition of material heritage as something that can operate beyond our intentions and control (Olsen and Pétursdóttir 2016), which is emphasized in article D that explores the ecological aspects of Retiro. Christina Fredengren (2015:120) argues that seeing heritage as *phenomena* instead of as a *social construct*, makes it possible to acknowledge "…*how a variety of actors, actions and apparatuses contribute to the rise of heritage*." This definition recognizes material heritage as a phenomenon that can be empirically studied, because it also exists and operates outside our minds and conceptual frames. Thus, it is something that can be discovered and revealed through observations, experience, and material engagement. A further implication of categorizing material heritage as something that has an autonomous existence is that it also intersects with the world we share with non-humans. This radical, and not least controversial definition of heritage, requires nuanced and perhaps experimental approaches.

What does such an approach actually involve? This is a pertinent question, which this thesis in many ways investigates. It involves shifting attention to things that are usually not regarded as heritage, but also employing what I characterized as an "oblique" way of looking at these things. This approach to the "unusual" can be seen in article D, which deals with the anthropogenic litter and fungi that make up the contemporary environment and novel ecology of Retiro. Moreover, as discussed in article C, one can employ a counterintuitive approach to things: Rather than looking for their historical and intentional significance, or the intentions of its founder, one may instead explore the material

excess that emerges when things are left to their own devices. This involves a comparison between what was currently observed in Retiro through on-site surveys and what have been emphasized in other investigations (see article A), such as biological surveys (Jordal and Gaarder 1995; Gaarder and Vatne 2013), archaeological surveys (Johnston and Johnston 2012; Sanden 2016), architectural re-imaginations (Kjørsvik 2012), municipal plans (Molde kommune 2014), local and national news articles (Grüner 2011; Reite and Sandvik 2014), and historical accounts (Rønsen 2007; Eikrem 2015; Bonne 2018). The comparisons were not driven by any ambition to prove that these perspectives on Retiro's past misrepresent the site, but rather to suggest a more materially and temporally diverse understanding of Retiro as a concrete place in the present.

Figure 3 A defaced mailbox found by the driveway leading to the Retiro villa. 24.09.2011, 14:52.

1.2 Research results

The exploration of Retiro resulted in five different texts, which consist of three peer-reviewed articles (A, B, and C) and two book chapters (D and C). While the articles are chronologically arranged, they can be read in any order. Each with a different topic that explores complementary parts of the overall topic. The first article, article A, focuses on the ruining and derelict character of Retiro. It initiated a trajectory in my research, which aimed it towards exploring the current situation of Retiro. It argues that Retiro as a contemporary site falls between two idiomatic stools when processed through established approaches to heritage; one that orients the understanding of Retiro retroactively, and another that focus on planned or imagined futures. What was left out of these concerns, representing official heritage management, business interests, and local public engagement with Retiro, was a serious attention towards its present dilapidated situation that goes beyond the tropes of loss, reconstruction, or repurposing. Dilapidation is not necessarily neither positive nor negative, but rather a fundamental fact of the material world that we inevitably live with and think about and should consequently not be overlooked when investigating how the past manifests itself as part of the present.

The second paper, article B, is a consideration of the place of plants, especially living plants, within an archaeology of the contemporary world. It argues that plants can be far more than just a veneer on more important vestiges. They can be a fertile ground for developing novel insights that acknowledge both their past and living present of great relevance for current debates. The anthropogenic but uncontrolled garden plants muddle the dichotomic gap between nature and culture. One of the central points in this article is that by avoiding reducing plants to colonizers, representatives of universal botanical taxonomies, or proxies for a human past, they can be included as a constituent of the contemporary archaeological record. While plants are not ignored in discussions of cultural heritage (e.g. Lowenthal 2005; Lien and Davison 2010; Abendroth *et al*. 2012; Solberg *et al*. 2013; Harrison 2015), they pose an interesting challenge when they are intertwined with anthropogenic legacies, like for example non-native and invasive ornamental plants that pose a risk to the local ecology and endemic species.

The third article, C, partly continuing the theme of fragmentation discussed in article A, take a closer look at the character of vestigial things, i.e. things that in some sense are decontextualised or disintegrated. One of the main conclusions is that apparently meaningless and vestigial things can be a topic in and of itself, which can lead to alternative ways to conceptualize the non-utilitarian in our everyday environment and heritage. One way to notice the vestigial and ineffable parts of the contemporary environment, I argue, is to approach it with the gaze of an archaeologist. This means to delve on the apparently impartial and doing it in such a way that it does not erase the vestigial character of the thing. In the case of Retiro, an approach that exclusively looked for the apparently meaningful and complete would inevitably overlook the presences of vestigial and disorganized things. Thus, to get the grip of the contemporary character of a site like Retiro, it is necessary to acknowledge the presence of perturbing or innocuous vestigial things, from neon coloured snow stakes to moss covered football boots and wild tulips.

The fourth texts (D) explores how a site like Retiro is partly constituted by things that are usually left unmentioned when material heritage is described. By closely examining the contemporary, it becomes possible to describe an ecology of things that demonstrate an expanded view of heritage that include a more diverse environment and thus ecology of non-humans. Retiro, even as a cultural heritage site, cannot be separated from its ecological context. Consequently, to grasp the full extent of heritage it is necessary to establish connections to things that might usually be seen as inconsequential or even irrelevant. For heritage to be a real phenomenon, it must be tied together with its implicit

counterpart, namely the "inheritors". Acknowledging that material heritage inevitably has an ecological legacy, will lead to the conclusion that *heritage is also inherited by non-humans*.

The last text, E, discusses Retiro's ambiguous character as a site that was originally located in a rural landscape that today has become enclosed by an urban environment. Amongst other things, the text discusses the idea that Retiro has a "feral" side because of how it contains both the remnants of a cultured past while also exhibiting an unpredictable and "wild" side, as exemplified by how the non-native ornamental plants have literally run out of control. The article concludes that archaeology is especially suited to explore the feral character of things left to their own devices. Hence, in a period of accelerated urbanization and centralization, there is a need for archaeologist to turn their attention towards the things and places that are left "behind".

As these five texts demonstrate, the idea of "abject heritage" was, eventually, after the observations and experiences gained from surveying Retiro, revealed to be an inadequate analytical category. It projected too much normative bias on Retiro, and would have locked away the presence of redundant things beyond their symbolic or negative effects. This was the entrance point to another perspective that gradually became the focus of this thesis, the aforementioned "oblique" approach. This is an approach that goes beyond the dichotomies of good/bad, attractive/repulsive, etc., which can easily emanate from normative prefixes such as "abject", or even "dark", that has been used to label heritage in similar cases (cf. Samuels 2015; Thomas, Seitsonen and Herva 2016). The main objective, accordingly, changed to investigate the types of impressions and questions that emerged from engaging with Retiro. Through literature but also, most importantly, through the experiences and observations done through field-walks and photography. The categorisation of the things I encountered as abjected, I discovered, became a straitjacket. Even if it was depicted as such through in plans and comments in the local newspaper (see article A), Retiro revealed itself as a heterogeneous, thriving, and lingering site on the brink of unexpected futures and pasts; that is, as too diverse for a single reductive key-word. This became obvious when working with article B, which dealt with the living plants in Retiro. Despite that some plants, such as the invasive Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), in some sense could be described as an abject, out-of-place weed (cf. Cresswell 1997), it also showed something *more* than human likes and dislikes, as touched upon in article A and D. Nevertheless, despite its shortcomings, the concept of abjection has been an inspiration, and necessitates some further exploration.

Figure 4 A non-native wild tulip (Tulipa sylvestris) in the derelict flower garden just south of the villa. 30.05.2018, 18:17.

Figure 5 Football boot and bryophyte substrate. 18.10.2015, 11:40.

1.3 Abjection and afterlives

The word "abject" have many uses in the contemporary English language. It can be used to invoke or describe feelings of contempt, debasement, misfortune, baseness, submissiveness, obsolescence, hopelessness, desertion, rejection, disgust, or nausea, but it might also signify something outcast, thrown away, rejected, and excluded (OED 2018). The etymological root for the word "abject" comes from the Latin word "*abjectionem*", "*abjectio*" or "*abicere*", literally translated as *ab-* "away, off" and *iacere* "to throw" (Barnhart and Steinmetz 1988:3). As a theoretical concept, the abject and abjection originates in psychoanalytic thought, and has been further developed in post-structuralist critical theory. The central figure in this development was Julia Kristeva with her book *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982). Mary Douglas's book *Purity and Danger* (1966) is also important to mention in relation to abjection; her work explored the meaning of dirt and uncleanness in different cultural and religious circumstances. Abjection is sometimes a topic in the critique of art and society, and is associated with subjects such as gender, queerness, marginality, taboos, otherness, transgression of borders and the human body (Kutzbach and Mueller 2007). The focus of these critiques is on the human subject and body, and is thus anthropocentric, but certainly not immaterial (Berressem 2007).

The interest in the marginalized and ignored might be said to be one of the hallmarks of the archaeology of the contemporary past (Graves-Brown 2011; Kiddey 2017). Victor Buchli and Gavin Lucas (2001:11-12) brought attention to abjection in their seminal book and connected concrete contemporary things, such as garbage and fresh decay, with the abject motifs of nausea and the uncanny. Spanish archaeologist Alfredo González-Ruibal, known for his research on supermodernity (e.g. 2008), works with a theory on abject things. He notes that archaeology is especially well suited to deal with the fragmented and destroyed, or put differently, "*the realm of abjection*" (2008:248). It is in this realm of fragments and ruins archaeologists feel at home. Since the abject is rarely memorialized and sometimes suppressed, archaeology with its focus on things is well positioned to study sites that have been omitted from history (ibid.248, 271). Thus, González-Ruibal argues that one of the objectives of an archaeology of the contemporary is to uncover the abject and "monstrous" materiality found in the strategies and ideologies of supermodern societies (2013b:310, 317, 2019:12-14). Examples of abject realms that have been studied by archaeologists include traumatic sites of mass murder like the Zeret cave in Ethiopia (González-Ruibal, Sahle and Vila 2011); campsites of homeless people in USA and Britain (Zimmerman, Singelton and Welch 2010; Zimmerman 2013; Kiddey 2017); World War II heritage in Northern Finland (Thomas, Seitsonen, and Herva 2016; Seitsonen 2018); and the ruins and destruction after natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina (Bagwell 2009).

The emphasis on alienation, distance, and otherness, often linked to the topic of abjection, has been scrutinized by Paul Graves-Brown (2011) and Rodney Harrison (2013a). Graves-Brown argues that the objective of alienation and making familiar things unfamiliar, as proposed by Buchli and Lucas (2001:9-10), is problematic (Graves-Brown 2011:132). What archaeologists categorize as abject, uncanny or disgusting might be a product of bourgeois and middle-class values (ibid.132). Something that seems alien to one level of the social strata might be familiar to people that have to endure and live with it in their everyday world. Graves-Brown argues that one should strip down the self-evident and obvious and create a new "whole" from the fragments to offer new perspectives on the familiar (ibid.135). He suggests this is just what archaeologists do: they break and transgress boundaries, especially when investigating contemporary material culture where archaeologists directly engage with the dirt and refuse of modern societies (ibid.136). Harrison follows his sentiment and argues that archaeology of the contemporary should aim to make the past accessible and knowable, by focusing on modernity as an active and unfinished project (2013a:44-46). The core of this critique is

that this subdiscipline should not exclusively focus on the abandoned and ruinous. It is an effort to expand the scope and engage with both the past and the future. However, can there be more to contemporary archaeology than *making* things accessible and knowable? In contrast to this, Þóra Pétursdóttir (2014:340) has argued strangeness and estrangement might be something things offer us in our experience of them, rather than it being a difference or alterity added to them by the archaeologist.

According to Gavin Lucas (2002:16-17) rubbish is situated in the intersection between appropriation, alienation, re-appropriation, and re-alienation. Lucas further asserts that the issue of throwing away and dispersing things *needs* to be related to theories of consumption. A danger in this line of reasoning is to frame every discussion of things with consumption – as Bjørnar Olsen (2003:93) said it: "*How do we consume a highway or a subway system? How do we 'sublate' the sewer pipes or a rusty harbour terminal in a northern Russian port?*" Alternatively, one could thus say that one of the reasons for Retiro's negative perceptions among some people today is that it is presently "inconsumable" (see article A). Another pitfall is to think that there is nothing substantial in how things come to be regarded as abject, and thus conclude that the otherness of things is in every instance a conceptual construction with no root in a material reality. Allegedly abject characteristics can be part of the biography of a thing, manifesting itself through material possibilities just as much as it might be overlooked by other qualities it affords. It is possible to speculate whether a form of abjection also may apply to relationships between plants in Retiro; such as the adversarial between birches (*Betula pubescens*) and silver firs (*Abies alba*) in the competition for sunlight, or between the Japanese Knotweed and the herbicide it was doused with. Plants even participate in interspecies communication, and actively employ chemicals to create responses of revulsion and aversion in herbivores and other organisms that threaten them (Karban 2015).

Figure 6 Far from being abandoned, the greenhouse ruin shows traces of frequent interactions with humans and non-humans. Today it is a "terrarium" offering shelter and substrates to green algae on its walls and silver fir saplings in its interior, while also serving as a canvas for graffiti. 16.10.2018, 14:26.

González-Ruibal argues that an archaeology looking at the current era should uncover the abject and sublime materialities of modern material culture (2013b:310, 317). The vast consumer societies of our world shed more things than what is recycled, obliterated, or reconstructed. Some of the things we leave behind endure and haunt humans as well as the rest of the environment with their durable materiality (Olsen 2010:166-167, 2012d:77). When they lose their apparent usefulness and instrumentality as things-for-us – one might say both for *academic* and practical/everyday purposes – they begin to protrude into our presumed orderly society and cause different kinds of disturbances (Olsen 2012d:83). Concerning the *afterlife* of things, which also include plants and other organisms, one should be aware how they demonstrate an unexpected and often unforeseen excess of capacities when released from circumstances carefully managed and supervised by humans. Thus, the afterlife of things does not designate a phase where they simply drop "*out of use*" (cf. González-Ruibal 2019:18-19), but rather a prolongation from one state of persistence to another. Retiro may be an example and outcome of such afterlife, where organic and non-organic things are more or less left to themselves to act-out, create, destroy, and transform. This does not in any way exclude human influence, affect, or agency, which very much is a part of Retiro's afterlife, but instead consider things when they are released from the toil of only being things-for-us (Pétursdóttir 2014:339). Things can have many "befores" and "afters" and can therefore be composed of a biographical palimpsest of multiple afterlives. Accordingly, the prefix "after" alludes to a continuity and connection as much as a discontinuity and decoupling. As a term, afterlife also alludes that things can be more than they first seem, that they possess the capability of something more, an *excess* of something not yet realized.

Retiro demonstrates that things have characteristics that can appear as abject for some stakeholders. One example is how its unruly character is regarded as unattractive by municipal planners (i.e. Molde kommune 2014), or a waste of opportunity for profit by the real estate development company that owns the southern half of the property. While these observations are interesting, what is more interesting is how Retiro exceed these normative outlooks. Accordingly, my focus have been on including and exploring things that can be regarded as abject, such as for example the flaking paint on the villa Retiro in article A; the invasive and non-native red elderberry (*Sambucus racemosa*) in article B; the displaced snow stake in article C; the toxic black mould (*Stachybotrys*) in article D; and the littering LCD-monitors and rotting snags in article E. One of the main arguments for taking such an approach is to illustrate their intricate afterlives by not reducing them to just the abject impressions they have on people. This is not in any way meant to gloss over negative consequences, like plastic pollution or how invasive species can harm the local biodiversity. Instead, it can act as an additional acknowledgement of how these things exist in the contemporary landscape, and not least, how they are a part of a persistent and evolving past that shapes the landscape we experience today.

Figure 7 Utilitarian afterlife: a bench carved out of a tree from Retiro by the French artists Olivier Ledoux. The bench will soon be removed because of fungal wood-decay. 26.02.2017, 10:09.

Figure 8 Even graffiti has an afterlife. In this instance, a piece of red graffiti is slowly getting rearranged by the gnarly and expanding bark of a birch tree. 14.02.2016, 11:28.

1.4 Pre-historic resilience

In which field of archaeological research is my thesis situated, and how is it positioned within it? First and foremost, it is necessary to elaborate on why this project is not just another case study in the interesting field of garden archaeology. This field was established to recover and reconstruct the former glory of gardens, whether it is an English landscape garden from the 18th century or a Roman garden in Pompeii (Currie 2006). To my knowledge, no garden archaeological investigations have put most of its emphasis on the after*life* of a garden like in my research. Accordingly, I have not focused on reconstructing what has happened in the past, but instead on how things have persisted and changed; in short, what they have become and are becoming. Despite the absence of goals to reconstruct, preserve, or "save" Retiro from its current situation, the past is an important ingredient in the research. The fact that many past things persistently continue their existence, and often released from the programs or initiatives set up for them, is the very cornerstone that makes the focus on the contemporary possible. Contrary to Svetlana Boym's (2010:58) assertion that our intellectual fascination of ruins is because they "… *give us a shock of vanishing materiality*", the biggest (after-)shock might instead lie in how things continue to persist, mutate, and endure, and, thus, affect the present day (see article A and B). It must be noted that some things persist in their originally operational parameters like the ancient Roman roads and bridges that are still in use today. Likewise, Retiro still partly operates as a landscape garden long after the upkeep was halted.

Despite not conforming to what normally is thought of as garden archaeology, it is still significant that the research is done *in* and *on* a post-horticultural landscape; it is this fact that made plants and other organisms an essential part of the research. Having said that, it is also important to mention how this focus was shaped by other and perhaps less scholarly circumstances. Early on, I realised that access to the buildings remaining on the property was blocked off. Despite phones and emails to the company owning the southern half of Retiro, where the old villa and the gardener's residence sit, I never got permission to enter them. This contributed to shifting the attention elsewhere, plants and things other than buildings. Ruins of factories, institutions, houses, bunkers, trenches, and other enclosed architectural structures have certainly achieved a lot of attention in contemporary archaeology; as touched upon in article A, buildings have a special allure that captures the attention of people. In this respect, it is interesting to note that Retiro's fate got the most attention when people noticed that the *villa* had started to dilapidate. This observation, or realisation, helped turn my attention towards the garden as a whole, including its plants, fungi, yesterday's litter and the original landscape garden architecture. At first, my lack in botanical training was an off-putting factor, but later, as discussed in article B, an archaeological approach to the living environment can be rewarding and provide insights on the place beyond botanical taxonomy and linear historiography.

Would Retiro be an interesting case study without its history? As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, my first fascination with the place happened without any prior knowledge of its history. I did not know its origin, who built and owned it, the names of the people that lived there, etc. It was Retiro's sheer presence that drew me into it. Of course, its present state of appearance also begged questions about its history, alluding to mysteries to be solved and hidden things to be unveiled. However, despite my shallow forays into the history of the place, it is the "prehistoric" presence that this project focus on – *pre*historic in the sense of being untold and thus released from the chronological connotation otherwise implied by this concept (cf. Lucas 2004). It is this tacit prehistoric dimension that leads to the object of research, namely Retiro's contemporary landscape. So, the focus is removed from its distributed historical representation in textual sources, photos, and archives. The intention, however, is neither in any sense to undermine or belittle the history of the

place nor the people who lived, worked, and visited here. Rather, it is about looking at Retiro as heritage from a perspective that highlights or accentuate its contemporary presence. By focusing on the elements that mostly excluded from heritage as a category, such as litter and wild invasive plants, the project explores how such a place endures beyond classifications and historical narratives. In an anthropological investigation, for example, people's opinions on the site would probably have been the focus, while the fungi and lichen growing on the walls of the privy most likely would have been left out because of their obscurity to the local people (see article D). By emphasizing the archaeological, my goal is not to form "superior" descriptions, but instead contribute perspectives that underscore the excess and intricacy of things in their afterlife as unruly heritage.

An archaeology of the present offers a different take on things compared to more conventional historical approaches that seek to reconstruct and find meaning in a lost or obscured past. Over the last two decades, it has become a distinct subdiscipline within archaeology, and seems to grow with new perspectives and takes on things each year (see Harrison and Breithoff 2017). A central aspect of how I situate my research within this field lays precisely in the concept "contemporary". This might seem self-evident but has important theoretical implications. For one thing, it must be emphasized that I do not employ the "contemporary" as a historiographical defined period, such as for example González-Ruibal's (2019) demarcation of a distinct contemporary *era*. The reason for this is an understanding of things not as something in the past, or of any particular age, but rather as something that is present and continues to persist into the future – the *con*temporary. The concept of contemporaneity, thus, always involves mixing of times and incongruent temporalities, not the least because different things have unique temporalities (Lucas 2015c). The aim is certainly not to disregard the past of things; instead, it is an effort to emphasize the multi-temporality, accumulation, and actualization of extant things. This approach is partly inspired by the archaeologist Laurent Olivier's (2001, 2011 and 2013) writing on the relationship between time, memory, and material endurance. Because things continue to exist long after they were created and used by humans, the archaeological record is far from an inert and passive assemblage (Olivier 2013:124). Thus, every period, however distinct, is partly constituted by things that endure from previous periods. Consequently, contemporaneity is not synonymous with innovation and newness. This definition makes it possible to approach things of the past as present, which acknowledges that they have concrete and real actuality and relevance in the current world. The core idea is to step away from the conventional focus on the past as the "authentic" being of things, to which we must return for confirmation (Thomas 1996:62; Farstadvoll 2010:15-16; Olivier 2013:117), and instead explore how things disclose themselves in the contemporary landscape. This does not mean that the origins of things are uninteresting or irrelevant, nor that the contemporary is a distinct and innovative era, but rather the focus is more on what becomes of things instead of witnessing origins.

An archaeological approach to the contemporary does not just represent an alternative path to reach the answers found in social anthropology, ethnography, or contemporary history. Through a concrete engagement with what is left, with what may be described as an environment of apparent material redundancy, it will necessarily lead to different answers and discoveries that pertain to what things have become. The question that very well may be asked, of course, is whether we really need this "contemporary" perspective that such an archaeology can offer? Article A discusses how historical expectations and representations of Retiro deviate from and thus collide with the current landscape. The rift between expectations formed by oral stories, personal memories, textual descriptions, and old photographs, and the present day Retiro in its dilapidated and "wild" state of being, creates *ruptures* that highlight the material excess within the contemporary environment (cf. Head and Muir 2006). For example, it can be a way to describe how anthropogenic and "feral"

environments (see article E) persist, change, disappear, or even reappear, without recourse to linear and successive historicism (see Olsen 2010:126-128; Olsen *et al*. 2012:138, 145; Witmore 2014:212).

The temporal asynchronicity between representations and the represented demonstrates, perhaps, a paradox within any endeavour that attempts to describe something contemporary. In an understanding of the world as something that is in constant flux and transience, shifting character from one moment to another (cf. Ingold 2007b, 2012:433, 2017:124, 2018:224; Simonetti and Ingold 2018), any attempt to fix the contemporary would be a conceptual contradiction. However, when working with things like archaeologists do, we also work with artefacts and landscapes that have persisted long enough to offer us an insight into the past; i.e. "sticky" things that bring together the past and the present (Olsen 2010:161-162). For example, complex things such as ecosystems rely on the ability to combine persistence with fluctuations and temporal variation (Holling 1973; Kovel 2007:104-105; Oliver *et al*. 2015), i.e. "resilience". Resilience is a contested and debated term in both the natural and social sciences (Hornborg 2009; Alexander 2013). It is a multifaceted concept that illustrates the ambiguous interplay between transformation and persistence where things can change while at the same time maintaining some defining characteristics (Carpenter and Brock 2008; Bunnell 2018). In some instances, stability is a prerequisite for biological diversity (e.g. Tilman, Reich, and Knops 2006). This principle is also transferable to the diversity of archaeological deposits and situations.

The concept of a temporal continuity that integrates change, with plants as an example, is demonstrated in article B. Ecological processes do not always operate as a smooth and continuous flow, but also involve stepwise changes and sharp shifts (Holling 1986; Alberti 2008:627-628). Thus, it is possible to postulate like Graham Harman has, that "*change is intermittent while stability is the norm*" (Harman 2016b:15). To avoid a spatio-temporal polarization, it is important to prevent a dichotomy between stability and change (Olsen 2010:162). In my repeated returns to Retiro, continuity was as much observed as change; some plants spread and grew, while others were killed off by herbicide and extreme weather. The gravel tracks were slowly dispersed by foot traffic, but encroaching grass and particleboards has helped them to maintain their integrity. Thus, studying the contemporary is not necessarily about observing ephemeral phenomena, but also very much about how things hold on and persist even with physical fragmentation and entropy. Things can have vast temporal depth, as demonstrated by the disciplines of geology, cosmology, palaeontology, and archaeology. This, however, does not mean that they are static and impervious to change, as taphonomy demonstrates. To know with certainty when a thing has changed enough to become another thing is not always as straightforward as one might think (cf. Harman 2012b). In a world continually upset by the lasting, not transient, effects of anthropogenic technology and interventions on the biosphere and climate, it is reasonable to investigate how things endure and metamorphose when they slip both our initial mental and physical grasp. As such, to approach the contemporary properly, it is necessary to acknowledge the longevity of things and the depth of time inherent in the present environment.

Figure 9 One of the original paths that cut through the middle of Retiro from east to west. People have haphazardly placed particle boards on some of the muddier sections of the path. 21.05.2015, 09:40.

Figure 10 Another of the original paths that follow the northern edge of the property. This is a much less travelled path and is mostly used by non-humans, such as deer and badgers. 28.06.2016, 12:51.

1.5 Object-ion and resistance

My PhD is a part of the larger research project *Object Matters: Archaeology and Heritage in the 21st Century*. As signalled by its very title, a key feature of the general orientation of the project is the role and matter of objects:

> *"It is the project's grounding assertion that a successful turn to things cannot be accomplished through theoretical and discursive reconfigurations alone but must also be grounded in the tactile experiences that emerge from direct engagements with things – including broken and stranded things."* (Object Matters n.d.)

In many ways, the research on Retiro could not have been executed without direct engagement and attention to the things that constitute the place today. Through working directly and intimately with Retiro, I also came to muddle the distinction between anthropogenic and non-anthropogenic things. For one thing, it became evident that the presence of plants in Retiro was more than just a veneer on the architecture; it was rather an inherent component of the landscape as a cohesive archaeological record. Especially the surviving ornamental plants made it explicit that their presence could not adequately be understood from tracing their origin and the human intentions that brought them there – they are things that blurred the opposition between the wished-for and the undesirable; i.e. between heritage and invasive organisms.

This also relates to non-human agency; the capacity of things to articulate themselves autonomously and exert influence on human agendas, whether theoretical or political. Severin Fowles (2016) has recently criticized thing-oriented theory and its allegedly "*analytical shift of focus from people to things*" and "*subjectification of objects*". Because of the postcolonial critique of how the West has written whatever it liked about other people, Fowles argues, Western academics have turned to things as a substitute for the no-longer silenced and oppressed humans (ibid.24-25). In his universe, things are "*perfect subjects*" – that is, submissive subjects – because they are silent and therefore lack the capacity to counter or resist the academic onslaught. This is an interesting argument to hold in the current condition of environmental change, where things evidently are reacting or "talking back" in an awry sense. It suffices to mention how carbon monoxide pollution contributes to dramatic global warming (Masson-Delmotte *et al*. 2018), how pesticides used in agriculture and aquaculture pose ever increasing risks for wildlife and humans alike (Köhler and Triebskorn 2013), and how plastics threatens to become more abundant in the oceans than fish by the year 2050 (World Economic Forum 2016:17), and how anthropogenically introduced and invasive species are increasingly becoming a severe threat to biodiversity (Bellard, Cassey and Blackburn 2016).

As much as academics, Western and non-Western, construct representations of what and how things are (Fowles 2016), I want to argue that things constantly push back in their own way and are far from perfect "subjects" ready to be colonized. It is precisely due to their utterances on beaches, in bodies, soil, ice, and sky, that we are made aware and must change our lives and discourses. Who spoke up about the Anthropocene? Extinctions, pollution, and environmental change are not a sign of authority, but rather a sign of how little foresight, authority and oversight most people have over material consequences and trajectories. In an "*age of excess*" (González-Ruibal 2019:190-191), it is pertinent to acknowledge and explore the excess of things beyond the intended, predicted and pretended. There is an essential aspect in things that characterizes resistance, such as durability and the ability to stabilize (Latour 1999:210; Olsen 2010:140-141; González-Ruibal 2014a:21, 26), and at the same time the ability to destabilize and cause monstrous harm (González-Ruibal 2019). Things resist

descriptions and rupture expectations that will always be inadequate because they never completely capture the excesses that lie at the core of things (Harman 2012b:188-189, 2013:61).

When the world is faced with a range of issues such as accelerated anthropogenic climate change, pollution, and general ecological disturbance, the focus, thus, should not only be on the human perpetrators and their collaborators. Here it is possible to employ an extended and carefully adjusted ethic that includes things other than us (cf. Introna 2014) – from non-human "victims" to "associates". Accordingly, to follow and prosecute only those who are guilty (or monstrous) by intent, such as guns, bombs, or chemical weapons (Hodder 2014; González-Ruibal 2019:177), is too simplified. Even the most innocent piece of plastic may become monstrous when joined by billions of fellow beings in colonizing oceans, beaches, and nutrition systems of maritime animals. Things are far from "perfect subjects", they can be as reluctant, awry, and resistant as human beings, albeit in different and often more serious ways. Things resist, like a colony of invasive Japanese knotweed fighting back against the herbicide it was sprayed with (see article B and E). Retiro exemplifies such a material resistance, and would not have been here today without it. It resists through its historical connotations, memories, and nostalgia, but more importantly, through its sheer physicality: tendrils of rhizomes digging and scrambling, grout crumbling, hypha proliferating, spores swarming, and plastics photodegrading. Consequently, if attentive to its own thingly mattering, Retiro is also a place that resists simple explanations and reductive representations.

Figure 11 Resisting things: a Japanese knotweed colony slowly resurfacing a year after being doused with herbicide. Massive amounts of ground elder (Aegopodium podagraria) has taken advantage of the space left open after the knotweed was decimated. Ironically, ground elder is an invasive weed in Japan, but native in Norway. 30.05.2018, 18:38.

Figure 12 Reminder of persistence; a faded note warning people to be careful not to eat any wild food in the area because of the herbicide used on the knotweed. The note has persisted long after its warning has ended and is now a part of Retiro's archaeological record. 16.10.2018, 11:28.

Figure 13 Unbound heritage: a small colony of Japanese knotweed that has spread beyond Retiro's original border. In escaping Retiro it has also escaped the herbicide. 27.06.2016, 15:04.

Figure 14 Obstinate object: the snow stake discussed in article C. It has now fallen all the way down to the ground. 17.10.2018, 11:20.

2 Multitudes and excess

After many repeating walks and stops, things that have been overlooked gradually make their presence known, for example, certain kinds of knotted plastic bags that accumulate due to the traffic through the garden. They are black and small and hold the ability to flatten themselves to the ground, creating an effective camouflage in the gloomy underwood amid stumps of fallen trees and towering ferns. These banal plastic bags trace the paths of people and their dogs on their everyday walks throughout the derelict garden. They may be viewed as the material surplus of an interspecies partnership, a kind of human-dog heritage that brings attention to a part of this relationship, or ecological dependency, that no one really wants to be reminded of. The waste bags are just one of the many things that constitute the bewildering assemblage that makes Retiro what it is today. Admittedly, it is also an example of a thing that can be subtracted from Retiro without putting its physical integrity at risk. Nevertheless, it is a consequence of the place, of its "gravity" (Bryant 2014), as its paths attract people walking their dogs, while the undergrowth invites a hide-away for litter. This "in-transit refuse" (Wilk and Schiffer 1979:531), signifies that Retiro has also become a transit space, one where things, people, and dogs move through.

Figure 15 One of the many black plastic bags that dot the verges in Retiro. 28.06.2016, 13:08.

Besides the transient origin of plastic bags, Retiro consist of many things that are rooted-in-place, like the remnants of an octagonal garden pond centrally placed in the middle of the old flower garden south of the villa. The exfoliating plaster on the raised walls of the pond reveal that it is built with maroon bricks, but this peephole is in the process of being hidden again by a creeping carpet of lichen and moss. The pond is approximately 30 cm deep, or 6 bricks high and has a diameter of 5,5 m. On the top of the brickwork corners, one can see three bricks radiating out from each of the corners. The pond is dry and probably has been so for a while, indicated by the vegetation covering its base: a thick carpet of grass, weed and a jumble of birch, sycamore, hazel (Corylus avellana), silver fir, alder

(Alnus incana), rowan (Sorbus aucuparia), and goat willow (Salix caprea) saplings. The inside of the pond has become a continuation of the unkempt garden floor. In the centre of the pond, there is a cluttered pile of stones mixed in with fragmented pieces of a concrete pedestal. One iron pipe is jutting out in the middle of the pile. A closer look reveals that the stones have a rather exotic origin; the greyish black stones are volcanic tuff.

The radiating brickwork on the corners of the octagon was originally used as platforms to put decorative elements, such as interesting pieces of volcanic rocks, urns and wooden pails with plants. Old pictures show that in the centre of the pond stood a tall, black Victorian fountain with a small statue on top. The statue was of a human figure with a horn "blowing" a jet of water approximately two or three meters straight up into the air. The fountain used to spray water on the brick edges of the ponds, causing some overflow and cracking of the plaster. Jagged volcanic tuff rocks were placed around the base of the statue, jutting dramatically out of the water. The black cast-iron fountain and volcanic rocks created a vivid contrast to the bright white Italian faux-marble plaster statues that were widely used in both the flower- and landscape garden. The flower garden was designed differently compared to the surrounding landscape garden; it had well-defined structures and placements of plants. This part was one of the first structures to be completed when Retiro was built, even before the villa itself. Originally, it had a complex network of pathways winding between asymmetric flowerbeds. This was later redesigned and simplified (Vestad 1961:15), perhaps because of the difficulty of maintaining the initial complexity. The pond has lasted through the redesigns and still occupies the central area of the flower garden even in its derelict state.

The grandness of the fountain is lost in the present, but through its ruination other memories of the pond are revealed. The plaster has been slipping away from the brickwork due to acidic rain, frost, and prodding roots. The mortar between the bricks is also crumbling away, eroding the possibility of the previously watertight purpose. With these intermediaries gone, the persistent bricks move with the rhythms and perturbation of its environment. Presently the pond is defined by a perimeter of stacked bricks; the original facade is eroded and gone. Its leaking brick- and rusted pipework reveal memories of its construction and use, but also of its afterlife in redundancy. What memories and connotations can this "pond" now unintendedly spill out in its surroundings? The previous plasterwork has seeped into the soil of the garden turf, again feeding the plants with minerals and nutrients for wild growth. The plants, moss, and lichen do not recollect the pond as a beautiful garden structure, but rather remember it habitually through dispersing minerals and build-up of soil and substrates for their roots and rhizoids to grip. In some way, out of our immediate and eminent reach, the plaster of the pond is still there, in a peculiarly archaeological way. The pond is not just a manifestation of chaotic matter; it is a rather particular accumulation of memory. The pipes and network of mechanisms that bound together the flow of water is presently constricted and only overflows with rust. Is a pond without water still a pond? How does the "natural world" remember, include, and propagate heritage? How can one approach such things?

Figure 16 The more-than-empty pond in the flower garden. The fountain foundation is barely visible in the centre. 26.05.2015, 12:13.

Figure 17 The crumbling pond-wall. The bricks are much more obstinate compared to the malleable and crumbling mortar. 16.10.2015, 16:10.

Figure 18 Ornamental tuff rock. Probably imported from the Napoli area in Italy. 13.02.2016, 13:00.

Generally speaking, there are two angles of attack in gathering research data on sites like Retiro. One is the indirect approach, which depends on sources like literature, archival material, and oral accounts. The other approach is to explore a site "face-to-face", so to say, gathering observational and experiential research data. Of course, both approaches are equally valid, and it is often necessary to combine them to get to grips with a place. Sometimes one approach might lead to the other, where historical information provides clues that can be used when surveying, and vice versa. Nevertheless, my research is mostly based on the latter approach, and the conviction that close physical proximity with Retiro offers something different, yet not better, than investigating a place mainly through secondary sources and representations. The choice, of course, also relies on the objectives of your study, and in my case, the things and material circumstances that were discovered during the fieldwork. Highlighting things such as for example Spanish slugs (*Arion vulgaris*) and plastic grave lanterns as components of Retiro's contemporary ecology (see article D), would have been difficult in an indirect approach where such things are hardly represented. Some things can only be discovered by being where they are, and by experiencing them in action.

A central premise this research is based on is how the theoretical framework, method and case study intertwine. Accordingly, surveying Retiro is not a detached sampling of empirical data, but also a *way* of theorizing. As much as Retiro is a diverse and multitemporal palimpsest, so too are the theoretical bits and pieces used when writing about Retiro (cf. Olsen 2010:12-14; Pétursdóttir 2013:64). Theorizing can be as bewildering, open-ended, and entangled as the underwood of Retiro (see Pétursdóttir 2018; Pétursdóttir and Olsen 2018). My goal has not been to straighten out the garden's bewildering character by fitting it into neat theoretical frames, but rather to emphasize and explore it. Instead of seeing theory as something that always precedes the matter at hand, it can be regarded as something that is informed *by* the things in question (Pétursdóttir 2018:208). Theory can, of course, be transformed, modified, or made moot with empirical observations and experiences. Therefore, theorizing cannot be separated into a realm that sits apart from an empirical reality, and is accordingly not always easy to define in archaeology (cf. Lucas 2015a, 2015b).

Fieldwork is an opportunity to be attentive to what and how things disclose themselves. This implies that new insights may emerge from engaging a case study directly and with an "open-mind" (cf. Olsen 2012c; Pétursdóttir 2014; Pétursdóttir and Olsen 2014a:22). Even if there is an emphasis on on-site experiences and empirical observations throughout the research, sources such as historical texts or photographs have, of course, not been disregarded when they can illuminate different aspects of the site in the present day, as seen in article A. Instead, it is about being curious when encountering things, and to acknowledge that things can challenge preconceptions and premises that are in place before the encounter (cf. Olsen and Witmore 2015:192). A phenomenological and aesthetic approach to documentation takes into consideration the researcher's experiences in encounters with the things, such as documenting smells, sights, and the sense of place (Tilley 2008). A common misapprehension of phenomenological approaches is to think that these encounters are nothing more than subjective experiences (Thomas 2015:1288). To immerse oneself in a place is not only about the subjective and personal experience, because being *there* depends on how other things are there with you and how they interact with each other. For example, as mentioned in article D, smell can inform about invisible presences of bacteria and fungi in soil, leaf litter and decaying wood. It would be problematic to bracket the world as only present through human consciousness, and that would lock away any relationship and interaction between non-humans (Witmore 2015). As such, the project has not only focused on the relationship between a privileged observer and the observed, but also on including other kinds of co-existential and -resistant things. This is seen in article D, which explores how Retiro is ecologically constituted by non-human things such as fungi and non-native plants.

The documentation included both biotic and abiotic, living and dead things. Further, things were not sorted into a hierarchy that prioritized them based on their age. This flattening and equalization of temporalities enabled me to juxtapose and acknowledge how things, regardless of their age, coexist in a contemporary environment. Hence, it was possible to engage a wide range of different things, from plastic stakes and yesterday's litter, to elderberry bushes and fragments of statues (see article B, C, and D). The fieldwork did not involve collecting and removing things from Retiro, except for a small range of botanical samples that were used to identify non-native plant species. There are several reasons for this: one point is that selecting which part of the material environment to document is a challenge when dealing with a contemporary context, where the sheer scale and the number of things might offer an overload of information (Graves-Brown, Harrison and Piccini 2013:14-15). Things that were recorded during the fieldwork were not picked out in advance but depended on choices done in the field and how things disclosed themselves to me during the fieldwork (e.g. Tilley 2008:273-274; Pétursdóttir 2014). Over the course of repeated fieldworks, eight[1] visits in total, things and patterns emerged and eventually led to the articles this thesis rests on.

Figure 19 Being on a survey: a photo shot while traversing the dense vegetation in one of the more inaccessible parts of Retiro. 28.06.2016, 15:53.

[1] *Nine if you count my first encounter with Retiro in September 2011.*

"Thing theories" concerned with the autonomy and particularities of non-humans (e.g. Brown 2001; Olsen 2003, 2010; Latour 2004, 2009; Olsen *et al.* 2012; Hodder 2012; Ingold 2012; Harman 2016b) have been important in shaping the outline and premise of the research. Sometimes the words "object" and "thing" are used interchangeably, as Harman does (see Harman 2016b), but "thing" is usually preferred because of its well-established use in archaeology (e.g. Olsen 2010; Hodder 2012). Some object-oriented philosophers such as Ian Bogost (2012:24-25) prefer to use "objects" instead of "things" because the latter can invoke too much concreteness and permanency. Ingold, on the other hand, claims the opposite, that "object" insinuates a complete and final form, while "things" are materials in motion (cf. Ingold 2012). My use of *thing* hints to something, in any form or composition, which exists independent of human minds. Hence, things are discrete and real entities that form a diversity of empirically observable phenomena. Importantly, "thing" is also used to refer to biotic things like plants, fungi, lichen, and cyanobacteria. Living plants are just as much part of the archaeological record as potsherds and charcoal, and should not be arbitrarily excluded because of their non-human origin or vitality (see article B). Thus, "thing" is an inclusive term that can refer to every*thing* of an environment like Retiro, with its trees, birds, beer cans, and buildings. Accordingly, "thing" is a *vague* term (cf. Sørensen 2016b), which does not define in exhaustive detail what it refers to and instead points out that it has an independent but observable existence. However, this inherent "fuzziness" is not detrimental; it can instead be regarded as a way of referring to objects without allocating them to restrictive categories. As such, "thing" is a term that acknowledges *excess* and gives room for objects to wiggle and "dither" (cf. Pétursdóttir 2018). "Thing" is far from a subjective term, but instead it emphasizes that there are always more things to know, indeed, that there is something beyond the subject. Referring to the fragment of a statue as a thing, for example, enables us to look beyond its previous existence as a part of a whole, and accordingly explore its characteristics as a substrate for microorganisms and slugs (see article D). Perhaps somewhat counterintuitively, using a vague term like "thing" can be helpful when exploring emergent particularities and excess of objects (cf. Marila 2017).

Turning to things is not a theoretical orientation that just exchanges human subjects with things, nor does it exclude people from the research (Olsen 2012a:29). Symmetrical archaeology and thing theory can instead be said to emphasize the difference between the human and non-human, and between non-humans, rather than just to assign human qualities and intentions to things (Shanks 2007; Olsen 2013:293). Symmetry furthermore emphasizes that archaeologists already are a part of the world that they observe and engage with (Olsen *et al.* 2012:13). This embeddedness within a material world is also highlighted in how archaeologists diligently work with and cares for things. Nevertheless, the word "symmetry" can easily be confusing and misunderstood as making all things equal by promoting a flat ontology (cf. Ingold 2012:430-432; Pollock *et al*. 2014:156-157; Van Dyke 2015; Sørensen 2013, 2016a; Cipolla 2018), or even leading to unfortunate assumptions of indiscriminatingly equating "things" with humans (cf. Fowles 2016:22). Symmetry as applied here, however, does not call for homogenization but rather "… *to forefront symmetry is not to deny that beings are different; in fact, it is to acknowledge that these differences are constitutive for the world, including for human existence*" (Olsen and Witmore 2015:188). A person and a spoon equally exist in the world, but their existence is quite dissimilar. More importantly the idea of symmetry is a sort of guideline for researchers interested in the empirically observable heterogeneity of the world, because it suggests that one avoids reductive and limiting assumptions about things *before the work is carried out* (ibid., Witmore 2014). In other words, it involves recognizing the difference of things without ontologically dividing them in advance; simply put, one does not describe the character of something before it has been sensed and observed in some way. Even though the representation of things to some

degree reflects personal and human interests and opinions (Cipolla 2018:64), I argue that symmetrical archaeology encourages the researcher to prioritize a different and oblique approach to things. It facilitates open-ended and lateral approaches, while stressing the importance of empirical engagement (cf. Witmore 2015, 2019). My research operates with a symmetrical perspective that makes it possible to de-emphasize an anthropocentric understanding of heritage based on human exceptionalism, as argued for in article D. Consequently, it offers an investigation of heritage that can move beyond concepts like property (cf. Pacifico 2019) by looking at how Retiro with its multitude of anthropogenic and non-human things transcends anthropocentric expectations of what heritage is.

Figure 20 Discovering lingering residues of interactions. A small bouquet of wilted twisted shell flowers (Chelone obliqua) found inserted into the crack of the villa's kitchen door. 16.10.2015, 15:54.

2.1 A walk in the park

As mentioned, the project's primary method of gathering information and descriptions was on-site surveys. Surveying involves a lot of walking and interaction with things. This exemplifies one of the unique particularities of archaeology, namely the closeness to and the care for things (Olsen *et al.* 2012:204-205). It offers an opportunity to experience the atmosphere and presence of a site (see Sørensen 2015), which otherwise is invisible, overlooked, or impossible to be experienced through secondary representations. This approach has by example been used in a contemporary archaeological research of the Soviet mining town Pyramiden (Andreassen, Bjerck and Olsen 2010; Harrison and Schofield 2010:69). Walking is a natural way of investigating Retiro, not only because of it being a way to closely observe things, but also because it is a piece of landscape architecture that was designed with walking in mind with a 3 kilometres long network of looping and serpentine paths. However, walking is also a way to subvert the inbuilt expectations of the architecture, by for example walking outside the original paths.

Field walking is not a method that is solely employed by archaeologists, it is also used in geography (Smith 2010; Edensor 2008), anthropology (Lohmann 2006), as well as in natural sciences such as biology and geology. Still, first hand investigation of places and things through field surveys are important aspects of archaeology that differentiates its approach from other means of gathering information. Surveys offer an opportunity to experience the unique environment of a site and the concreteness of the field encounter that cannot be conveyed through other representational means (e.g. Gumbrecht 2004). Archaeological surveys, of course, involve much more than simply walking, it is also about *being there* (e.g. Clark 1997; Andreassen, Bjerck and Olsen 2010; Harrison and Schofield 2010:69; Olsen *et al*. 2012: 58-78; Pétursdóttir and Olsen 2014a:24-25). Walking can imply transience and always be on the move – to pass things by. However, every archaeologist with in-depth survey experience would certainly know that it is much more than just boots touching the turf. Sometimes one spends just as much time standing still and, on the knees, scrutinizing vague features and things. Another aspect is that surveying is not exclusively a matter of prospecting, where it must in one way or another lead up to a more in-depth data analysis that uncovers the real truth that is hidden behind the immediate encounter with things. My surveys of Retiro have emphasized qualitative aspects, and thus focused on documenting things as they were encountered in the field. As such, the project has been more interested in documenting the kind of things found, and how they exist, rather than their frequencies and distributions.

While staying for hours, walking and sometimes sitting down to investigate things, it became apparent that most of the human presence in Retiro is today transitory compared to other things, like for example the paths, oaks (*Quercus robur*), glass bottles, drainage channels, and green elfcup fungus (*Chlorociboria aeruginascens*). Despite their brief visits, humans and their entourage of things still affect Retiro in ways that make them an influential part of the contemporary landscape. Humans, as observed through material traces and movements in Retiro, are masters of unpredictable material interactions. Suddenly, things have been dragged out of their hiding place inside the dusty buildings and left out in the open. For example, the antique kicksled left stranded in the middle of the flower garden. The present owners of the villa and gardener's residence have through several means attempted to hinder the movement of people and things. Windows and doors have been boarded up and nailed shut, with different degrees of success. To monitor movements in and around the buildings "wildlife" surveillance cameras have been installed, watching the gravel courtyards behind the villa and the flower garden at the front. This, however, has not stopped or dissuaded people from breaking into the buildings. The architectural framework of Retiro as a landscape garden was originally

designed with controlled walking in mind (Leone 1984). It had, and to some degree still has, loops and circuits that cut through the terrain. When the garden was left to its own devices, new paths appeared while other have been blocked off by rampant vegetation. People still mostly follow the original paths, but they probably do not have the same aversion to walking off the path and into the emerging wilderness as when Retiro was still tended to by gardeners. Similarly, I did also walk in-between the original paths, which was necessary to really get inside the contemporary workings of Retiro.

Figure 21 An antique kicksled wrecked in the flower garden. 30.05.2018, 18:08.

Walking enables specific observations and experiences that cannot be achieved through other scholarly practices. It is of course embedded in the observers' corporality and tools, which accordingly offer perspectives and observations that can differ from person to person, or even from day to day. A good pair of walking boots is for archaeologists a scientific instrument that aid the gathering of data. Walking, and thus surveying, is a method central to counteracting simplifications and spatial understatements that exists in the contemporary era (González-Ruibal 2019:161). In one way, walking is a fundamental part of Retiro's relationship with humans (cf. Ingold 2004). It is not really an abstractly selected and objectively employed method; it is one of the only ways to *reach* most parts of Retiro, and not least to get to grips with its contemporaneity. Walking is also one of the reasons that some sections of Retiro are reachable at all. For paths to be kept open, they need to be *walked*, by humans or wildlife (Macfarlane 2012:17). Hence, walking is an integral *part* of Retiro's landscape – an activity that merges and is in a dialogue with the terrain and the things that dwell in it. While some paths have become overgrown and disappeared under a thick layer of soil and vegetation, new paths have started to grow and present themselves, cutting into unrealised opportunities that Retiro offers. Thus, walking is much more than a transcendental exercise in introspective self-reflection (i.e. Thoreau 1862).

Walking also has a temporal aspect to it – each survey was a movement through time, seasons, and weather. As sometimes experienced during lengthy archaeological excavations, *other* things and

processes move in concert, or diagonally, with the time the work takes. For example, cleared and levelled profiles and surfaces can spring to life with all kinds of organisms, erasing the immaculate planes with rhizomes, roots, and mycelium. Opposite these negentropic events (see article B), you have the entropic processes where matter dissipates and continually seeks equilibrium, like erosion, chemical reactions, and diffusion. Like the roadside stake discussed in article C, which slowly but inevitably moved from being upright to being prone in the course of four years. When working with a contemporary perspective, it is important to acknowledge that the things studied also move, grow, or dissipate. This is different from regarding data as always fixed, like numbers on a spreadsheet – a current perspective must leave parameters open and give leeway for things to move about and shift without making them too ephemeral or permanent.

Repetition and walking are intricately linked to each other (e.g. Edensor 2008:136; Gros 2014:207-217), because walking regularly involves, purposely or inadvertently, tracing and repeating the tracks of other people or following in your own footsteps. Repetition, or *anaphora*, can be argued to be a part of the rhetoric of archaeological practise, not least because it involves continually returning to the same places (González-Ruibal 2014b:370-371, 2019:109). Thus, a focus on the present day also offers an incentive to return – to both repeatedly look at things a-new and make new discoveries. To return is to linger and make time for affective encounters with things (Pétursdóttir 2013:54). To recognize that returning to a place, repeatedly, has merit, one also must acknowledge the capacity of a place and its excess – such as the complex and evanescent multitudes a real and unmediated environment offers. The return is not necessarily about refining conclusions through reductive deductions, as in getting closer to a truth by eliminating extraneous things; it can instead aim to expand knowledge about the things that constitute a site, and thus increase the abundance of things and nuances in our representations.

For example, “bad weather” can be regarded as disruptive during excavations, while seasons and weather are also important to understand the vibrancy and multitudes of archaeological landscapes (e.g. Tilley 1994, 2008; Hamilton *et al.* 2006). Thus, seasonal and climatic variations are meaningful for research that aims to describe and understand the contemporaneity of things and places. For instance, living organisms like plants and animals have temporal rhythms, activities, and appearances that are dependent on the environmental conditions that the seasons and weather bring (see article B). Even non-living things, like water and minerals, drastically change affordances and aesthetics depending on ephemeral environmental conditions such as temperature and humidity (e.g. Tilley 2004). As such, these changes and fluctuations in the environment are vital to get a realistic understanding of how things are parts of and constitute a place like Retiro (see article B and D).

To repeatedly return enables us to document ephemeral things, such as snow, ice, and floodwater. In the same manner as plants can be regarded as superficial veneer (see article B), snow can be subjected to the same kind of reductive generalization. Sometimes, in order to get the gist of things, one must be there at the *right time*. Accordingly, places have a *kairotic* character (see article B), a timeliness that is a part of the particularities of things. Snow has a range of different materialities, as exemplified by the Sámi languages that have extensive vocabularies describing different types of snow. The experience of walking in Retiro during winter would depend on the type of snow draping its hibernating landscape; for example, crusty hard snow makes it easier to walk outside paths, but deep powdery snow makes it difficult. Light, freshly fallen snow acts as a sound-deadening material and can for example emphasise the chirps and songs of small perching birds that usually become drowned in anthropogenic noise (see Whitehouse 2015). Thus, Retiro has a soundscape and thus an acoustic ecology (see Pijanowski *et al*. 2011), which changes with seasons, weather, and the time of day. Snow also ephemerally records the passing of things, like footprints

revealing that it is indeed badgers (*Meles meles*) that occupy the burrows in and around the gardener's residence. Snow is as much a part of Retiro as the leaves on the trees and the serpentine paths. A thick cover of snow can obscure things, but it can also in some instances highlight things (see Pétursdóttir 2011, 2012a; Olsen 2012b), as for example tracks and other traces of movement. The cold also halts decay and growth temporarily, making decomposing things linger and remain visible a little longer. It is not just people that "*live in the open*" as Tim Ingold argues (2007a), but also every*thing* else.

This is not just about subjective experiences of a place, but also a less subtractive and discriminatory view allowing for the real complexity of what a place *is*, and thus, the potential for what heritage can be. The "return" as a method can be different from quantitative investigations that look to find the trends, averages and means of things. Instead, it can highlight "outlying" protrusions by recording how things can deviate and occasionally behave erratically. Not just the things that repeat themselves but also unique events, juxtapositions, uncouplings, movements, and entanglements. The return acknowledges that a place always has an excess to explore, but it also recognizes that there is a familiarity in this, that there is always *something recognizable to return to*. When returning, you are bound to encounter something that has previously touched your senses, but also aspects previously not noted because of a slight change in angle, movement, light, vegetation, etc. This was the case with the wooden window frame that haunted Retiro's northwest corner. Its most common abode was among the ruins of the Atlantic Ocean pond. Here it jumped around between my visits. It was for sure moved around by human agents, but any purpose of this jagged migration throughout the environment I have yet to discern.

Figure 22 First sighting of the window frame. 21.05.2015, 09:00.

Figure 23 Second sighting of the window frame.14.02.2016, 10:19.

Figure 24 Third sighting of the window frame. 29.06.2016, 13:52.

Figure 25 Last sighting of the window frame. The frame was not encountered again in subsequent surveys. 25.02.2017, 10:48.

2.2 The subterranean

Harrison (2011) has argued that a shift away from the tropes of "*archaeology-as-excavation*" and "*a past that is buried and hidden*" to instead define archaeology as surface-survey, can help archaeologists working with the contemporary overcome the felt need to justify their work. Harrison's focus on *visible* surfaces has been criticized for overlooking aspects such as movement and the imperceptible (i.e. Simonetti 2015:82), but this recognition of exposed surfaces as archaeological is significant because it acknowledges that to understand things one is not always required to move behind "mere" appearances. This, for instance, is important for the premise in article B, that the dynamic "surface" of plants is not only a veneer on the "true" archaeology beneath it. From the outset of the project, excavation was not prioritized as a method. Simply speaking, one of the main reasons was that surface surveying is less time consuming, and less logistically and labour intensive than excavation. This gave more time to engage with the site as a whole. An excavation would inevitably lead to a more focused and spatially concentrated attention compared to an approach that is based on walking. The focus on what Retiro has become and is becoming, rather than what it once was, is another reason behind the decision. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that there are some appearances hidden from view; contemporary things that *need* to be excavated for us to see them (González-Ruibal 2019:161). Even without excavations, it is important to acknowledge that to investigate the contemporaneous environment of Retiro does not categorically exclude the subterranean, or invisible. The buried and out-of-sight, as I will argue, is an essential component of the present.

The connection and connotation between archaeology and the buried is well established both in popular knowledge and within the discipline (i.e. González-Ruibal 2013a:7; Gnecco 2013; Nativ 2018). The archaeological context is tricky to define, as shown in for example Michael Brian Schiffer's well-known attempt to distinguish between the historical, systemic, and archaeological context (Schiffer 1996; see also Patrik 1985). Despite not being the only academic discipline to use excavation as a method, archaeology is alone in using it in the social sciences and humanities. Anthropologists, ethnographers, and human geographers might survey and document environments and artefacts, but only archaeologists will put it under the scrutiny of the spade and trowel. Accordingly, archaeology has a "*matchless capacity to engage the chthonic realm*" (Witmore 2018). It relentlessly pursues matter that is out of immediate reach, and archaeological excavation, and the subterranean, has therefore been a welcome metaphor in psychoanalytical thought (González-Ruibal 2013a). For archaeologists, however, excavation is not first and foremost a metaphor for the depth beyond or behind things, but is rather a concrete method to reach and document things. As such, the effort to plunge into the earth to uncover things is overall related to methodology and the nature of the archaeological research objects. Nevertheless, it can also be seen as an archaeological orientation towards the world, as discussed in article C. Thus, the *chthonic* perspective of archaeology is not limited to the underworld of metaphysical beings, deities, and metaphors; it may be preoccupied with what is (partly) out-of-sight, but it is so in a way that *predicts*, so to speak, its real presence and impact on the present.

Surfaces constitute the border to the subterranean. They are, however, not impermeable membranes separating the past and the present, or archaeology and any other discipline. The chthonic realm is the very substrate that supports the weight of the present. In the many surveys of Retiro, I witnessed the slow and speedy creation of new surfaces, and the disappearance of old ones. Things erupt from beneath the soil without being intentionally excavated, resurfacing as an inherent part of reality. Through these repeated fieldworks, Retiro appeared to me as a messy folded sheet of surfaces,

to allude to Michel Serres' metaphor of the crumpled handkerchief (Serres and Latour 1995:60-61); a polychronic gathering of superpositions, juxtapositions, intersections and impacts. A conventional historical approach would want to unfold and straighten things out to create a neat and orderly chronology and chain of causality. An archaeology of the contemporary, however, can proceed rather differently. As stated by González-Ruibal, it should describe the materialities and their current relationships as they are, in order to articulate a "*deep archaeology of the present*", an archaeology that should "… *manifest these rich pasts, their many connections, while keeping their tangled nature*" (González-Ruibal 2017:269).

Figure 26 Bedrock hoisted up into the air by the roots of a silver fir toppled over in stormy weather. 02.08.2017, 09:54.

The metaphor of a crumpled handkerchief, however, does not quite capture the intricate reality at any site as convergent and intersecting as Retiro. Here things fold into each other, things are dissolved and recombined, changed in material and shape. Even things that usually vehemently stay in place, like the folded bedrock of migmatitic gneiss, sometimes re-surface and get exposed. The roots of a silver fir uprooted by windthrow have in one instance ripped out and hoisted up huge gneiss boulders, suddenly reanimating geology that has slumbered there for 420 million years since the Caledonian orogeny. While many things stay hidden in the soil in Retiro, there is always an intermittent dialogue between the subterranean and the heterogenic surfaces above. Plants are one of the manifestations of this exchange, as they are organisms that are both rooted in and reach above the soil of which they grow. The nutrient cycle is a process that binds the subsurface and the upper ground in a concrete but uneven continuity, where matter is decomposed and recomposed (cf. Begon, Colin and Harper 2006:525-526). Some things stay in the ground, while others percolate out by various means.

Most of the things that have been described are in one way or another related to the subterranean: from the exfoliated paint accumulating in the soil beneath the villa, to the fungi that mostly exist within other things. After my surveys, the things beneath the soil-cover of Retiro still mostly remain a mystery. As a matter of course, I have speculated on what might be found there, from structures and artefacts to pollen from exotic but extinct garden plants. What traces has the now buried playground left in the soil? What kind of artefacts have people lost through the years in the Atlantic Ocean pond, and what kind of stories about the past and present can they tell? Nevertheless, leaving things to their mysteries is not necessarily something that I want to avoid, or for that matter, bypass in any way. By leaving things as they are, things are left open. If Retiro remains in bureaucratic limbo, who knows, I might get a chance to excavate. But I think that the new things uncovered would lead to new mysteries and prompt further speculations.

2.3 Obliquity

If all of the upper ground had been surveyed and the underground excavated, would one reach the "end" of Retiro? Could I have reached a final conclusion? One perspective that can offer an answer to this is Graham Harman's object-oriented ontology (2016b). A central axiom in Harman's ontology is that things always exceed the way they appear to us and other things. They are always more than their current relationships and always hold a part of their being in reserve (Harman 2016b). According to this, Retiro has no "end", no finality that can be reached, despite how much is surveyed or excavated. To some, such a Socratic claim can evoke images of an ever-present darkness that occludes everything in the universe; a depressing perspective of alienation, chaos, and irresponsibility (e.g. Ribeiro 2016:147-148; Barrett 2017; Ion 2018). However, it would be too reductive to see the excess of things simply as an ontology of withdrawal. Instead, it can be regarded as an ontology that acknowledges that things have a *surplus* and thus an excess that cannot immediately be accessed and extracted, offering an opening for things to be *manifold*, an opportunity for multiplicity, subversiveness, and resistance.

One of the central notions of Harman's philosophy is his concepts of "overmining" and "undermining". Undermining can be understood as a kind of reductionism, which is often connected to the methods of natural sciences, but is also found in the humanities. It reduces and splits things into smaller and smaller parts in order to explain them. Reductive materialist explanations, for example, dissolves things "downwards" by telling us that the real matter is what it is composed off: a table is never truly a table; it is rather just a swarm of particles, fields, empty space, mathematical equations

etc. On the other hand, overmining is prevalent in the humanities (Harman 2013:89). In this approach, everything is treated as a product of something else, such as a social structure, an economic system, or an ideology. This means, for example, to describe a table as an extension of the intentions of its maker, a manifestation of capitalist ideology, a symbol of wealth, and so on. Overmining treats things as residues or epiphenomena of a more relevant, overarching reality. For Harman, the "real object" is located in between these two extremes (Harman 2013:93), a third table that cannot be reduced to mere particles, elevated to fleeting human intentions, or a perfect mathematical formula.

A central point for Harman is nevertheless that undermining, overmining, and "duomining" (a combination of the two) is impossible to avoid, since it is connected to what he defines as the two possible ways of knowing a thing: first, we can know what it is *made of*, and secondly, we can know *what it does*. Consequently, every intellectual method is by necessity reductive (ibid.94), because any understanding or explanation inevitably must focus on a selected part of reality. Knowledge of a thing cannot replace the thing; in other words, it is impossible to translate a thing to knowledge "as it is" without losing some qualities, practise, or causal relations (Harman 2016b:32-33). Thus, the research on Retiro inevitably both overmined and undermined its being; it summarises its constituent *parts*, like for example non-native garden plants, and looks at what they *do*, that is growing, multiplying, or dying out.

How is it then possible to approach *real* things if they are inherently irreducible and inexhaustible? One way, Harman writes, is to view the object-oriented approach as a counter-method (Harman 2013:95), which as exemplified by textual analysis would involve: "*[i]nstead of dissolving a text upward into its reading or downward into its cultural elements, we should focus specifically on how it resists such dissolution*" (Harman 2012b:200). Thus, the method emphasizes the tension between the research and the researched thing. Since things are irreducible, a researcher, Harman claims, should approach the object in indirect and allusive ways, and thus that *"[o]bliquity and metaphor are better tools for getting at the hidden nature of things than any … reductive cataloguing of palpable features*" (Harman 2013:95). Instead of focusing on reducing a research object to something exact, the researcher should also emphasize its elusiveness and hidden excess. Because of this, an object-oriented approach should be less concerned with relations between things, and rather attend to their autonomy (Harman 2013:60). Accordingly, an object-oriented method focuses more on exploration and discovery than on criticizing and refuting things (ibid.). However, that is not to say that critical approaches cannot lead to discovery and exploration (see article D), but the point is to involve more things without eliminating the possibility of nuance and excess.

Art, Harman argues, can be a role model for object-oriented philosophy and humanities (cf. 2013:99). According to Harman, one of the interesting things about art is its production of *allure*. Allure is something that comes to our awareness in the form of surprise or fascination because we are not sure what we are dealing with, even if we witness its qualities (Harman 2013:69). Accordingly, allure brings into attention the contrasts between the hidden sides of real things and their visible qualities. The fascinating enchantment of artworks is by these terms the tension between what we can sense and the hidden *excess* in things (Harman 2012b:187). One could say that art is an example of the middle road Harman envisages in an object-oriented method in the humanities. Art can be translated and interpreted, but these observations cannot take the place of the artwork itself. In my reading of Harman, an object-oriented approach involves revealing the friction between the research and the researched object. The material vestiges and "hyperart" discussed in article D, can be an example of things that in some way show such tension between what they are and what they once were, and thus allude to a hidden excess.

Archaeology is an academic discipline oriented towards things, but how does Harman's object-oriented method measure up to how archaeological methods and research define things and the access to them? Are the ungraspable things described by Harman an applicable starting point for an archaeological investigation? How does one survey, write up, photograph, the inherently ineffable? Are all our approaches reductive and divisive, missing the real object by emphasizing the sensual object in how things appear for me? Harman's philosophy makes for an apparently secluded and mysterious universe, where all things withdraw from us and each other (cf. Harman 2013:75), and where even the most careful use of a trowel only uncovers a caricature of the real thing (cf. Harman 2013:61).

What, then, does it mean to approach a site such as Retiro "obliquely"? One way to interpret Harman's notion of obliquity, is to see it as a concept that simultaneously acknowledges that things have a real essence and that this essence is always withdrawn and inaccessible. For example, listing every species of plant or the position of every grain of sand in Retiro, would not bring us any closer to its "essence" than the historical recounting of the thoughts and ambitions of Christian Johnsen who originally built the garden – or my own recounting of Retiro's contemporary landscape. Nevertheless, that we cannot ever know the "essence" of things does not mean that we cannot have some knowledge of them:

> *"The inability to make the things-in-themselves directly present does not forbid us from having indirect access to them. The inherent stupidity of all content does not mean the inherent impossibility of all knowledge, since knowledge need not be discursive and direct. The absent thing-in-itself can have gravitational effects on internal content of knowledge …"* (Harman 2012a:17)

Acknowledging Retiro as an irreducible and real[2] object, which seems impossible to reduce to one clear and absolute explanation or description, opens for more diverse knowledge and approaches. Harman's work is used as one way to substantiate such approaches to Retiro – to enable new ways of discovering and attending to the processes and things that make up and inhabit its current day.

Despite Harman's emphasis on indirect caricatures and metaphors, his notion of obliquity also involves a bodily orientation from a phenomenological perspective (cf. Tilley 2008). This can be empirical, in that different orientations will enable different sensory data. To enable alternative perspectives, you can sometimes go down on your knees, taste things, take a few steps backwards, and hence *be* there in different ways. In short, one might claim that there is an inherent obliquity built into fieldwork and the archaeological practice. This is a concrete and real obliquity, a bodily reorientation towards the material environment; for example, the *reorientation* towards a polystyrene cup, as described in Rachael Kiddey's collaborative research on homeless heritage. Here she describes how one of the participant's memory becomes triggered while cleaning the decaying cup (Kiddey 2017). This act of care towards a thing that is usually regarded as litter is in itself a physical reorientation, involving both things researched and the archaeologist herself.

It can be argued that Retiro does not only offer to be obliquely investigated, but that itself *possess* distinctively oblique characteristics; rudimentary and fragmented things allude to absences, like the water that once filled the Atlantic Ocean pond (see article B and C). Retiro forms its own caricatures of things that have been, like smashed statues and a rotting villa of past grandeur. These oblique "caricatures" allude to the excess of things – for example, a bedroom ceiling slowly

[2] *Real in that it is a concrete object that exist independent of our minds and descriptions.*

developing into a fungal garden or a discarded bottle that has grown into a moss-filled terrarium (see article A, B, and D). Ruins, or more precisely things and places that have been left to their own devices, can reveal details previously hidden behind façades and floorboards. However, when the multitudes of things are revealed it also encourages questions and speculations. Thus, an oblique approach is reciprocal; one must face the things with an openness that truthfully acknowledges and seeks to articulate their excess.

Figure 27 A terracotta horse "caricature". 16.10.2015, 16:17.

Figure 28 Garden and pet cemetery. 30.05.2018, 19:11.

2.4 Critique and speculation

In her book *The Limits of Critique*, Rita Felski (2015) investigates the inclination to unmask and criticise literary works. Working to promote a more positive vision of humanistic thought in an age where it has increasingly been subjected to scrutiny, she highlights the potential "… *of literature and art to create new imaginaries rather than just to denounce mystifying illusions*" (ibid.186-187). Likewise, I also conceive my own research as being more of a positive engagement with a place steeped in critical discourses (see article A). Indeed, these discourses are legitimate, and many hidden motives and ideologies have and could be revealed through a critical engagement with contemporary Retiro. For example, how the sorry state of the buildings in the garden is the combined result of inaction from the heritage authorities and speculations by the private company that owns that section of the property (Solli 2012).

My oblique approach to Retiro can be described as more exploratory than a method to reveal something that is hidden behind mere appearances. Nevertheless, critique is, of course, not absent in my research. However, this critique is mostly based on expanding knowledge instead of cutting things off. For example, article A is critical of the way heritage management usually overlooks ruination and fragmentation when dealing with questions of who inherits the past and how it is inherited. Article B likewise criticises the way plants are typically regarded as something secondary in heritage discourses – as a kind of colonizing veneer on the recent past. It is intended that this criticism is rooted in the things at hand, that these things "push" against our preconceptions and questions and thus unfold a multifaceted and more diverse environment. Like in article D, the description of a tiny part of Retiro's ecological embeddedness, aims to expand the ways of knowing and experiencing a heritage site instead of disparaging other approaches.

Science is just as much about expansion and enrichment as dispelling myths and falsification (see Harman 2013:78-99). While critique is, of course, an integral and crucial part of the humanities and social sciences, it can be used to silence alternative approaches. To make proper sense of a place like Retiro, one must also attune to it and allow oneself to be surprised and bewildered. It is perhaps possible to ascribe to a "non-critical heritage study", as opposed to a critical one steeped in *suspicion* and pre-decided objectives (e.g. Harrison 2013b; Winter 2013; cf. Olsen 2003:88, 2006). This also involves accepting that the things we think of as heritage have an autonomous and non-constructed reality that supersedes human intentions and predictions (i.e. Fredengren 2015:120, 122; Olsen and Pétursdóttir 2016). Paul Graves-Brown has for example argued for the importance of cultivating the mysteries of things:

> *"In the end I want material culture to retain its sense of mystery, or even the uncanny, because this is the quality which is stimulating to the imagination. Hopefully, truth will always remain stranger than fiction."* (Graves-Brown 2011:142)

Þóra Pétursdóttir has argued in a similar fashion that archaeologists should not stop wondering about things:

> *"… rather than putting all our effort into eliminating their difference we need to find a way to overcome our fear for it and instead allow ourselves to be challenged by it; to occasionally allow us to remain in wonder."* (Pétursdóttir 2012b:598)

González-Ruibal likewise asserts that archaeological practices are not only about disenchanting the world, but that they also can add depth and *mystery* to things:

> *"In an era characterised by the impoverishment of spatial experience, I wonder: how can we re-enchant the world again? How can we recover some of its density and mysteriousness, its lost placeness? I suggest that archaeological practices such as mapping, fieldwalking and digging may offer a way forward."* (González-Ruibal 2019:163)

Mystery and wonder, thus, can be seen as inherent components of the universe that inevitably lead to *speculation*. To speculate does not simply mean to base conclusions and descriptions on conjecture, but can rather imply careful and attentive contemplation and observation (Barnhart and Steinmetz 1988:1043). However, it is important to be aware that speculation always comes with a precarious uncertainty because it delves into the occluded excess of things.

The philosopher Ian Bogost frames the act of speculation as a way to grip the "*... infinitely dense molten core of an object and project it outside, where it becomes its own unit, a new and creative unit operation for a particular set of interactions*" (Bogost 2012:32). The speculative aspects in my research involved acknowledging Retiro as an autonomous and generative site. This also involves liberating it from a historical determinism where its "authentic" origin and creator always take precedence over its dynamic and persistent contemporary landscape. Moreover, this implies acknowledging that Retiro, as a local biotope and ecology, *matters* for other-than-human organisms (see article D). As my work proceeded, I had to give more room for the things that constitute Retiro's present-day environment. The methodological focus on *being there*, as mentioned, allowed me to record things and their particularities that is absent in texts and other re-presentations of Retiro. Like for example the aberoglyphs described in article A, or the phrase "*Gud ser dig*" (English: "God sees you") written on the inside of the basement door in the gardener's residence. Accordingly, Retiro is not a thing that is only written about, it is also literally written *on*. It incorporates and blends text into its excessive palimpsest of things; from old magazines lying haphazardly strewn on the floor of the utility room in the gardener's residence to the graffiti on the walls of the greenhouse ruin.

This couples into an underlying emphasis on nuance rather than finality, which means letting descriptions and conclusions retain a certain openness. Speculative work does not imply being non-empirical or detached from a reality "out there". In fact, the empirical reality of archaeology might fit better with speculative approaches that dare to be "… *wild, messy and creative*" (Currie 2018:290). Accordingly, vagueness is an elementary part of knowledge formed and filtered by the fragmentary nature of the archaeological record (Marila 2017). "Speculative archaeology" encourages us to explore and investigate the things that lie beyond immediate experience, and thus acknowledges the open-ended nature of things (ibid.80-81; see article C).

The crucial point here is *not* that we do not know, but rather that there is always *more* to know, additional things to describe, and alternative ways to know them. We know who funded, partly planned, and named Retiro, namely Christian Johansen. We know when Retiro was built and finally established as a summer residence in the middle of the 1870s. We also have knowledge about the Swiss chalet style the villa was originally built in and the shape and use of the Atlantic Ocean pond. Nevertheless, we do not know completely what has happened nor what is happening to Retiro today, or what will happen to it in the future. For example, how things adapt to and form new hybrid gatherings in this post-horticultural environment. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that the representations we produce are unavoidably anthropocentric (cf. Bogost 2012:64-65). Any such

knowledge must by its nature be understandable to us, and consequently partly be an anthropomorphic reflection of our embodiment in the world (Bennett 2010:98-100). While it is necessary to avoid making "humans" the thing we measure everything against, research is always primarily directed towards a human audience. Nevertheless, how we conduct this research and how it is received, may influence things and environments that stretch far beyond the human.

Figure 29 Newspaper clipping found on the steps between the villa and the gardener's residence. The clip mentions the musician Ole bull, who has incidentally been a guest at Retiro. 16.10.2015, 16:03.

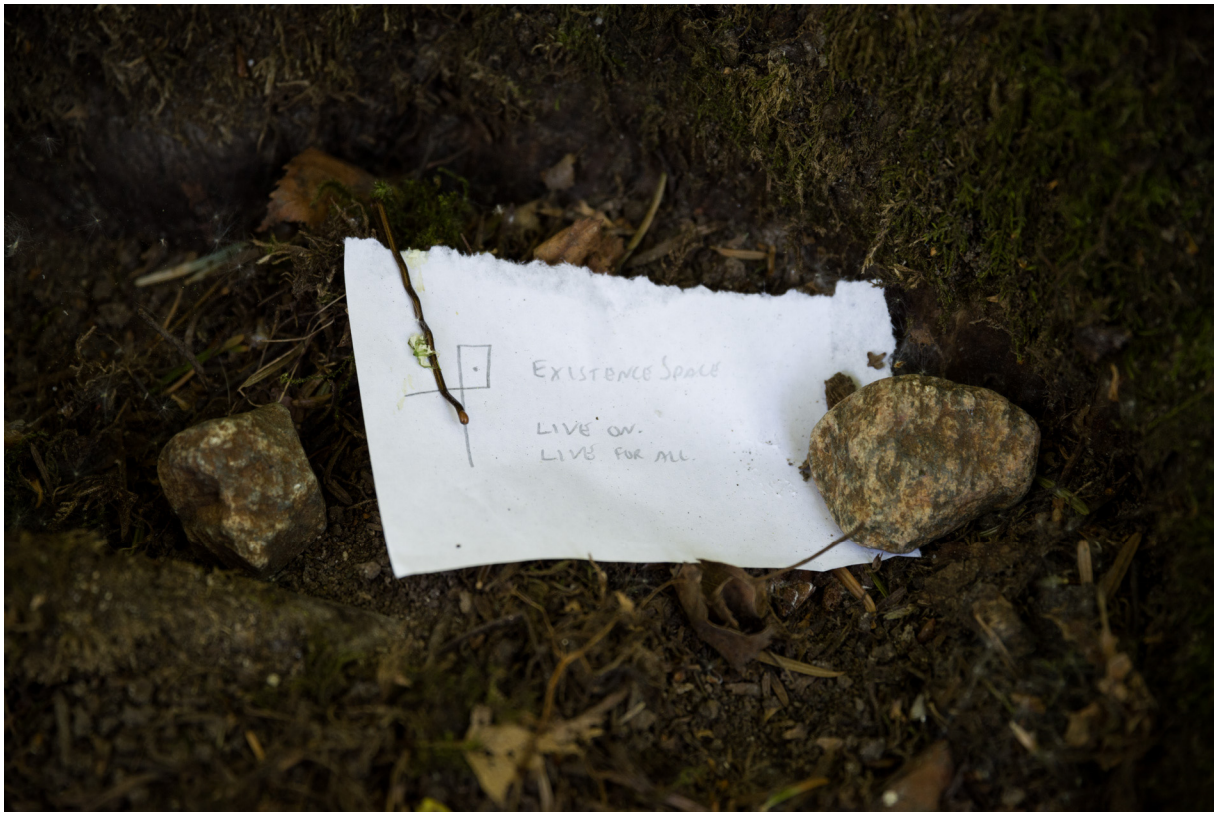

Figure 30 A strange note with sinister connotations found next to a tree stump. 30.05.2018, 17:41.

Figure 31 “Gud ser dig”, God sees you. 18.10.2015, 10:37.

2.5 Photographic imagination

The four years I have worked with Retiro have yielded about 6500 images. That number might seem excessive, especially so when the photo-work has not included inherently image-heavy methods such as photogrammetry. In the beginning the intention was to sort images by content through tags and keywords that could be used to separate and compare different things, e.g. with respect to temporal variance such as how vegetation changes or how artefacts drift through the landscape. However, I quickly realised that the number of keywords for each image became too plentiful and unwieldy. This may be representative for a sort of fault line running though the project, namely the inclusive attention to the range of features present. In the end, I abandoned this attempt of organizing the photos and went for a more randomized and perhaps "stochastic" approach that remained open to unnoticed characteristics in the images, namely that they often capture more than intended.

Though guided by the gaze and objectives of the photographer, photographs have the ability to capture things that the photographer is unaware of. While photography has been criticized for being superficial and one-eyed (e.g. Mullins 2012; Pusca 2014:35), it can also be said to afford and manifest an "*indiscriminating inclusiveness and attentiveness*" (Pétursdóttir and Olsen 2014b:23). Although Retiro cannot be reduced to what the photographs depict, the images can represent things in ways not possible through other means such as drawing or writing. The photographs possess a level of detail that surpasses the eye that pushed the trigger, and is thus prone to "accidental recording". This unruly candidness is also indirectly admitted through the habit of pre-photo "field styling", which is common at excavations, where we clean out "disturbing" elements from our photos, such as digging debris, excavation tools, footprints, and ourselves (Parno 2010). However, it is possible to see this empirical muddling as an opportunity to make discoveries through unexpected inclusions. Thus, it can be argued that photography has interesting characteristics that make it synergetic with an oblique approach. As argued by Susan Sontag (2005:56), photographs can themselves be conceptualised as fragments and quotations. Photos include in some instances "vestigial" representations (cf. article C), by for example just capturing a small part of a larger thing, such as one side of a building, a short section of a long path, or the lower trunk of an ancient silver fir. This phenomenological honesty is an empirical expression that things are always viewed or experienced from a position *within* a real spatio-temporal landscape.

My photographic method mostly relied on "reflexive" snap-shots, an approach that did not use time-consuming and carefully composed scenes. For example, rainy and overcast days were not skipped despite their subpar lighting conditions. Thus, most of the images in the database on Retiro are neither well composed nor in any way related to careful "fine-art" photography; instead most of them have a more pragmatic quality focusing on capturing something. This, in many ways, involves capturing the mundanity of the site, making up a litany of beer cans, trees, snow, sherds, penny buns (*Boletus edulis*), pinecones, plastic bags, tires, paths, benches, nest boxes, cigarette butts, and roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*). The images may appear random precisely because they are just that. The spontaneous nature of the snapshot produces fragmentary samples of the things and subjects it captures; highlighting a stillness that otherwise is hidden (Arnheim 1974:151). Apart from some very few cases, like the snow stake in article C, I did not set up plans of what was going to be photographed during my fieldwork. Though the 6500 images are by no means a complete representation of Retiro, they nevertheless form a representative assemble of things that constitute the site today.

Working with photographs prepared and even triggered the returns to Retiro; they afforded new discoveries of what went unnoticed during the fieldwork as well as rediscoveries of things forgotten. For example, the red elderberry bushes mentioned in article B, were such a photographic

discovery. Through repeated visits, patterns and familiar figures started to appear in the photo-archive. The accumulation of images of grave lanterns made me consider their ecological significance in article D. In some sense, the photographic work with Retiro resembles an unstructured interview, where one subjects (things) are allowed to interject and shape both the questions and answers. Photography is site-specific and binds together fragmented moments, it is an engagement between the past and the present (Shanks and Svabo 2013:97, 100). Thus, it is a forensic and creative practise that encourages a focus on witnessing and interrogating things (ibid.100).

"Photographic memory" is usually used as a metaphor of perfect recollection, but is that all to it? As noticed, the photograph can record details and relations that can be subsequently discovered. However, this does not make it just an extended eye or an objective technology; it can also have a speculative character that "… *offers a phenomenal parallax that already invites curiosity toward the objects in the scene* …" (Bogost 2012:48). Roland Barthes (1981) and his notion of the *punctum*, a disturbing detail or wound in the image, highlights this unforeseen and surprising side of photographs. In this understanding, photos are more than just illustrations, they can shock and disturb (Barthes 1981:42). Consequently, images do not enter scholarly works only to support or *illustrate* textual elucidations, they can provide alternative access to sites and things, which in their captured stillness can enhance unrecognized relationships and foster immediate and wordless reactions. Photographs also have the ability to inject an element of the ineffable into any work, which can highlight what is omitted from or impossible to represent through text (Shanks 1997:102) This characterization of photographs resonates in several ways with the derelict and unruly nature of Retiro's contemporary landscape. Instead of disclosing and ordering landscapes, the photographic record can document and accentuate the material and ecological excess in places.

Figure 32 "Necroscape": because Retiro is not regulated by societal standards, "unsettling" things get more time to linger. Thus, Retiro offers encounters with the afterlife of things that are quickly removed under other circumstances. 17.10.2018, 16:21.

Figure 33 Accumulating biomass and anthropogenic off-casts: a bag of electronic articles inside the greenhouse ruin. The plants growing out of the bag are pioneering raspberry seedlings (Rubus idaeus). 31.05.2018, 09:25.

2.6 Frame-work

The use of framing is important in the English landscape gardening tradition. Serpentine paths, the reflective surface of ponds, inclines, and hedges are employed precisely by the gardeners. Framing was a device used by the famous English garden architect Lancelot "Capability" Brown (1716-1783). In Brown's landscape compositions, the perimeter of the garden was framed by a dense belt of vegetation that separated it from the surrounding farmland (Bruun 1987:174). These vegetative frames often contained more frames; for example, a hole cut in the hedge could be used to frame for a certain vista or a distant object like a lighthouse, or as at Retiro, a sublime view towards the Sunnmøre Alps. A view that Norwegian writer and Nobel laureate, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, while staying at Retiro, claimed was greater than that of the mountain ridges of Nepal (Amdam 1960:267). The frame of vegetation is visible when looking at the park from the outside, but when you are inside the garden it is innocuously veiled by carefully planned irregularities and placements of trees (ibid.). This is a peculiar situation where the frame is obscured from those that are within it, while being visible for those outside.

The etymological origin of the word "garden" is an enclosed area or yard (Barnhart and Steinmetz 1988:422). "*Hage*", the Norwegian word for garden also has similar etymological roots referring to a fenced enclosure (Bjorvand and Lindeman 2007:407; Heggstad, Hødnebø and Simensen 2012:237). Enclosing things as a stylistic device, or more precisely "framing" (cf. Brodey 2008:23), could be said to have a connection to the aesthetical idea of the picturesque (Albers 1991:169). Gardeners working in the English Garden style attempted to imitate the way painters composed landscape pictures (ibid.). In painting, framing relies on the vantage point and placement of the "observer", or the "ocular" direction, and is thus both something that is looked through and a means to artificially create a certain perspective on a landscape or things. One could say that a frame is servile, a thing being there solely to serve the perception of the picture (cf. Miller 1985:181-182). However, there are more nuances to frames; a framework can, for example, describe something supportive, a structure carrying the load or propping something up. Frames are things that adjust or arrange other things by the virtue of itself. The English word "frame" can be etymologically traced to the Norse word "*fram*" that can be directly translated as advancement, pushing *forward* (Barnhart and Steinmetz 1988:405; Heggstad, Hødnebø and Simensen 2012:179). Frame is also used as a word for the human body, a person's frame. Framing, thus, may be understood as a means for piecing things together and "pushes" them in a certain direction.

Like horticulture, archaeology also uses framing as a device to approach the archaeological record. Similar to art, scientific research is expected to frame its focus and direction (cf. Miller 1985:140). The first thing archaeologists employ when digging a site is a grid system by which the trenches, as well as features and finds, are measured. Profiles may also be perceived as sections of frames, and even our notebook, trowels, spades, and camera sensors could be seen as framing technologies. Framing is crucial to scientific thought and practices, not only as a conceptual tool but also as a distinct object and a way of approaching things. Frames make things manageable; they both separate and bind objects together. One can both stack, separate, and make a mosaic of frames; they have a fractal nature, endlessly recursive, and do not necessarily stop where our thoughts end (cf. Bogost 2012:28). In relation to the issue of framing, one could also ask if archaeology is in action "picturesque", not in the way of using the word as a superficial synonym for beauty, but rather as a way to interact with things in a "picturing" manner. To appear scientific, it is necessary to aspire towards a certain kind of aesthetic of tidiness (Parno 2010:123-124) – the excess of both things and meaning should be carefully managed because they can interfere with the reception of facts.

Interestingly, photos in popular, non-academic publications often show the messy nature of our toil, with archaeologists digging and their knees deep in the soil (ibid.125).

Frames limit extents and sharpen the scientific myopia, because the frame as a thing is a way to concentrate attention and to make something concrete. Framing, however, can afford a diversity of perceptions. It may be used as a tool to tame Retiro, to rein it into a coherent chronological order and proper history, but it may also provide a tool to look obliquely at things. The careful framing that once existed in Retiro has today dissipated but that is not to say that it is absent in other forms. Instead of acting as thoughtfully composed and arranged, the current frames in Retiro have an anarchic character that performs haphazardous and unpredictable. Whether plants or ruins, things form and influence their own contexts and compositions. They may very well appear accidental and without any clear intention, but they are there, controlling and guiding the movement of both humans and non-humans. Today, the development and maintenance of Retiro are no longer controlled by the gardeners; other things have taken over. Humans have certainly had a hand in the continued reframing, but they are more like opportunistic collaborators than a single executive authority.

Retiro is littered with frames. Some of its redundant things are literally constructed as frames, such as a wooden window frame or the stripped frame of a bicycle. Because these frames have escaped their original compositions, they may appear as nonsensical to human eyes (see article C). Retiro and its companionship of unpredictable things ambush us with a bewildering juxtaposition of frames that would hardly have the chance to take root in more controlled landscapes (see article A). The emergent reframing of Retiro, especially as implemented by its vegetation, opens up the possibilities of occasional and oblique glimpses of things; and in this sense, the design work also continues albeit in a new and unpredictable manner. These glimpses do not necessarily reveal breath-taking views or beautiful things; they can be an involuntary framing of a distant “memory” (Olsen 2010), such as the ruins of the greenhouse, only visible at certain times of the year when not engulfed by its surrounding vegetation.

Figure 34 Broken framework: remnants of a chain-link-fence running through the middle of Retiro, delineating redrawn property boundaries. large stretches of the fence have been flattened by falling trees. 23.05.2015, 12:43.

2.7 Picturesque heartlessness

It is perhaps unavoidable not to encounter the idea of the "picturesque" when writing about the afterlife of a landscape garden. There is, however, also the question of what the "picturesque" really implies. The art historian Christopher Woodward (2001:121) writes that no one really invented the concept, it can rather be "… *understood as a confluence of philosophers, poets and painters whose ideas flowed in the same direction*" in 18th century England. The English reverend William Gilpin, one of the originators of the term in the 18th century, wrote in his essay *Picturesque Beauty* about how he could transform his symmetrical country house into something picturesque:

> *"Should we wish to give it picturesque beauty, we must use the mallet, instead of the chissel* [sic]*: we must beat down one half of it, deface the other, and throw the mutilated members around in heaps. In short, from a smooth building we must turn it into a rough ruin. No painter, who had the choice of the two objects, would hesitate which to chuse* [sic]*. ... Turn the lawn into a piece of broken ground: plant rugged oaks instead of flowering shrubs: break the edges of the walk: give it the rudeness of a road; mark it with wheel-tracks; and scatter around a few stones, and brush wood; in a word, instead of making the whole smooth, make it rough; and you make it also picturesque."* (Gilpin 1794:7-8)

The connection between material "mutilations" and the picturesque give some interesting but sinister connotations. John Ruskin (2007:19) criticized the "*lower picturesque ideal*" as "…*eminently a heartless one; the lover of it seems to go forth into the world in a temper as merciless as its rocks. All other men feel some regret at the sight of disorder and ruin.*" There is indeed perhaps something lurid and cold in deriving pleasurable feelings from ruins, but exactly why is this? In the passage about the heartless aesthete, there is a sense that there is a lack of sympathy in deriving pleasure from apparent human misery and suffering in fallen cottages, deserted villages, blasted heaths, and mouldering castles (Macarthur 1997; Ruskin 2007:19). While Ruskin condemned the moral distance (see Macarthur 1997), there is an interesting contrast to the world of heritage, which in many ways quite often is a celebration of fragmentary and ruinous assemblages of things. It can also be noted that ruining sites are not always a product of human misery; in some cases, they may represent the end of something evil and/or the beginning of a far better life elsewhere. Ruskin criticized the idea that the picturesque is rooted in an allure of "*universal decay*" by arguing that there are decaying things people do not like to illustrate, like dead flowers and rotting fruit (Ruskin 1849:156). Similarly, Friedrich Nietzsche (1980:21) criticized the persistent "antiquarian" focus on preservation and the antiquarian enveloping "*himself in an odour of decay*" at the expense of a progressive understanding of how to generate new life (cf. Labuhn 2016). These conceptualizations of the picturesque demonstrate a tension between persistence and the apparently fragmentary and rudimentary character of the vestiges in question. Instead of seeing the fate of things as an inevitable and ecological trajectory, it can also be seen as an aftereffect and afterlife of moral agencies. Thus, an appreciation and even interest in the "picturesque" can be regarded as heartless, because it overlooks its symbolic and causal connections and instead focuses on things as they appear (see article A).

How do we relate to the apparent tensions between the picturesque and social critique in a more modern context? Critique has been mounted towards seemingly aesthetic photographic representations of ruins by some contemporary archaeologists, labelling it as "ruin porn" amongst other terms (see Clemens 2011; Mullins 2012, 2014; Ryzewski 2014; McAtackney and Ryzewski 2017). Modern ruins

or rather ruins in general, have largely been viewed as alluring things, and thus attractive for both paintings and photography. Today, factories and other post-industrial landscapes have been at the forefront of an intensification of this depictive practice (Pétursdóttir and Olsen 2014b:14). But, how does this critique apply when imaging an environment such as Retiro? A nature "in ruin" confronts the anthropocentric framework behind the critique of "ruin porn" and other forms of academic delinquency such as indulgence in "ruin lust" (see Dillon 2014; Whitehouse 2018). The "ruin porn" term has an implicit industrial and not least urban connotation, which overlooks the material diversity of ruins that inhabit and exhibit different and perhaps more non-urban materialities (see article E; Pétursdóttir and Olsen 2014c:48). Retiro demonstrates how ruination extends far beyond exclusively human machinations. Thus, it is necessary to extend the idea of ruination to include more than humanly induced causes and effects in research on material heritage. This also extends to reinterpret the picturesque tradition as an aspiration to care for and approach "natural wilderness", in contrast to the dominant understandings which only saw its corrupting influence of fake ruins, rustic hovels, and "decaying forms" (Brook 2008:117-118). In some ways, the picturesque can be an alternative way to explore our relationship to nature (ibid.118), or even further, the interplay between non-humans and the feral afterlife of anthropogenic things, which also include living things. The documentation of ruination is thus an essential element in order to record and explore the contemporary environment, especially in an age of accelerated material change and exchange. The picturesque "mutilation" of the environment through both anthropogenic and non-anthropogenic affects, is perhaps an inadvertent marker of the current "*Age of Destruction*" (cf. González-Ruibal 2018).

Retiro is accordingly a challenge to preconceptions of how a picturesque aesthetic operates, especially with regards to plants. The cluster of undergrowth and trees can easily restrain a camera lacking a wide enough lens. Even the brutal contrast between the darkness of shadows and the stray rays of light can challenge the technique of experienced photographers. The non-human geometry and bewildering chaos of the organic, challenges the common image of the Anthropocene as consisting of bleak and dying landscapes covered in plastic and other synthetic things (see article E). Despite ecological and climatic turmoil, organisms will always exploit new openings and substrates, whether anthropogenic or not. Retiro's feral character (see article E) thus rarely conforms to modern expectations of availability and adaptability; it displays a "savage" character at odds with the humanly useful (cf. Olsen 2012d). The physical dimensions of ruination and decay demonstrate that the "heartlessness" of the picturesque is not always located in the eye of a privileged human spectator, but it is an emergent quality of the things that lacks a heart to lose.

Being surrounded by an air of decay and mould might for Nietzsche and other philosophers describe an undesirable situation. Nevertheless, the smell of rot can also be seen as an inherent condition of being a part of a world that is inevitably rooted in an excess of things, and thus constantly decaying and persisting past (see article A). The material latency of the world does not, in most instances, need the caring hands of an antiquarian to survive and accumulate – which is something archaeology depends on, as in the accidental accumulation of anthropogenic detritus and ruins. The success and attractiveness of picturesque motives in our contemporary era, through for example cosmopolitan activities such as urban explorations (Gibas 2010; Garrett 2013), demonstrates that the afterlife of anthropogenic materials possesses an allure and a bewildering range of characteristics that eclipse any attempt at easily fixing it in a term. The picturesque is arguably one of the concepts that guide conventional archaeological photography, not least since it is often used to supply *ambience* in archaeological books and other mediums (Shanks 1997:76-77). Picturesque aesthetics do so by being inclusive and alluding to the excess in things, not least because it emphasises things such as weather and the "wild" afterlife of things that are omitted in idealized illustrations and drawings (ibid.; Pearson

and Shanks 2001:141-142). Archaeologists are well versed in documenting the afterlife of things, which contrary to Ruskin's argument against the preferred picturesque illustrations of decay, rigorously involves all kinds of dereliction, fragmentation, and putrefaction. The "roughness" in Gilpin's idea of the picturesque, can thus be seen as an allusion to non-human excess by highlighting the presences of "broken" and "rudimentary" things. Archaeology has a close relationship with things that afford picturesque motives because of their fragmentary and vestigial nature. In the same vein, social realism and documentary photography began as a form of picturesque illustration of the industrial landscapes in England during the 19th century (Kemp and Rheuban 1990:120-121). Here too the things depicted in the photographs, despite their apparently superficially picturesque appearance, mediated a factual landscape that otherwise would have been overlooked. Thus, as Kemp and Rheuban argue, the appearance of things and "*[a]esthetic experiences cannot and should not be excluded from an encounter with poverty* …" (ibid.133); it should rather tie into an awareness and perception of the condition that the things are in.

Figure 35 An abandoned campsite discovered during my first visit to Retiro. The mouldering tent and the immediate surroundings contained various everyday things: clothes, shoes, pots, pans, toys, DVD's, and baby carriages. 25.09.2011, 13:38.

Figure 36 Ambience: landscape gardens are architectural "machines" built to produce distinctive atmospheres. The architecture of Retiro has today taken on its own life and offers visitors unregulated and indiscriminate atmospheres. 13.02.2016, 15:50.

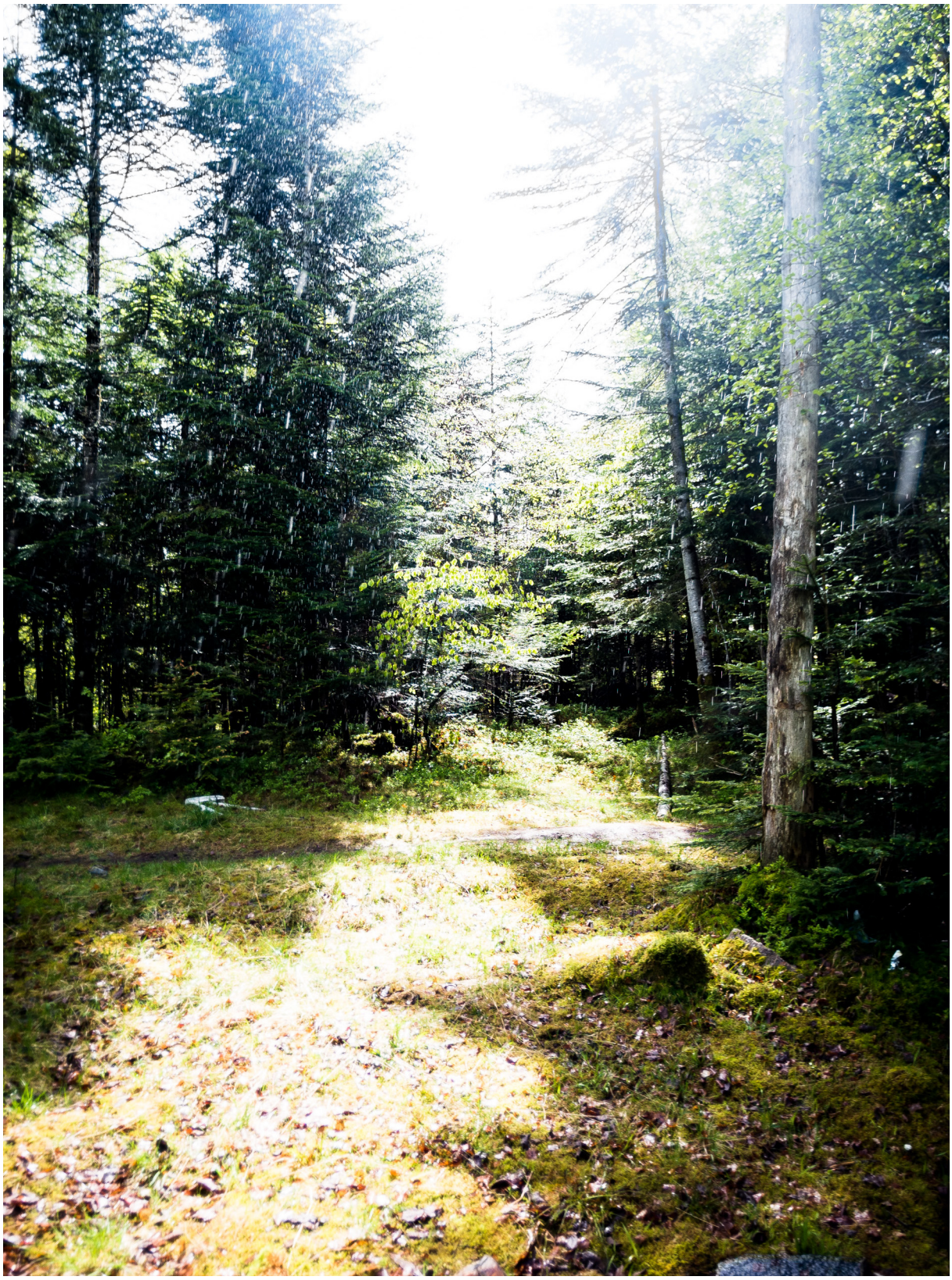

Figure 37 A sudden deluge immediately changes both the perceptible and physical qualities of things. It recomposes the landscape and brings forth new things such as smells, spores, colours etc. 23.05.2015, 12:38.

3 The nature of things

As in the past, vegetation is the main feature of Retiro. While the vacated villa and gardener's residence stand out as eye-catching examples of the Swiss chalet architectural style, it is the untamed flora that dominates the landscape. Retiro was originally designed to serve human wishes and needs, but to do so also had to cater to the needs of non-humans; not least because horticulture is all about caring for plants. For example, an artificially heated greenhouse was used in the winter to help exotic plants survive. Today, Retiro has developed characteristics that can be seen as uninviting and uncanny from a human perspective such as: impassable silver fir thickets, soggy carpets of peat moss, and the muggy darkness of a mouldy basement, that at the same time are desirable for non-humans such as purple jellydisc fungus (Ascocoryne sarcoides), white wood-rush (Luzula luzuloides), and badgers. The anthropogenic ascendancy in Retiro is slowly losing grip and, from our point of view, becomes increasingly vestigial; the nature of the place mutates and take advantage of surfaces and detritus left behind without any apparent plan or care.

One of the common and "romantic" ruin tropes is that ruins illustrate how nature "reclaim" things (see article B). However, is Retiro an example a site that is reconquered by nature, or does it reveal something else? Certainly, non-humans have moved in and taken advantage of the things that people have left to their own devices. For example, barn swallows (Hirundo rustica) nests each year in the empty attic of the gardener's residence and mark their seasonal passage with a growing carpet of guano on the wooden floorboards. Is Retiro really in the process of being reconquered by a non-anthropogenic and pristine "nature"? One observation that refutes this, is how resist being converted to a pre-anthropogenic substance. Instead, they become integrated into the life and being of other non-humans (see article D), as seen with the attic.

The relationship between the anthropogenic and the non-anthropogenic of course work both ways. Fungi are an illustrative example of how non-human and "natural" things constitute Retiro today and were fundamental in the creation and ecological maintenance of the garden, even when it was tended to by a gardener. By recycling and transforming living and dead matter, and forming symbiotic relationships with other species and things, fungi become interweaved and mixed together with anthropogenic things (see article D). The chanterelle (Cantharellus cibarius) is a mycorrhizal fungus, meaning it is reliant on a symbiotic relationship with a host plant. One of the host plants that are common in Retiro is the Norwegian Spruce (Picea abies) (Danell 1994). Evidently, the chanterelle was not intentionally planted there by any human being, but was instead attracted to the ecological niche Retiro offered. As succinctly said by Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing: "No 'one' fungal body lives self-contained, removed from indeterminate encounters. The fungal body emerges in historical mergings – with trees, with other living and non-living things, and with itself in other forms" (Tsing 2015:238). This could also be said about Retiro, which is the result of a collaborative work of human and non-human things. The chanterelle is just one of the countless things that make up Retiro. Despite this apparent triviality, it offers one way to describe the interrelationships that make Retiro what it is today.

Figure 38 A barn swallow flying out of an opening to the loft in the gardener's residence. The opening was originally used to access the farm bell. A mesh once covered the opening, but it was probably recently removed by the same persons that have stolen the old bell; which has inadvertently opened the loft for swallows and other organisms. 31.07.2017, 13:33.

Figure 39 Chanterelles. 02.08.2017, 09:53.

While investigating Retiro it became apparent it was necessary to grapple with what is conceived as "the natural" as a way to understand the derelict afterlife of the landscape garden. The landscape of Retiro is a dense mix of the planted and wild, planned and overgrown; saturated with non-human agencies and presences – from badgers, woodpeckers, birch trees and chanterelles, to gravel paths, plastic bags, beer cans and rusted iron water pipes. Thus, to acknowledge only human actions, intentions, and consequences – or to ascribe these a primary position – would not do justice to the way Retiro currently exists. Christian Johansen has an overwhelming presence in the historical accounts of Retiro, as the mind and monetary body behind this wondrous summer retreat. His historical agency, thus, is difficult to ignore and it, therefore, takes an effort to also acknowledge the wealth of things that constitute the present landscape. Doing so, however, is not aimed to reduce the importance of his impact but rather to explore the multitudes of processes that exist in conjunction with the creative and imaginative power of the people that formed and still form Retiro.

Much has been written on the relationship between nature and culture during the last few decades (e.g. King 1989; Latour 1993; Descola and Pálsson 1996; Haila 2000; Barad 2007; Descola 2013; Kohn 2013; Fredengren 2015; Debaise 2017), and not least how this dichotomy is underpinned by a bifurcation of the universe between human and non-human realms (Whitehead 2015). Philippe Descola predicted that the relationship between humans and nature is perhaps one of the most important questions of the century (2013:81), while Timothy Morton (2007) has argued that we must totally abandon the concept of nature to close the conceptual gap that exists between humans and the environment. There are, however, scholars such as Alfred Hornborg (2006) that defend the distinction between nature and culture to keep these realms analytical apart, in order to unravel and demystify things like human technology.

One solution to bridge the chasm between humans and nature is to argue for an ontological flattening (see Bryant 2011), where humans are given the same ontological position as any other thing, and thus eliminating human exceptionalism (Bogost 2012:11-19). This does not mean that humans are the same as plastic spoons and badgers, but instead recognizing that they all equally exist while expressing different relationships and unique characteristics (Kohn 2013:7). Accordingly, artificial things such as concrete, wooden villas, and polypropylene road stakes could not come to exists without humans (see Jørgensen 2018:228), but despite being human creations, they have their own lives and qualities that are different from us humans. Thus, one way to describe Retiro obliquely is to follow a flattened ontology that does not sort the environment by the nature/culture dichotomy. This can, for example, draw attention to how the afterlife of anthropogenic things affect and interact with other non-humans, which in turn can shape how humans interact and are affected by these things (see article D). For example, this gives more nuance to the natural formation processes described by Schiffer (1996), such as floralturbation or accretion, i.e. how plants and accumulating things shape the archaeological record. In a "flattened" and contemporary perspective, these processes and their transformative and sometimes preservative effects (see article B and D), are relevant for how things persist in their afterlife, and not only biases and distortions to overcome in order to properly understand the past.

Accordingly, we cannot leave the things that are normally sorted under "nature" to the natural sciences alone (cf. Harman 2016a), despite their invaluable knowledge about the universe. For example, a bryologist could give many universally valid descriptions of how a species of moss grow inside a discarded glass bottle amongst the leaf litter in Retiro, but its specificity and locality, as described in article B, would generally be insignificant and too banal in a natural scientific epistemology. However, for a contemporary archaeology that does not limit itself to a historical understanding where the true nature of the flask lies in the past, the moss-bottle thing is an interesting

emergent “sym-biotic-artefact”. Such hybrid and contingent things may be regarded as trivial, arbitrary, and banal, but ignoring them would also discount how they constitute and shape the contemporary environment and future material trajectories.

Figure 40 A stone wall that supports one of the terraces in Retiro. Apart from the raised paths and drainage channels, these stone walls are some of the more visible architectural structures. The wall has become a substrate for animals and plants. Despite the lack of upkeep and intrusive tree roots, the walls have impressively kept together well and are a testament to the understanding of the material by the mason that put them together. 16.10.2018, 11:48.

Figure 41 Moss growing inside a glass liquor bottle. The bottle has accidentally created a microenvironment that works like a terrarium. 31.05.2018, 12:17.

3.1 Disturbingly non-human

In reaction to the first article in the project (article A), a fellow archaeologist criticized the "ruin archaeology" upheld. According to this colleague, my work was clinging to a bandwagon of faded sentimentalism for decay conspicuous in recent years. In addition, one of the peer reviewers of article B raised a similar concern regarding the already "well-trodden paths" of "post-human ruins", and that the choice of case study involved the privileged position of eliminating human voices. Both commentators, thus, had problems with the subject matter of ruins and dereliction, and both alluded to an assumption of a topic that is "over-researched" and, thus, completed. While taking many of the issues raised seriously, I wonder what would happen if the same critique was mounted against other research areas and periods? Are there no repetitions, retellings, or derivatives in, for example, Scandinavian Iron Age archaeology? Is Mesolithic archaeology always novel and refreshing? Or, does anyone claim that, despite thousands of previous investigations, there is nothing more to be gained from investigating Mesolithic campsites? One implication is that more recent material cultures are in some sense already familiar, easily extinguishable and shallow, especially the alluring and seductive ruins – and thus "limited". There may however be other implications behind this as well. To have a "thing-centric" perspective has even been argued to be a "slippery slope" towards marginalizing, dehumanizing and objectifying people, which can open a "philosophical door" to slavery, annihilation of groups of people, and glorification of war (Pollock *et al*. 2014:156-157). A question that has bothered me after being accused of "elimination of human voices in a study of the living present" is: if someone put these imagined human voices at the forefront of their research, would non-humans then continue to be conceived of as insignificant servants waiting in the wings? One may moreover

speculate, whether this relegation, especially in the humanities and social sciences, in some ways have contributed to today's dire environmental situation. The reluctance to accept investigations of ruins and remnants that do not focus solely on negative human consequences, demonstrate how non-humans are sorted out and are made invisible in certain investigations of contemporary environments.

By calling the focus on plants in article B article "privileged", the reviewer might have implied that it was so because it did not implement a comprehensive multivocal approach that included the opinions of local people. However, such an understanding hinges on an idea that it is only through humans we can see and describe the world that concerns humans. What are we left with, to echo the peer review, and what can we learn from studying a site in the absence of human voices? The natural sciences have done that since its inceptions and thus brought a whole universe into our view. Of course, by not focusing on human "voices" they are conclusively not represented. However, this does not mean that to focus on non-human things is inherently an act of silencing because any description and conclusion will inevitably omit something. Focusing on, for example, the formative non-human relationship between tree-roots and the remaining brim of a pond, as described in article B, produces a different and unique kind of knowledge compared to the equally real and unique opinions and feelings voiced by humans describing their thoughts on to the trees and the derelict pond. Every empirical representation is in a sense a paraphrase of the presented object (Harman 2013:61), which always leaves something unsaid, but it is this imperfection that produces specific and thus nuanced knowledge.

According to González-Ruibal (2018:6, 2019), post-anthropocentric positions run the risk of ignoring important factors such as gender and ideology when dealing with the modern world. If we have an ethical responsibility to expose human perpetrators and exploiters in history and within contemporary societies, what room is there left for the non-humans that are apparently judged *a priori* as "less important"? In a contemporary era dominated by destruction and power asymmetries, not that it is underexposed in academic literature despite the "forgetting" of the extreme right (cf. González-Ruibal 2018:8), it can nevertheless be interesting to investigate the non-human environment that occupies a more diffuse place in the weight scale of power. While we live in a landscape dominated by a very real and concrete supermodernity (González-Ruibal 2018, 2019), looking at things that are excluded or suppressed under this regime can allude to a different world beyond its limitations (Cipolla 2018:64-65).

To wonder about things other than us can be important because they are also affected by exploitation and the privileged actions of humans and non-humans. Why is this important to know about? For one it reflects our multifaceted presence in a concrete reality we share and experience with other things; this should fit into a humanistic and social perspective on the contemporary world. In can be argued that a "post-human" perspective is not an approach of exclusion, but rather of inclusion, contingencies, and multiplicity (i.e. Barad 2003; Bogost 2012:16-17; Fredengren 2013, 2015; Sundberg 2014:42; Haraway 2016). It can also be understood as a reaction or even a product of the current environment and physical conditions, not just something that was summoned from the cold vacuum of disembodied theory (Pétursdóttir 2018:207). Thus, it is a slippery slope fallacy to assert that a curiosity for non-humans inevitably will downplay, overlook, or make the relationships between human actors less important. Perhaps one should not leave the domain of "nature" to the natural sciences alone (cf. Harman 2016a:36), but rather make distinct contributions, additions to descriptions and representations of contemporary environments. Enhancing the presence of non-humans, both living and not, that are in many ways overshadowed by human-centred concerns.

Post-human ruins are an inevitable part of contemporary environments that humans and non-humans live in and around, and thus cannot be overlooked as they will always have something to say

about the past as well as the present (see article A). Accordingly, humanities or the social sciences are not confined to the human, but also extend to the hybrid world that humans share with non-humans. Contemporary archaeology can describe and illuminate relationships between things such as plants that fall beyond the scope of the natural sciences and other social sciences. An archaeological focus on relationships between non-humans is not automatically a "slippery slope" forcing us to ignore the human dimension of things such as gender and ideology as argued by González-Ruibal's (2018, 2019). Instead, it can highlight the unforeseen material interactions and the dispersion of human actions that exceed human plans and intentions. Although it is sometimes pertinent to put blame on something or someone, it does not follow that we must ignore the afterlife and aftereffects of things to do so – namely the unfolding future. While Johnsen's embeddedness in a capitalist economy and Western culture was fundamental in creating Retiro, it does neither account for nor explain the Retiro we and other non-humans encounter today.

For example, article D worked through this principle, as it focuses on things that are seemingly unrelated and insignificant for heritage research. Humanistic disciplines can in this instance take inspiration from the natural sciences, where specific niche research and areas of study are commonplace. It is perhaps possible to argue that there is no room for "blue-sky research"[3] in contemporary archaeology because of normative responsibilities, but that would instil a regime that stifles creativity and unexpected results. Instead of relying on an ontological framework where relevance is decided in advance, it is instead possible to rely on discovering the significance or insignificance of things through empirical research. Some might argue that such a position is "blue-eyed" and privileged, but a little bit of naiveté is perhaps needed to leave open an empirical space that affords alternative directions and offers knowledge that is discovered instead of reproduced (cf. Olsen 2012c:99; Pétursdóttir 2014:345; Pétursdóttir and Olsen 2014a:22). As demonstrated in archaeological investigations of modern garbage by William Rathje, there are always some aspects that people overlook or miss in their everyday life (Rathje 1984; Rathje and Murphy 2001). Thus, to explain human waste by only interviewing people would miss many details that are only accessible through the garbage itself. Another example is to think of ecosystems in the same way; they are mindbogglingly complex assemblages, and one could never explain it in totality through the behaviour, physiology or even "understanding" of one organism that are a part of it. Thus, an ecosystem can be understood as an emergent thing that cannot be explained by only one of its many wildly different components (Green and Sadedin 2005).

Things, as argued, have independence from the environment and human expectations surrounding it. As the artist and central figure in article C, Akasegawa Genpei (2015:117), pointed out, even the most mundane things have "oblique" uses; like how a flagstaff can become a club and a soda glass bottle a vital ingredient for putting together a Molotov cocktail. The hidden excess within things allows for a creative and subversive thing power (Mould 2019). To be able to break out of something, things must be more than their current relation with other things and people. Through different experiences, we also have different potentials for descriptions, stakes, and discoveries. To access Retiro, it is not prerequisite that one must mediate the site through some specific individuals or things. It is important to note that this does not supersede ethical or moral concerns, especially when considering other stakeholders, both human and non-human. The project was founded on the afterlife of things in Retiro, consequently, there are fewer human voices, both contemporary and historical, in the resulting research. However, it does not follow that they are less important or relevant in accessing

[3] *Fundamental and flexible research that does not have any immediate "applications" or clear goals; i.e. research for curiosities sake (Linden 2008).*

Retiro's contemporary landscape, only that they can provide a different but not necessarily contradictory representations.

There was one human voice that the referee on article B overlooked, namely the inherent human presence in the text, namely my voice. This may just be an accidental oversight; however, the omittances may also have been caused on the ground that the voice of the "expert" is less human in one way than "other" people. This partly relates to the opinion that there is a multivocal ethical imperative to include stakeholders into any archaeological interpretation (cf. Webmoor 2007:568-569; González-Ruibal, González and Criado-Boado 2018). The idea of experts operating in the field of heritage and heritage research has recently become topic of discussion (see Hølleland and Skrede 2018), which has produced statements such as "*we are all heritage experts*" (Schofield 2014). I agree that heritage is something that everyone and everything can partake in, wilfully, inadvertently, or unconsciously. Heritage is often not really a choice, but rather at consequence that one relates to in one way or another. Thus, heritage is not dependent on human experts to exist, but it does not mean that they cannot discover interesting things. In the end, rather than just striving to flatter and collaborate on existing opinions and concepts, academics have an important role to produce knowledge that can in some instances be provocative and in conflict with the opinions of other stakeholders (see González-Ruibal, González and Criado-Boado 2018). The privilege of doing research, however, should not be translated to a form an overarching authority that supplants every other perspective, professional or non-professional. Rather, to explore both human and non-human nuances in the environment can expand and enrich our understanding and experience of the world we co-inhabit.

Figure 42 From video recorder to the archaeological record; interesting enough, Retiro contains a large number of consumer electronics. The overflowing excess of obsolescence. 31.05.2018, 10:26.

Figure 43 Tree lungwort lichen (Lobaria pulmonaria) growing on an old goat willow (Salix caprea) in Retiro. The lungwort lichen can be used as an indicator species for the health of the local environment because of its sensitivity to acid rain and air pollution (Gilbert 1986). 19.10.2018, 10:27.

3.2 Natures

As pointed out in the articles (A, B, and E), Retiro is locally referred to as the "Retiro park", but more recently the local newspapers, amongst others, have begun to name it "the Retiro forest" (Holsbøvåg 2010:47). Perhaps this is done with a bit of tongue-in-cheek humour, pointing at cultural heritage management authorities and municipality planners and their seeming lack of action. Simultaneously, it is viable to ask: when does or did Retiro transform from garden to forest? Is there a special threshold, or is it just meaningless pigeonholing? The interesting question here is the polarization between natural and anthropogenic things, or said in another way, between "wilderness" and "civilization". This polarity goes beyond the question of "moral faculties" well known from Western colonial thought, exemplified by the Victorian era dichotomy of the savage and the civilized (i.e. Lubbock 1865; Morgan 1877; cf. Brown 2012).

Different perceptions of nature and its interrelationship and contrast to "civilisation" have a deep history in Western culture (Glacken 1967). In Norwegian medieval sources like the *Historia Norvegiæ*, the indigenous Sámi people are in Latin referred to as "*homines silvestris*" that can be either translated as "wild" or "forest" people (Hansen and Olsen 2004:80-82). The Norse word *skóggangr*, or in English, "to walk the forest", was used in the context of outlawed people (Heggstad, Hødnebø and Simensen 2012:558). Here the wild/forest is the domain of the "other" and in some sense different. In one instance, the "progress of civilisation" has been directly coupled with deforestation, and the "decline of civilization" with reforestation (e.g. Zon 1920). Robert Pogue Harrison (1992:1-3) writes that the founding legend of the city of Rome has a sylvan origin, from the deep woodlands under oaken boughs amongst wild game. The Roman politician and philosopher Marcus Tullius Cicero wrote in his dialogue *De natura deorum* (English: On the Nature of the Gods) that in conjunction with nature there exist a "second nature" (Latin: *alteram naturam*) (Brooks 1896: 153). The landscape historian John Dixon Hunt thinks Cicero implies that this second nature consists of bridges, roads and things introduced into the physical world by humans to serve them, as opposed to the primal nature we today call the wilderness (Hunt 1992:3). The philosopher and poet Titus Lucretius Carus, a contemporary of Cicero, also posited the concept of the "third nature" (Latin: *tetria natura*) in his poem *De rerum natura* (English: On the Nature of Things) (Lucretius 1978:29), attributing it as a concept of "… *something which cannot exist*" (Beck 2002:328-329). Lucretius, from the standpoint of an Epicurean philosopher, thought that nature only consisted of two things, namely substance (material) and the space (void) things move about (Lucretius 1978:28–29). Nature, as in *Natura,* is both in Italian and Latin used to refer to the innate qualities in both people and things or the constitution of the world (i.e. ontology), however in Latin this distinction is not always evident (Beck 2002:328). So, nature is used to point to essential properties and existential parts that make and differentiate things, and not used to refer exclusively to an ontological distinction between the human and the non-human. One can say this concept of nature also exist in some form in the English and Norwegian language, as the idiom "it is in the nature of things … that for example glass will shatter", alludes to essential properties in things.

Later in the Renaissance, the idea of a "third nature" (Italian: *terza natura*) reappeared as a concept referring to a "… *characterization of the interaction between art and nature in horticulture*" (Beck 2002:326–327). Third natures, such as gardens, can only be created through the interaction between people and "nature", i.e. non-humans (ibid.329). In recent times, yet another level of nature has been theorized and defined, namely a "fourth nature" that develops *after* a careful relationship between nature and humans (see Kowarik 2005, 2013). This is environments created through the interactions between non-humans, such as abandoned manmade things, plants, and animals, and which

thus does not rely on them being mediated by humans. Retiro's things, such as the statues, ponds, litter, or gravel-paths, did not simply become inert when the gardener left. These things were in a sense kept in check or temporarily "tamed" and fenced into an instrumental role – like the pruning of trees, removal of weeds, and filling new gravel into potholes in the garden paths. After this phase of domesticated order, countless visitors with indiscernible intentions and reasons, has left substantial traces in Retiro's wilderness. The presence and interactions of humans within Retiro today does not suppress its feral nature (see article E), but instead are very much a part of it and sometimes inadvertently perpetuate it.

In Retiro, illicitly dumped garden refuse is an example of this "perpetuation". Garden refuse often contain living plant matter, such as rhizomes, seeds, spores, stolons, etc., that can continue to grow where it is dumped. The dead organic matter, such as clippings, can function as a ready-made bed of fertilizers for these plants and other organisms such as fungi. Beyond its potential negative ecological effects (cf. Rusterholz, Wirz and Baur 2012), garden waste can be the beginning of something new, or a dead end for organisms that are unable to reproduce and survive in a foreign environment without the help of humans. Researchers working on "novel" ecologies have pointed out that places that historically have been regarded as quintessential examples of non-human wilderness exhibit signs of previous human activity (e.g. Glacken 1967) (Standish *et al*. 2013:306). In the end, there might be no untouched or pristine wilderness left on earth. Even the historically uninhabited continent of Antarctica exhibits environmental impacts of human activity deep in its glacial depths (McConnell *et al*. 2015), and cores from Greenland show that the imprint of human activates stretches as far back as the Roman and Greek civilisations (Hong *et al*. 1994). Retiro does not need help to remind us that it exists, as it is very capable to do so itself, not least because of its savage "nature" (cf. Olsen 2012d). Retiro is neither passive nor inactive, because it has in several ways affected its immediate surroundings and beyond. There is nothing inherently "good" or "bad" about nature; for example, claiming that Retiro as a part of nature does not make its invasive plants or litter automatically beyond critique.

Figure 44 An illicit garden waste dump. 31.05.2018, 08:15.

Figure 45 Plants in the illicit dump: to the right in the picture, you can see the native, but not local, Eurasian Solomon's seal (Polygonatum multiflorum). To the left, you see that the native pioneer species fireweed (Chamaenerion angustifolium) has also started to colonize the nutritious refuse. 31.05.2018, 08:15.

Figure 46 The non-native and invasive mountain bluet (Centaurea montana) were also present in the same dump. 31.05.2018, 08:15.

3.3 Invasive heritage

On a plot of land just south of the villa, Johnsen established an ornamental flower garden at the same time the rest of the summer estate was built. As with the villa, it was kept tidy for some time after the surrounding landscape garden was left to its own devices. The maintenance was halted when the remaining southern half of the property was sold by one of Johnsen's descendants around the turn of the millennium. It is much more noticeable that the flower garden is in the middle of a chaotic ecological succession because it was more recently left to itself compared to the surrounding landscape garden. Today, both native and non-native species are eking out a niche in the post-horticultural environment. My survey of non-native plants inhabiting Retiro, reveals that the flower garden is a hot spot for non-native species. The survey spotted a range of plants that were observed here and nowhere else on the property, such as Catawba rhododendron (*Rhododendron catawbiense*), spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*), wall spray (Cotoneaster horizontalis), beauty bush (*Linnaea amabilis*), English dogwood (*Philadelphus coronarius*), Japanese meadowsweet (*Spiraea japonica*), twisted shell flower, Sawara cypress (*Chamaecyparis pisifera*), lawson cypress (*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*), midland hawthorn (*crataegus laevigata*), Florida variegata (*Weigela Florida*), Maule's quince (*Chaenomeles japonica*), and cypress spurge (*Euphorbia cyparissias*), to mention a few. While some of these plants will thrive, most will succumb to competing species or die off because they are unable to reproduce in the local environment.

The plants form an eclectic and partly ephemeral and self-aggregating collection of things that have been gathered from all over the world to satisfy concepts and perceptions of beauty. The recent biological survey of Retiro does not mention many of the species that can be found in the flower garden when summarising invasive and foreign species (cf. Gaarder and Vatne 2013:8-9). One might speculate that they left the flower garden alone because it was too recently abandoned, despite that the plants are a distinct part of Retiro's assemblage of relict organisms. Nevertheless, what is the flower garden today? Is it a "floral ruin", or is it perhaps a vestigial artefact, a rudimentary piece of hyperart (see article C)? The garden is a landscape in-transition; it is in the middle of a juncture of becoming something other than what it was, but not without retaining some of its past. What we see today, and what its non-human constituents experience, is a *kairotic rupture* (see article B; Murchadha 2013:151). Things reveal some of their hidden excess, as unreleased prospects erupt into the environment. The flower garden is apparently in a rift between two stages, namely, what it was and what it might become. For example, some of the plants have been loyal to some of their anthropogenic instructions, and thus stuck to their designated plot of soil, like the yew (*Taxus baccata*) and rhododendron. However, this apparent immobility has not hindered the plants of growing out of previously enforced topiary geometry, and thus taken part in rupturing the garden. But the aesthetical geometry of cones and cylinders are still remembered in scars of pruned branches (see article B). Contrary to the yew, the garden holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) has reproduced and spread outside its original spot in the flower garden; today you can find holly saplings all over Retiro and beyond.

There are plants that are regarded as more nefarious than the holly, like the often-mentioned Japanese knotweed (see article B and D). The knotweed in Retiro was planted and arranged purposefully because of certain inviting aesthetical qualities – and it endures today because the environment it was once forcefully transplanted into does not necessitate human care. It is not just a symbol of the potential unruly nature of non-humans, it is also a heritage that has an impact on biodiversity. The Japanese knotweed is globalized to such an extent that it can be regarded as a cosmopolitan species. Thus, it is a local manifestation of a "hyperobject" (see Morton 2013), the entanglement between human and non-human things as a part of the biosphere. It can be eradicated

from some localities (see Jones *et al*. 2018), but we must make do with managing it – to live *with* the knotweed (see article A). In an old catalogue from the middle of the 19th century by the Von Siebold & Company of Leiden, the knotweed is said to have many "positive" properties, one of them being "*inextirpable*" (Bailey and Conolly 2000:94). Knotweed is an example of heritage that people do not want to protect and preserve, but instead to eradicate and remove. Accordingly, Retiro is an extended part of the global Hyperobject of anthropogenically displaced and noxious organisms. While Retiro in Norway is regarded as only a nationally and locally significant heritage site (Reite and Sandvik 2014; Kulturminnesøk n.d.), it is nevertheless connected to a global and unruly legacy of anthropogenic activates. Who knew that the pursuit of horticultural aesthetics could lead to global ecological threats? This globally entangled character of Retiro is difficult to notice, or even experience, when walking through its undergrowth. The knotweeds tiny, white flowers look beautiful, and honey bees love its nectar (vanEngelsdorp and Meixner 2010:s91). In the end, things as heritage are intertwined with the excess of its material capabilities. Knotweed is an example of invasive heritage, a heritage that does not only maintain a past but can also rupture and contradict neat chronological conceptions of our anthropogenic environments. The archaeological record thrives on surprises and kairotic ruptures; new discoveries, or inadvertent encounters, that bring forth knowledge and things that can burst preconceptions and tear into the material fabric of the world.

Figure 47 Creeping Jenny (Lysimachia nummularia), a plant that is defined as a high impact invasive non-native species (Artsdatabanken 2018), taking advantage of the space left behind after a knotweed colony was eradicated by herbicide. 31.07.2017, 10:26.

3.4 Be-wilderment

Rewilding has in the recent years become a hot topic the community of environmental and nature conservation (Sandom *et al.* 2013:431; Seddon *et al*. 2014; Lorimer and Driessen 2016:633). The NGO Rewilding Europe defines rewilding as:

> *"… a progressive approach to conservation. It's about letting nature take care of itself, enabling natural processes to shape land and sea, repair damaged ecosystems and restore degraded landscapes. Through rewilding, wildlife's natural rhythms create wilder, more biodiverse habitats."* (Rewilding Europe n.d.)

Rewilding is thus about restoring biodiversity that has been lost and damaged by anthropogenic activities. It also emphasizes that it is important to let ecosystems become self-sustained with as little human intervention as possible. Nevertheless, it is a process that often relies on human planning and ecological engineering, like breeding programs and reintroducing species (Sandom *et al*. 2013), and not least preventing future human activities. Accordingly, rewilding works towards imagined futures and ideals, and is thus a process that is controlled by people. The concept has come to attention for researchers working with heritage studies (see Breithoff and Harrison 2018; DeSilvey and Bartolini 2018) and other social scientist and humanity scholars with an interest in the environment (see Jørgensen 2015; Lorimer *et al*. 2015). Wilderness is, of course, a contested term (see Cronon 1995; Nelson and Callicott 2008), as it often denotes something "pre-human", a natural realm devoid of people. Discussions of wilderness reveal a tension between non-human autonomy (Prior and Ward 2016) and the inclusion of the human in the natural (Jørgensen 2015). Indeed, there is a need to differentiate things, because there is quite the difference between a human being and a fir tree; but that does not mean that we must separate humans, and humans only, from everything else, without also separating everything else into their own unique categories. Logically, human exceptionalism also necessitates silver fir exceptionalism, or plastic bag exceptionalism, chanterelle exceptionalism, etc. Accordingly, wilderness is a term that encourages us to think about the autonomy and difference in things.

For archaeologists, the word rewilding can stir up certain connotations. The archaeological record contains many traces of previously inhabited landscapes and sites where the "wilderness" has moved in, for instance, the abandoned Norse settlements on Greenland. Parts of the rewilding process of an abandoned Norse farmhouse have been reconstructed by fossil insect evidence, which for example reveal that the collapse of the roof created pools of water and a new habitat that attracted certain species of insects (Panagiotakopulu, Skidmore, and Buckland 2007). However, this re-wildering was not foreseen or intentionally engineered. In most cases, archaeology work with sites that have one or more times been abandoned, and thus have been affected by unguided processes of re-wilding. While "Pompeii" like archaeological contexts have been seen as an ideal situation where things are preserved (for critical discussions, see Binford 1981; Schiffer 1985), the nature of the archaeological record is characterized by non-human processes and things that shape, mix and transform things and depositions.

What happens now at Retiro is perhaps more akin to a "be-wildering" rather than a re-wilding because it does not involve any planned ecological engineering. The emerging wilderness in Retiro is neither a purely natural nor an anthropogenic product; instead, it is a haphazard mixture of human and non-human legacies. It is unguided but still follows the logic embedded in the material environment. The re-occupation and survival of organisms have not been directly planned, foreseen, nor directed by

people; it is an example of a "feral" heritage as discussed in article E. The wilderness never left Retiro, but was previously kept at bay by the hands of gardeners and other workers that held the weeds away. Instead of relying on the prefix "re"-wilding, which implicitly refers to a retroactive process of restoring something that once was, the prefix "be"-wilderment might instead insinuate a *becoming* that does not overlook a forward momentum, and thus implicates both development and persistence.

"Bewildering" might sound like yet another academic buzzword, but it can be helpful to conceptualise and visualise the aftermath of an anthropogenic environment and its emergent excess. We know things will never really return to a presumed pristine environment that existed before the coming of the destructive excesses of "supermodernity" (Augé 1995:29, 40; González-Ruibal 2008, 2019) – an impossible return to Eden (cf. Jordan III and Lubick 2011:29-35). Archaeological research has repeatedly shown how the landscapes we think of as pristine and untouched, often are products of ecologies that include humans (Hayashida 2005; Brown *et al*. 2018). Mixed nature-cultures and "recombinant" ecologies are not exclusively nor primarily an urban phenomenon as argued in article E, but can in many regards include any environment on the globe or even in outer space (cf. Hinchliffe *et al.* 2005; Jorgensen and Keenan 2011; DeSilvey and Edensor 2013:476-477; Rotherham 2017:24). Nevertheless, it is important to emphasise that this should not be used as arguments to excuse and justify practices that are harmful to both humans and the environment they are a part of. Bewildering can be used to highlight and illustrate a materializing sense of uncertainty, without confusing the return of non-human diversity with a return of a pristine nature. To be able to achieve this it is important to recognize that bewilderment is not planned and driven by human intentions and concerns, and instead depends on the interplay between non-humans, both anthropogenic and not; the future is and has always been more than human. Where and how the growth of organisms and the drift of non-living things are in most instances not under explicit human control. For example, the knotweed in Retiro was never intended to exist independently from humans, but today they demonstrate that they very much can. This is also true for the villa and gardener's residence, as they were never built with the idea that they one day would have an afterlife characterized by the absence of human upkeep.

There are unprecedented things in the world, especially today: sciences and other human endeavours assemble and synthesize never before seen things, which inevitably will stray from their intended utility and form unexpected relationships and combinations with things already out there. Accordingly, this leads to the emergence of unique ecologies that have "*no precedent in prior natural history*" (Robbins 2001:655-656). Every time humans act, and for that matter live, we participate in the "*agnostic composition of a world*", because we are always interacting with the other, "… *wild objects that capable of acting back in strange, sometimes threatening ways*" (Rivers 2015:437-438). Retiro has been described as a site where one can study the dispersion of non-native plants (Jordal and Gaarder 1995:62), but it is also a laboratory of the afterlife of anthropogenic things. Thus, in its nature, material heritage is a kind of experiment. We may discuss the instrumentality of heritage as an anchor of social identity, economic profit, experiences, emotions, and archives of knowledge, but it is always more than it seems. Things are excessive. As argued for at the start of the chapter, archaeologists are well equipped with methods, theories, and knowledge to engage and research this materializing process of bewilderment. As much as material heritage can be argued to be an anchor to the past in a changing world, it is just as much part of the process that throws the world into the future. Consequently, by directing an archaeological gaze at the present past, we can observe the future in action. Archaeology is not only an autopsy; instead of just being a post-mortem examination, it can engage with an environment that is very much alive.

Figure 48 A tangled "mess" of anthropogenic artefacts and plants, such as the non-native European spindle (Euonymus europaeus), illustrating a lively afterlife; to live also means to have an impact on the environment. Accordingly, heritage is the bewildering consequence of life (see article B). 18.10.2015, 10:41.

4 The future in Retiro

The alarmed calls of a great spotted woodpecker (Dendrocopos major) break through the dry air surrounding the "Atlantic Ocean" pond. The early summer of 2018 has been especially warm and dry. Detritus on the forest floor snap and rustle underneath my boots, while the arid air is rich with the smell of wilting vegetation. The calls of the woodpecker echo amongst the branchless lower trunks of the silver firs that grow along the brim of the pond. The pond is a curious place; it was the centre of attention in the old glory days of Retiro and it still holds its allure. As I moved over the dry basin and onto the southernmost islet, I discovered the reasons for the distressed calls. In the shadow of a large birch snag in the centre of the artificial islet, the corpse of her mate lies in a heap of loose feathers. On the southern brim, just across the strait, I spot another birch snag with a nesting-hole. From the nest, I heard the begging-call of woodpecker nestlings. Judged by its state of decay, the dead bird is no more than a day old. Interestingly, the body is mostly intact, but show damage around the neck and tail. Perhaps he was predated by a raptor of some kind, but more likely, he was the victim of a domestic cat. It is well documented that cats hunt and kill prey without necessarily eating them afterwards (Biben 1979).

Figure 49 The body of a woodpecker. Identified as male by the red mark in the nape. 30.05.2018, 17:49.

The unmanaged landscape is the reason Retiro today is an attractive habitat for woodpeckers. Because of this, old, dying, and dead trees have mostly been left to their own demise. Snags, i.e. standing dead trees (see article E), attracts woodpeckers because they provide a habitat for prey and are excellent for making cavity-nests. Also, the great spotted woodpecker uses snags and exposed areas of dead wood on standing trees as "anvils" to hammer pine cones and other hard food items (see Kędra and Mazgajski 2001). In parks that are frequently trafficked by people and actively managed, dead trees are often removed because they are regarded as safety hazards and aesthetically undesirable (Tyrväinen, Silvennoinen, and Kolehmainen 2003; Morrison and Chapman 2006:253-254). Some of the birches in Retiro probably became snags because they were outcompeted by other tree species, like conifers, in a battle for sunlight (cf. Mason 2006). The activity of woodpeckers, such as pecking insects out of dead wood and making nests in tree cavities, leaves an affective ecological legacy; for example, tree cavities help with biodiversity by offering habitat for organisms that rely on such cavities but lack the ability to create them (e.g. Cockle, Martin, and Wesołowski 2011). While all this might seem "natural", they are nevertheless embedded in a landscape that is inherently part of anthropogenic legacies. Like the aggressive spread of silver firs, planted in Retiro by people, which have killed off birches that accordingly become ecologically significant snags.

Retiro regularly reverberates with bird song blended with the distant drone of traffic and the occasional roar of a plane taking off from the nearby airport. As ephemeral sound can be, it is nevertheless repeated with the rhythms that run through the landscape, like the toll of a bell marking yet another burial in the neighbouring cemetery. A quick search on the public "Species Observations System" website, hosted by the Norwegian Biodiversity Information Centre, reveals about two hundred unverified ornithological observations in Retiro (Artsobservasjoner n.d.). These observations include several vulnerable bird species, like the Eurasian collared dove (Streptopelia decaocto), northern goshawk (Accipiter gentilis), common starling (Sturnus vulgaris), and the common gull (Larus canus). While Retiro is a diverse habitat for a wide variety of organisms, it is not exceptional enough to acquire status as a protected area (i.e. Gaarder and Vatne 2013). Accordingly, it is neither "good enough" to be protected by natural nor cultural heritage under national conventions or regulations. Nevertheless, despite the absence of legal protection, things continue their lives for now, with a non-human disregard for human conventions.

In 1964 Lewis R. Binford introduced the term "ecofacts" that "… applied to all culturally relevant non-artifactual data …" which could "… be broken down into many subclasses representing different populations, such as pollen, soil, and animal bone…"(Binford 1964:432-433). The strict separation between things made by humans and nature that the term implies, has been criticized for being too dichotomous and overlooks how such "unmodified" things might have been "… selected by people, transported to the archaeological site, modified by processing, redistribution, and ritual practices, discarded, perhaps several times, and finally sank beneath the surface until excavated" (Reitz and Shackley 2012:5). However, there is something compelling about the term ecofact; for example, what if one "reversed" the analytical meaning of the term? That is, instead of seeing ecofacts as natural things of archaeological relevance only when they can say something about human activities, one can regard them as anthropogenic phenomena that can be informative about the non-human environment. This is an intended subversive way of approaching the environment that offers an ecological perspective on the most unlikely things. For example, one can speculate that in the future, sedimentary microplastics could operate similarly to pollen, with typological categories (cf. Nuelle et al. 2014; Avio, Gorbi, and Regoli 2017:3) based on shape, origin, and polymer. From this perspective, Retiro is not a site that can only inform us about anthropogenic legacies; it can also inform us on the environment overall, both in the past, present and potentially in the future.

Figure 50 A woodpecker “anvil” on an old spruce snag. 26.02.2017, 13:11.

In recent years the idea of the "future" has become a topic of interest in heritage studies and archaeology of the contemporary world alike, and it has been suggested that it has been largely taken for granted in the heritage management sector (Holtorf and Högberg 2013; Högberg, Holtorf, May and Wollentz 2017). The UK-based research project Heritage Futures is one example of heritage research that explicitly focuses on the future (Harrison *et al*. 2016; Bartolini *et al*. 2018). The project focuses on how heritage can be "… *practices within a range of different domains which are dedicated to conserving and perpetuating ideas, words, objects, places, species, persons and things into the future*" (Harrison *et al*. 2016:68). Thus, the "heritage futures" that this project focuses on are those deliberately created through heritage initiatives and actions (cf. Harrison 2018a). This is described as collaborative human action of "*future-assembling practices*" (Harrison 2016). These include intentional human activities such as archiving, historical building preservation, rewilding efforts, botanical gardens, safeguarding biodiversity, storing nuclear waste, and sending messages out into space (Bartolini *et al*. 2018).

As a sort of counterweight to Heritage Futures is the *Unruly Heritage* project (see Olsen and Pétursdóttir 2016; Unruly Heritage n.d.). This project emphasizes the literally unruly nature of the things that we leave behind, or that have left us behind. Here, it is not how humans deliberately construct heritage futures that are in focus, rather, it is the materiality and unpredictable character of our material aftermath that are centre stage. In a sense, like Timothy Morton's assertion that the "… *end of the world has already occurred*" (2013:7), one can already say that much of the heritage that will be encountered in the future has and is happening and, moreover, that much of this accumulation is happening beyond the measures of human stewardship. Living with a durable and present past also means that we already have a foot in the future. While mostly emphasized as a retrospective affordance, things' duration and thus ability to make the past present, also means that they – and thus all momentary presents – are directed ahead of themselves, always committed to the future and unpredictable aftermaths. Moreover, this provides a timely cautionary tale, that the future does not always stand for revolutions and pristine novelty.

Accordingly, a contemporary archaeology looking towards the future does not mean that it ignores the past. González-Ruibal (2018, 2019) has recently emphasized that archaeologists working in and with the contemporary era, must not forget the very human phenomena that define "our age". Indeed, it holds true that many of the things that make up Retiro are inherently tied to human ambitions, processes, and actions. It is, of course, possible to trace these, such as the very origin of Retiro itself being an outcome of the accumulation of wealth made possible by a capitalist economy, or how the consumer society created by the same economy plays a crucial part in forming the gathering of things that shape Retiro. What is just as significant as investigating the *causes* of all the troubles we face today is *what becomes of things*. Taking things seriously and especially the non-human parts of heritage, can be the basis for "… *new templates for imagining and designing alternative heritage futures and the common worlds which might be articulated amongst them*" (Harrison 2018b:1379). Aftermaths are the basis of the future and new autonomous things. Even though artificial things are results of human actions and intentions, they have a material excess that can supersede any purpose we have projected on it. For example, who would ever have predicted that the grave lanterns discussed in article D would be stolen, carried away and eaten by birds and badgers?

While it is true that archaeology must in some way be about humans (Lucas 2012:260-265), the aftermath of anthropogenic activities and things do not always conform to our expectations and predictions. Things move along despite neoliberal economies and systemic inequalities. Documenting

the unruly afterlife of things after they have been set free from human regimes, can in some ways be subversive because it discloses previously hidden excess and how peculiar things can be. Contrary to an argument that these consequences demonstrate that there are for example "*no outside to capitalism*" (González-Ruibal 2019:190), one can instead argue that places such as Retiro testify that there *is* an escape and an outside to anthropocentric systems such as capitalism – it would be a logical fallacy and false equivalence to say that the outcome is the same as its cause. Just as archaeologists can discover that the world can be configured in different ways by studying the remote past (Pacifico 2019:283-284), contemporary archaeology can demonstrate that the current and future world is configuring differently compared to predictions, ideologies, and procedures of the present day.

Figure 51 Grave lantern with bite marks from a small mammal, probably a badger. 16.10.2018, 11:39.

Figure 52 Another grave lantern, but this time with burn marks, indicating that it was stolen by an animal while it was still on fire. 16.10.2018, 12:09.

4.1 Ecological/heritage successions

To call Retiro abandoned is a misnomer. True, it has been left mostly to its own devices, but to think of it as a place that is deserted or depopulated is certainly not true. When the upkeep ended, when no new layers of paint were added to the ageing buildings, something definitely diminished and changed. Old relationships based on human use and care was disentangled and thus succeeded by new and unforeseen relations and entanglements (cf. Hodder 2012, 2018). This concerned more than plants, paths, statues, ponds, and buildings. Human also formed new entanglements with Retiro, exploring its boundaries, trespassing formerly restricted areas, creating campsites and hideaways, relationships that are remembered by the material traces left behind. As discussed, to call Retiro a place that is re-wilding might be yet another misnomer, especially if one thinks of pristine nature as wilderness (see article B). For an untold time, Retiro will depend on its persistent and durable past, it will grow, accumulate, and disintegrate as a result of the material futures implied by its past. Retiro will always be "disturbed" in one sense or another, despite what trajectories it takes on in the future, being that as an urban "green lung", a reconstructed landscape garden, a new residential subdivision, or as unruly heritage.

The smooth newt (*Lissotriton vulgaris*) is not registered as an endangered species in Norway, but the habitat it shares with the threatened great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) has in the last century been reduced by human activity and environmental changes (Dolmen 2008:6). Smooth newts were first spotted living in the ponds in Retiro in the 1970s but in a survey of the area published in 1995, it was noted that the ponds were in danger of disappearing due to plant growth and accumulating organic detritus (Jordal and Gaarder 1995:94, 128). When the ponds in the garden were left to their own devices, different environmental effects came into play, such as ecological successions where the artificial ponds slowly and inevitably transform into mires (cf. Moore 1989). The newt probably lived in the almost forgotten second pond in the garden, aptly named the "Forest tarn", which is hidden away inside a dense thicket of spruce and silver fir. The natural conclusion to most small tarns in Norway is to become a mire, at least in places where biotic matter accumulates faster than it can be eaten by other organisms (ibid.). The pond is today completely overgrown with different species such as common peat moss (*Sphagnum*), haircap moss (*Polytrichum*), and other macrophytes including the slender tufted-sedge (*Carex acuta*) (cf. Gaarder and Vatne 2013:8). A discarded wheelbarrow handle protrudes through the moss-covered surface of the pond. This disrupt expectations of a pristine natural succession because it highlights how an anthropogenic artefact operate in an eerily similar way to the dead plant matter. The smooth newt is now long gone from Retiro, following the fate of the ponds that slowly lost their open and artificial water surfaces. It is a poignant reminder that heritage is not static, neither is it in constant flux, but can instead involve sudden ruptures or slow transitions (see article B and D).

Immanuel Kant (2000:196-201) places gardens under the category of "pictorial arts" in a division of the "beautiful arts". Kant further specifies that pleasure gardens belong to the "art of the painter". He thought that paintings *depict* nature, while gardens are the beautiful *arrangement* of the products of nature (ibid.200). Gardens are decorated with what nature presents to our intuition, which we can arrange differently to suit certain ideas (ibid.200-201). In a garden, the artist, or landscape architect, arranges "nature" according to different forms and makes the thing itself speak as if it were a mime. One may wonder what Kant would have thought about a dilapidated garden such as Retiro. What kind of afterlife do these artistic arrangements live as Retiro have rearranged and "reinterpreted" itself through saplings, sphagnum moss, plastic bags, and fungi growing on rotting tree trunks?

Certainly, the sharp contours of the ponds and drainage-channels have lost their sharp edges, while the once carefully arranged flowerbeds are now only visible in subterranean contours of roots and cuts.

Figure 53 Silver fir seedling growing on a "nurse stump" (see Marcot 2017). 31.05.2018, 09:10.

As previously mentioned, while surveying Retiro I made a small qualitative inventory of foreign plants that I encountered. Of course, there might be invasive invertebrates, vertebrates and fungi inhabiting Retiro, but I chose to focus mostly on non-native plants because they were and are a constituent part of the original architectural arrangement of the garden. One of the most imposing plants here is the aforementioned silver fir, which probably makes up a significant part of the biomass in Retiro. This coniferous evergreen tree is native to the mountains in central Europe, Italy, and Balkan. In Norway, the silver fir has both been used for tree farming and as ornamental trees in gardens (Fremstad and Elven 1997). It thrives in cool and moist conditions and is the tallest tree native to Europe where it grows to be over 60 meters tall (Tinner *et al*. 2013:420). In an overview of invasive alien species in Norway published in 2012, the silver fir was defined as non-native and invasive plant in the "high impact" category (Gederaas *et al.* 2012:98).

In 2018, the Norwegian Biodiversity Information Centre published an updated list of alien and invasive species in Norway (Artsdatabanken 2018). In this new list, the silver fir had suddenly been moved from being a non-native species to a species native to Norway. The reason for this dramatic move from foreign to native is the discovery of historical information that attested that silver firs were naturalized in Norway before the 19th century (Elven *et al.* 2018). The guidelines used for assessing the ecological impact of alien species state that "*[a]n alien species is not to be risk-assessed if it was established with a stably reproducing population in Norway by the year 1800*" (Sandvik, Gederaas and Hilmo 2017:11). Thus, the silver fir was redefined from being an anthropogenically introduced

invader to a "native" phenomenon. However, the silver firs in Retiro is not a pure non-human natural phenomenon because they were only naturalized[4] after humans moved and planted them there.

What does this tell about the nature of Retiro and its future? The way the silver fir has suddenly jumped categories, which have also happened with other species of the former "black-list" (see Grundt, Brysting and Elven 2015:21), demonstrates how the world of human-made knowledge and representation may prove to be abstractions of things that we try to capture in reductive categories. Still, such definitions and categorizing often informs and guide how the material environment is managed and planned. In order to describe the presences and effects of the silver firs in Retiro, it is, thus, necessary to acknowledge its extra-historical existence and specific particularity. Today it is a part of Retiro's successive ecology and heritage landscape; it has brutish effects on the local terrain, exemplified by impenetrable thickets of saplings and juvenile trees. What comes next, however, is very uncertain: will the silver fir win and therefore reduce the biodiversity in Retiro or will the population over time even out in a more balanced ecological partnership with the other organisms in the garden? Or will it be attempted exterminated as a result of Retiro being regarded as too valuable to be inherited by silver firs? The silver fir as a species is probably going to stay for a long time in Norway. Regarding global warming, it is predicted that it will handle an increase of 5–7°C if there is enough precipitation (Tinner *et al*. 2013:435). Thus, the silver fir is likely here to stay as a reminder of an anthropogenic legacy; that is, as heritage.

Figure 54 The dense silver fir thicket that surrounds the grotto (see article A). The forest floor under these thickets is a barren and dark environment that hinder the growth of other plants. 23.05.2015, 13:03.

[4] *In biology, the term "naturalisation" refers to a process where non-native organisms establish a population that reproduces and maintains itself without the help of humans.*

Figure 55 A wheelbarrow-handle poking out of the mossy surface of the "Forest tarn" pond. 23.05.2015, 12:53.

4.2 Idiosyncratic mediation

It is undeniable that my approach, arguments, conclusions, and descriptions are inherently incomplete and inadequate to grasp Retiro with all its intricate complexities and effects. Why should we rely on *my* experiences, the impressions of a white, male, non-local, adult whose body is particular and individual, and as such has a "*bodiliness*" that is different from other bodies possessed by humans and non-humans (Meskell 1996; Brück 2005)? However, as discussed earlier, an aim for an absolute universality is just as obfuscating as overlooking the role and specificity of the researcher. I do not claim that the approach that has been used in my thesis has yielded descriptions or discoveries that are in any way more true or closer to the "real" Retiro than in other research. The one thing I stay firm on, however, is that this thesis has contributed to a more multifaceted and vibrant collage of descriptions and representations of Retiro by highlighting a small part of its excess. By focusing on an empirically grounded selection of things that today constitute Retiro, though without being exhaustive, my goal has been to point out Retiro's possibilities and openings instead of plugging them shut.

During one of my surveys, I was approached by two boys that sincerely asked if Retiro was haunted by ghosts. The boys told me that they had heard mysterious sounds of footsteps in the old garage and found scary scrawling on the attic door in the gardener's residence. In turn, I told the boys about the eerie sightings of a ghostly woman in the garden and of a man that tragically drowned in the pond during a night in 1878 (Romsdals Amtstidende 1878:1; Holsbøvåg 2010:47). It is salient that they did not ask me who built the garden, lived in the houses or something similar, but instead were more interested in the spectral aspects of Retiro. It was the immediate and haunting character of Retiro that was in focus, as the evocative materiality of overgrown paths and derelict buildings.

One may think that this indifference for history is just a superficial and juvenile way of appreciating a heritage site. While Retiro is included in historical tours of the local area, it is not purposefully modified to disseminate knowledge or regulate experiences; you will find no posters and signs in or around Retiro instructing you on its history, nor are there any cords and fences demarcating and separating you from spaces and things deemed important. Accordingly, one can speculate that in the absence of such instruction and guidance, visitors are more exposed to Retiro's contemporary and immediate nature. Just as the chance meeting that triggered my interest in Retiro, people's encounter with it is basically unmediated. Without any reconstruction and other means of mediation such as information posts and signs, Retiro offers an emergent past, an "auto-mediation" with its own inadvertent biases and caricatures (see article A). Retiro is not a neutral and inert place, but instead demonstrate how heritage is not always about certainty and comprehensibility. In its present condition, Retiro offers a variety of contingent qualities, depending on who or what, human or non-human, are there to experience or trigger them.

Figure 56 A "haunted" landscape: the ghostly remnants of a campsite (see article C). 24.09.2011, 14:08

Figure 57 A toy magnifying glass found on one of the islets in the "Atlantic Ocean" pond; an instrument that changes the viewers perspective. This one was made to view insects. 27.06.2016, 13:47.

4.3 Darkness and badgers

Today, many heritage sites are lit up with large floodlights, enveloping the landscape in a permanent and synthetic daylight. As mentioned in article A, Retiro lacks lightning and is literally a dark place during evenings and nights; a place that is more in sync with non-human circadian rhythms than its insomniac urban surroundings. While darkness is an inherent part of how humans experience (see Hensey 2016) and transform environments (Bille and Sørensen 2007), it is also an aspect of reality that can allude to other non-human experiences and existences. Accordingly, darkness as an empirical phenomenon can be a way to demonstrate how Retiro is inevitably interlocked with an intricate ecology of non-humans. For example, badgers are crepuscular and nocturnal animals that hide in burrows during the day while emerging at dusk. Even among zoologists, the nocturnal life of the badger has been a challenge and have slowed down research on their behaviour (e.g. Buesching, Stopka, and MacDonald 2003:977). During my four years of surveying Retiro, I often observed traces of their activity; from tracks left in the snow and mud, entrances to "setts" (i.e. underground burrows), to chewed up remains of plastic grave lanterns (see article D). I never saw a badger alive, the closest I

came was a badger corpse entangled with metal detritus spotted in the basement of the gardener's residence.

The badger's presences have made its own contributions to the palimpsest that is Retiro, not the least through its substantial and complex network of setts (see Roper *et al.* 1991; Brøseth, Bevanger and Knutsen 1997) that persists and crumbles like human ruins. Zoologists have even suggested that they need the help of archaeologists to investigate old and complex setts (Hansell 1993:10). One of the more peculiar places the badger used as a sett in Retiro was the basement of the gardener's residence. It is not unheard of that badgers sometimes use anthropogenic structures for setts, for example, it has been documented that they use abandoned bunkers from the Second World War (i.e. Jumeau *et al*. 2017). In that case, it was recommended to keep and ecologically manage these derelict bunkers as hotspots of species variety in otherwise homogenous and intensive agricultural landscapes (ibid.). From an ecological perspective, the presence of badgers, e.g. how their digging and setts affect the properties of the local soil, can improve the local habitat heterogeneity and biodiversity (Kurek, Kapusta and Holeksa 2014). Thus, anthropogenic landscapes can simultaneously be heritage and habitats for a variety of organisms.

Heritage sites contain material realities that are hidden to us, or more, contain things that are – or are made – inaccessible to us, or that we are just unaware of. The nocturnal can be a part of an oblique understanding, and by incorporating the badger into representations of Retiro it is possible to allude to it as a place of darkness, and thus as a place that is, and always have been, more than human. Both conceptually and physically, darkness can be seen as an obstacle for conveying and presenting places with clarity in an "enlightened" manner. Even as a metaphor, the lack of light is found in the ill-fitting neologism "Dark Ages" that is often oppositionally paired with the "The Age of Enlightenment" (Lindberg 2003; Nelson 2007). However, critique has been raised that contemporary archaeology, amongst other disciplines, has been dominated by a daycentrism that overlooks the dusky and dark (Orange 2018). Instead of using the phenomena of darkness as an analogy of ignorance and sightlessness (i.e. Ion 2018:195-196), it is more productive to approach darkness by exploring how it can demonstrate how things differ due to their unique qualities (i.e. Pétursdóttir 2018:212). Thus, Retiro has a literally dark side that offers different qualities and encounters compared to a vision of the site as permanently flooded with light.

Figure 58 Villa Retiro in the night. 15.10.2018, 19:02.

Figure 59 Tracing the "dark" and elusive presence of Badgers in Retiro: the entrance to an inhabited sett. 26.02.2017, 13:57.

Figure 60 A desiccated badger corpse tangled together with metal wires and other detritus in the basement of the gardener's residence. 16.10.2018, 15:16.

Figure 61 The same sett as on the previous page. This time it is uninhabited, as seen from the undisturbed vegetation around the entrance, mostly consisting of pilewort (Ficaria verna), which have flourished after the area was sprayed with knotweed-herbicide. Example of a Non-human ruin. 31.05.2018, 10:20.

4.4 Heritage impact

However trivial it may appear in a global context, Retiro is nevertheless tapped into a biogeochemical cycle involving, amongst other things, carbon and its accumulative effects on a planetary scale. According to remote sensing data from *The Norwegian Institute of Bioeconomy Research* (NIBIO 2017), Retiro resides in the highest category of forest biomass production potential. Thus, due to its biological constituents, Retiro is as much a carbon reservoir as a constantly accumulating aggregation of material heritage. It is important to note that plants and other organisms not only produce what can be defined as biomass but also contribute to the formation of another enormous component of Retiro, namely necromass – the dead remains of organisms and their derivatives. Living things may even partly consist of necromass, such as trees where most of their trunk and branches are dead (Begon, Colin and Harper 2006:487).

This points to the importance of acknowledging that also non-humans leave things behind (see Reno 2014). However, because these things have had the time to develop reciprocally within well-established ecologies, they may appear to us as quite different from those we leave behind. "Non-human heritage" is not simply an abstraction (see Spennemann 2007a, 2007b); it is a fact of the natural world where entities and processes leave things behind. This may also include a co-production, such as when the ritual of lighting candles beside the grave of a beloved person has, with the help of crows and seagulls, created an accumulation of grave lanterns in Retiro as described in article D.

Appreciation of things as heritage may be an exclusively human emotion (Spennemann 2007a:254-255), but that does not negate that these persistent remains also affect non-humans in their own way. Retiro is in some ways constituted by non-human heritage, as discussed in article D. Needless to say, if it was held together by human agency alone Retiro or any other heritage site would not exist. A concept of heritage that only rests on our appreciation and projected values would overlook this environmental dimension. As stated, heritage is not inert; it affects and is itself affected. For heritage to be something at all, things must persist and be affected by and create effects in the future. This also implies a form of autonomy, in the sense that things exceed their origin, which enables unforeseen interactions and entanglements. Dealing with heritage, consciously or not, is thus unavoidable.

How anthropogenic material heritage crosses into the "*umwelt*" of non-humans is a poignant question for the future. Jakob von Uexküll defined *umwelt* as the subjective realities of living things, i.e. "life worlds" built by and filled with things through the perceptions of animals (von Uexküll 1957). The philosopher semiotician Morten Tønnessen has argued that the contemporary relevance of Uexküll's *umwelt* theory is how it:

> *"… raises the question of how the artefacts and other manifestations of human culture are perceived by animals, and how studies of animal perception of human cultural processes and artefacts can be informative for our understanding of human culture. What is a human – to an animal? And what is an anthropogenic artefact or physical structure to an animal?"* (Tønnessen 2015:16)

While we can never truly access the "subjective space" of non-humans without in some way anthropomorphizing the experience (i.e. Nagel 1974; Bogost 2012:64-65), it does not hinder us from threading into a speculative third-person perspective (e.g. Bogost 2012). The effects of anthropogenic, and hybrid human-non-human material composites, i.e. gatherings of things (Latour 1993:144, 2009), do not only raise concern for pollution and adverse effects, but also for being and existence – how

things occur, endure, live, etc. Describing material heritage can just as much be a description of the past as it is a representation of the present day. This can in turn encourage us to think beyond the constricting bubble of sterilized "human environments", and thus to speculate about diverse heritage environments populated both by living organisms and things that have their own unique specificities (cf. Harman 2016c). Only then can it be possible to understand the full extent of how material heritage impacts the future.

This approach does not undervalue the place of humans in an environment saturated with anthropogenic heritage; instead, it is aimed at creating more nuanced and supplementary descriptions and representations. Thus, heritage can both impact and be impacted. Retiro is a complex material emergence of all these reciprocal impacts: it is an example of an environment made possible through a capitalist economy, the surplus extracted from factory workers and fishermen by the owner Christian Johnsen (cf. Eikrem 2015). Nevertheless, it is impossible to reduce it's being to one variable of capitalism in an overmining way. This is particularly evident today with its myriad of organic agents that continuously transform and maintain the post-horticultural landscape. The nature of these impacts is that they form a web of human intentionality and unintentionality, and non-human effects and affects. One can perhaps rank these impacts according to various criteria, but as a site in the present day, Retiro is reducible neither to a single variable, such as a capitalist economy nor to the biology of plants. Retiro has its own "gravitational" pull on things (see Bryant 2014); a unique and affecting presence that shapes, rejects, and accumulates things into itself.

Figure 62 Heritage symbiosis: one of the nest boxes that can be found throughout Retiro. This box is made from treated wood and will remain for many years. 19.10.2018, 09:44.

Figure 63 A nest box that has fallen to the ground. The unintended next step in the heritage succession of a nest box; now it becomes nutrients for wood-digesting fungi and perhaps a shelter for small animals like rodents and shrews. 17.10.2015, 16:16.

4.5 Play-ground

According to the local municipality the derelict character of Retiro does not invite active use (Molde kommune 2014; see article D). My observations and experiences overwhelmingly contradict this statement. Retiro's landscape is filled with material evidence of use, both human and non-human. Things are moved about, modified, and left behind. This play is unruly and completely embedded in the materiality of the place, which is characterized by a broad range of spontaneous and ineffable activities. While parks are places of subversion and transgression (Brück 2013), the vibrant landscape of Retiro is in some ways literally oblique in that things are not always in their right place or in an expected condition; garden plants growing out of bounds or a coconut bird feeder hanging in a random tree. The connection between play and ruins has been explained through "ruin-qualities", such as their allure, non-determined being, existence outside the control-sphere of adults, and their invitation to spaces of material alterity (see Cloke and Jones 2005; Edensor 2008; Edensor *et al.* 2011; Moshenska 2014:231). Play can be connected to rational and pedagogic goals such as developing cognitive and physical skills (Stagnitti 2004), but it can also involve spontaneous and unmediated interactions with the affordances of the environment. This rawness meshes with Retiro, which in its derelict state facilitates dynamic interactions with and in-between things, which otherwise might be excluded from our everyday environment.

Michael Schiffer (1996:75) has pointed out that *child's play* is a formation process that is generally overlooked by archaeologists. However, in recent years the presence of children in the archaeological record has gained increasing attention (see Lillehammer 2015; Dozier 2016). It is interesting, however, that the traces and "refuse" left by play are, for Schiffer, not regarded as significant indicators of behaviour, but rather as *disturbance*. In the eyes of an archaeologist looking for structure and regularities in an archaeological context, play is thus regarded as "… *'randomizing' and dispersive processes* …" (Hayden and Cannon 1983:149). In the English language, the idiom "child's play" denotes an extremely easy task or something that is regarded as insignificant. As Walter Benjamin observes (1979:52-53), however, there may be something more genuinely attentive and even ecological with children's play:

> *"They are irresistibly drawn by the detritus generated by building, gardening, housework, tailoring, or carpentry. In waste products they recognize the face that the world of things turns directly and solely to them. In using these things, they do not so much imitate the works of adults as bring together, in the artefact produced in play, materials of widely different kinds in a new, intuitive relationship."*

Nevertheless, that things and waste products can offer new and fresh experiences, applies to both adults and children. It is important to note that it is not only children that "play" in derelict places such as ruinous buildings and derelict lots. Adults are also drawn to such places and are able to adopt playful interactions with their environment (Wilk and Schiffer 1979:532; Edensor 2005). People often travel through Retiro, walking dogs, skiing, or jogging, representing respectable and recreational activities. However, engrossing and playful activities necessitate that people halt, and linger for a while – much like the archaeological approach I adopted in my research.

Play in form of interaction with ruinous and abandoned places is well acknowledged and studied, but the aftermath and the concrete lingering and enduring aspects of play are somewhat absent from these discussions (cf. Edensor *et al.* 2011; Woodyer 2012). It may be argued that there is something already playful with such sites, a kind of non-human playfulness. As such, Retiro may be

seen as a place that invites play and future use. It represents a reflection of a reality that is usually overlooked by the official and governing agencies in the contemporary society, as demonstrated by the inability of the municipality to acknowledge Retiro's derelict allure and gravitational pull on both humans and non-humans. However, abandoned toys, clusters of empty beer cans, coconut bird feeders, twig-huts, graffiti, trails, and drug paraphernalia allude to a place that affords a wide variety of unsolicited interactions and activities.

As observed in literature written about similar spaces, ostensibly identified as abandoned, scholars such as Tim Edensor have connected the many unruly and inappropriate activities taking place there with the lawlessness of such spaces, their hidden or "out-of-place" character (cf. Edensor 2005). However, such descriptions of ruinous spaces often play on a rather anthropocentric, dualistic perspective, which defines the ruination as opposite to something objectively "orderly" and as such reduces it to an antithesis. The ecology of Retiro might seem "unorderly" for eyes that overlook its tightly interwoven ecology – but is it really an unorganized mess of unmatched pieces? This ecology does not discriminate between a flowerpot and a plastic tray; it is playful, humorous, and sometimes bleak – it shows a different and emergent kind of arrangement of things not bound to anthropocentric principles. Like Akasegawa's irreverent attitude in his work with hyperart (see article C), humour can be an oblique way to describe things that are invisible in more conventional ways of looking at heritage sites.

Figure 64 A plastic candy container filled with spongy white-rot wood. Remnants of a playful interaction between the persistence of plastic and the malleability of cellulose processed by wood-decay fungi. 25.05.2015, 14:41.

Figure 65 Residues of play; an assemblage of sherds from the Triton statue, logs, treated planks, branches, and nails, located on the brim of the "Atlantic Ocean" pond. 30.07.2017, 19:20.

4.6 Witnessing the past's future

González-Ruibal (2019:118) has proposed that archaeology can through its refusal of accepting the past as always annihilated "*... become a weapon of resistance that slows down time and reminds us that another world was (and therefore is) possible.*" How does my research fit into this "resistance"? One way to act on this resistance is to use the persistence of the archaeological record to discover how things were literally different in the past. More poignantly, it can be used to unravel past transgressions and wrongdoings. However, I want to argue for an alternative approach, which, instead of focusing on something that *was*, aims at witnessing how things *are*. While Retiro's past(s) certainly has contributed to how things are today, the present-day context also reveals that things have an unruly and excessive afterlife. The present condition, thus, as demonstrated in my research, is no more given than the past, it is something that must be investigated to be understood and acknowledged. Thus, I want to argue that such a perspective is necessary and can complement an act of historical/retrospective witnessing.

Because the humanities and social sciences have mostly been concerned with humans, it is an important act of "archaeological resistance" to reflect on how our life-world is entangled with and dependent on non-human things (Latour 2002; Introna 2014:45). As Bruno Latour (2009) brings to light with his *Dingpolitik*, we are locked into gatherings and relationships with non-humans whether we like it or not, regardless of who might be the instigator. We cannot leave this trouble behind only to look retroactively on how things have been, we must stay with the trouble, to quote Haraway (2016), and face the world we and all other things inhabit. However, staying with the trouble is not always a choice, but rather a condition of living; sometimes the trouble stays with us, whether we like it or not. Today we are faced with environmental upheavals that will affect both human and non-human lives, which make a focus on the present even more pressing. We can perhaps change our environmental impact, but a global rise in temperature is now highly likely (Masson-Delmotte *et al*. 2018). We are currently experiencing the sixth mass extinction, where we and our non-human companions have an enormous impact on the balance of biomass and other ecological effects (Ceballos *et al*. 2015; Ceballos and Ehrlich 2018; Bar-On, Phillips, and Milo 2018). Today, the deliberate and accidental spread of species beyond their normal biogeographic distribution have made non-native organisms one of the significant drivers of extinction (Vitousek *et al*. 1997; Bellard, Cassey, and Blackburn 2016). Accordingly, Retiro with its excess of invasive garden plants, cannot be simply sorted away as a local phenomenon, but is inherently part of a global environment.

What do these looming environmental changes have to do with heritage and archaeology? The environmental challenges we face today demonstrate how heritage can constitute material legacies that simultaneously form parts of and affect the overall environment (see article D). As demonstrated by how silver firs moved from non-native species to being recognized as a native, our perception and knowledge of things are slippery and can suddenly shift. With regards to archaeology, how we illuminate and acknowledge the place of the past in the present is relevant in the face of the present environmental upheaval, because of the role unruly anthropogenic things have in its perpetuation. A part of this resistance is how archaeology *cares* for and carefully pays attention to things. Archaeologists carefully dig, sift, collect, and document the most mundane things. Thus, archaeology enables us to care for things that are usually overlooked, from glass shards to relict plants. This way of caring for things is a stance of resistance because it rejects that there are things that do not deserve our attention. This also implicitly acknowledges the excess of things, recognizing that their affordance always exceeds current observation; for example, we carefully conserve and hold on to things as reserves in museums (Olsen 2018) in the hope that we can someday tap into their excessive nature.

González-Ruibal (2019:57, 104-105, 169-171) has criticized approaches that call to attention how we can care for things and their otherness (e.g. Puig de la Bellacasa 2011; Olsen *et al*. 2012:204-207) by arguing that there are things that do not deserve care, such as smallpox and atomic bombs. However, are not these precisely examples of phenomena that one must approach with care? Careful attention to smallpox, for example, made Edward Jenner realise in 1798 that vaccination could prevent it, and continuous medical care led to smallpox being declared as globally eradicated in 1980 (Riedel 2005). Care can highlight both asymmetrical and reciprocal relationships between what or who cares and what is cared for. Instead of filtering ethical understandings of the environment through concepts such as "purity" and the "pristine", which in the end will always lead to disappointment because of their idealistic impossibilities, we must rather realise the implications of living in a "*compromised world*" (Shotwell 2016:203-204). This does not mean to passively accept the injustices that exist in the world, but instead involve a positive and proactive engagement with things that are not necessarily perfect, and thus acknowledge the possibility for a new and different world to emerge (ibid.). To imagine new prospects and trajectories for the future it is necessary to go in depth and explore what is at hand, especially when it comes to anthropogenic legacies and how they mix, enable, disable, dissolve, and fuse with the environment. Careful investigations of things can offer a reasonable, though not absolute, way of exploring the affects and effects of things that are left to their own devices. Thus, a careful approach towards the environment makes it possible to speculate, for example, how care, as an *action*, is not exclusively human (Puig de la Bellacasa 2017:160-164). How the roots of beech trees have helped to preserve the brim of the "Atlantic Ocean" pond in Retiro is an example of such careful action, even when conventional notions of intentionality are absent (see article B).

Because things get the chance to accumulate in Retiro without being filtered through heritage management, it is a window into the recent past, the "*archaeology of ten minutes ago*" (Zimmerman, Singleton and Welch 2010:444). What we choose to throw away, forget, or overlook, is just as important as heritage as the things we choose to preserve and manage, if not more. Certain places, like Retiro, have a "gravitational" pull on material undercurrents in their surrounding environment and thus offer a glimpse of the society's "subconsciousness" (Olivier 2011). Retiro is a material counterweight to the general trend in Norway to remove any dilapidated structures and abandoned things from the urban landscape. The presence of such sites and things have rapidly declined in conjunction with the general growth of prosperity in Norway. In an international context, this might seem like a first world luxury problem, but it nevertheless is a significant and challenging development that involves questions of for example how this shapes people's understanding and experience of the past, and not least how it affects and becomes part of non-human things and assemblages. Retiro is a pedagogically valuable exemplar of an unruly nature-culture, which displays the interlacing of humans and non-human things. In a time where concepts about the "Anthropocene" are entering the mainstream consciousness, it can be beneficial to have sites that highlight how humans cannot place themselves outside, or above, nature and the realm of non-humans. Thus, it might be an ethical imperative to demonstrate that material heritage is not only about learning about the past at an arm's length, but that it also possesses an excess that can affect the present day and future in unpredictable ways, despite previously attributed meanings, intentions, and functions.

Beyond universalizing theoretical discussions on ruination, plants, or vestigial artefacts, my work in Retiro has been an act of witnessing and acknowledging (see González-Ruibal 2014b:370-371, 2019:74-77). I have witnessed and accordingly articulated a small part of Retiro, namely some of its contemporaneity, which has been dismissed out of hand or not acknowledged at all in other scholarly work and the public discourse (see article A). While my work in Retiro has not been guided

by an ambition to save something that might disappear, it has nevertheless preserved some things in the recorded material, like in photographs and notebook descriptions. Through a careful engagement with the archaeological record, I have witnessed how anthropogenic and non-anthropogenic presences are witnessed by non-humans (cf. Pétursdóttir 2012b:589; Olsen and Witmore 2014:189; Witmore 2014:213). Consequently, archaeology is not only about witnessing ourselves, but also things are *not* us. This is an empathic act because it recognizes things as they are and that their excess can come back to haunt us and other non-humans in unpredictable and unforeseen ways. Nevertheless, things have a "habit" of reminding us about their presence when they either are forgotten, or we thought them out of mind.

Figure 66 A "wildlife" surveillance camera mounted on the wall of the Retiro villa. Witnessing and being witnessed is sometimes not voluntary as we do not always have control over what we see or when we are seen. 28.06.2016, 13:44.

Figure 67 A vanished witness: in the end, the camera disappeared; perhaps wilfully removed or stolen. 30.05.2018, 18:03.

Figure 68 A bong stashed away in a small alcove above one of the doors in the greenhouse ruin. Like the green algae covering the exfoliating plaster walls, the bong is one thing among many others that form the vibrant palimpsest of Retiro. 31.05.2018, 09:24.

Figure 69 Materialised empathy: a plastic heart that presumably belonged to a funeral wreath. Probably a stray artefact from the neighbouring cemetery. 29.06.2016, 14:00.

5 Contemporary archaeology and the environment

Current environmental uncertainty necessitates a new look at the definition and management of heritage, such as scrutinizing the ecological relations and interdependency between material legacies and the environment. How can we connect the concepts of change and continuity? How can we account for unintended and unforeseen afterlives of things we leave behind, instead of reducing them to entropy and erasure? Archaeology offers a careful way to be and orient ourselves amongst ruins, intra-species litter, invasive plants, and processes of formation and disintegration. Archaeology compels us to slow down and be attentive to things. My investigations of Retiro have in some sense been an attempt to observe the momentum and timeliness of things. Even though this archaeological care is often focused on rescue and preservation, archaeological practice also acknowledges and thus accepts ruinous presences and the afterlife of non-humans as informative and constitutive. Such perspectives, I argue, may only become more significant in near futures. If predictions of environmental upheaval come true, we will inevitably face an increasing presence of things "released" to their own fate – abandoned cities and countrysides, polluted oceans, space debris – where the phrase "*accelerated archaeology*" will gain a much more significant implication (cf. Stallabrass 1996, 2009:416). Material heritage, and thus the archaeological record, is not just something that was, but also a manifestation of what things can afford, affect, and change into; a demonstration of excess.

The non-human environment has always been part of archaeological research (see article B). A conspicuous example of this is the development of the sub-discipline environmental archaeology, where the aim is to "… *learn all that we can about the past, relationships among this record, people, cultural institutions, and ecosystems*" with the aid of "… *theories and practices drawn from biological, chemical, physical, and social sciences*" (Reitz and Shackley 2012:1). One of the characteristics of environmental archaeology has been a reliance on multidisciplinary methods, employing a wide range of natural scientific approaches. This is one of the reasons environmental archaeology has been criticized for maintaining the nature/culture dichotomy, by focusing on the relationship between human cultures and nature, instead of seeing humans as a part of nature (Albarella 2018). To solve this problem, Umberto Albarella has proposed a simple solution that instead of relegating environmental archaeology to a separate subdiscipline, "*... the 'environment' is simply a thematic investigation that should be of concern for archaeology as a whole*" (Albarella 2001:9). Hence, the environment must also be regarded as an inherent concern for an archaeology of the contemporary world. One of the strengths of an archaeology of the contemporary environment is exactly that it can bridge the natural-cultural divide by, amongst other things, highlighting and thus acknowledging the bewildering afterlife of things as part of a naturally "feral" environment (see article E). Importantly, in an approach that does not discriminate between the human and non-human, things such as plants and ecofacts are not reduced to just proxies for understanding human culture (see article B and D).

However, González-Ruibal (2018:8) warns us that "… *paying too much attention to the environment, we run the risk of downplaying conflictual and asymmetrical relations between humans.*" While it is true that current large-scale geological processes and climate change cannot thoroughly be understood if humans are left out (e.g. González-Ruibal 2018, 2019), it would be equally biased to exclude the partly independent afterlife of things in archaeological investigations of the contemporary world. Indeed, while monstrous anthropogenic mega-artefacts shift and rumble, there are still vibrant landscapes inhabited by fungi, plants, badgers, and other things. Despite the devastating forecasts, the world is also full of survival, and thus glimmers of futures. For example, unruly heritage such as the noxious and invasive Japanese knotweed, has an afterlife that is

independent from human concerns and intentions and which should encourage us to speculate about the unforeseen excess, and thus future in things. We may very well acknowledge and witness the harmful agents of the contemporary world, like rampant consumerism and neoliberalism, nevertheless, one possible way to counteract these things is to describe both how the human and non-human environment and things adapt, resist, and continue despite current disasters and gloomy outlooks. Thus, to study ruins and the afterlife of anthropogenic remains does *not* mean to "*wilfully sidestep*" economic change and social issues (i.e. Penrose 2017:187), it is instead research on and an acknowledgement of a concrete contemporary environment that would be omitted if we solely focused on human agency.

To notice, and not least meet and record things in their post-anthropocentric after*life*, I have argued that we sometimes need a form of oblique approach, if not a humorous disposition (see article C). This implies that we also need to write and use tools like photography in certain ways in order to encounter and record things that are left out of the picture in heritage research. Such wondering and speculating perspectives do not always lead to clear and final conclusions, nor do they always have critical dispositions. Consequently, such approaches have been met with scepticism by some scholars and criticized for being too "poetic" and "dark" (e.g. Hornborg 2017a; Ion 2018). As the argument goes, times like ours, with enormous environmental and societal challenges, call for more clarity and finality. However, is it necessarily that simple? While some academics have argued that concern for non-humans themselves is an idle and nonconsequential activity (e.g. Hornborg 2017a, 2017b), neoliberalism similarly brackets non-humans as commodities that primarily exist for us (cf. Morton 2017:6). Accordingly, a different and decolonized orientation that works against neoliberalist ontologies, must highlight how non-humans, such as plants, animals, and soil, are our cohabitants on Earth (Hamilakis 2018:518-519). Even though capitalism fetishizes things, it does not logically follow that we need to "… *take the opposite position and ignore the intertwining and imbrication of people and things*" (Kipnis 2015:55-56). Indeed, one of the steps in avoiding future exploitation is to acknowledge the intricate infrastructure of the present day and the future (Fredengren 2015).

As previously argued, archaeology is especially well equipped to witness and describe contemporary sites such as Retiro – that is, places and things that have been left to themselves (see article E). This is not to say that archaeologists have privileged access to Retiro, or that their perspective should be prioritized, but to acknowledge that archaeology is one of many different and equally interesting orientations towards the environment (see article B and D). Archaeology views things in a light and proximity that is significantly different from, for example, history (see article A and C). "Different" does not necessarily imply better, but rather asserts the excess of things and thus the possibility to discover *alterity*. However, this does not mean that we can say whatever we want about things, because looking closely at things also entails a rigorous loyalty and *care* towards the things in question. Accordingly, descriptions must follow things as best as they can, and in depth; not just by heedlessly describing as many details as possible, but also acknowledging their excess. A descriptive approach may surely imply naivety and lack of perspective or ability to generalize and abstract, but staying faithful to things is harder than one expects – as can be attested by anyone who has attempted to interpret and draw complex stratigraphy. An archaeological orientation is *needed* to articulate and illustrate certain things. "What things?", you may ask. To articulate the intricate afterlife of Retiro, I would claim, calls for an archaeological perspective, eyes trained in acknowledging the past in the present – not only the complete and finished, but also things that are fragmented, vestigial and incomplete. An oblique approach to the contemporary world is archaeological, not least because it can recognize and speculate on the fragmentary and interwoven nature of anthropogenic things.

As demonstrated by William Rathje's garbage project (Rathje and Murphy 2001), which contemporary archaeologists often look to for legitimacy and inspiration, people do not always have a direct, unhindered, and unrestricted access to understand their own intimate contemporary environment. There are material nuances that simply pass us by, and, hence, there is a direct relevance in Jefferson Reid, Rathje and Schiffer's "*strategy 4*", namely to "… *study…present material objects in ongoing cultural systems to describe and explain present human behavior*" (Reid, Schiffer, and Rathje 1975), which Schiffer sees as an approach that can form a "… *uniquely archaeological understandings of the modern world*" (Schiffer 2015:181-182). Nevertheless, to "reconstruct the present" it is necessary to expand our scope beyond the singular focus on human behaviour and the idea that the contemporary environment mostly consists of recent and ever-changing things. To meet the future, archaeologists must be bold, innovative, speculative, and not afraid to fail, or confront opposing opinions and perspectives.

Figure 70 My last picture from Retiro is of the gate on the western edge of the property. The same motif as my first picture from 2011. 20.10.2018, 11:47.

Figure 71 The bewildering afterlife of the archaeological survey trenches in Retiro: after the trenches were backfilled, the soil changed; It became more aerated and porous, and thus susceptible to be waterlogged. Accordingly, the newly formed wetland attracted new organisms, like the common rush (Juncus effusus), which in the picture can be seen to be faithfully following, and thus "remembering", the outline of the trench. 16.10.2018, 10:29.

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Abstracts: article A, B, C, D, and E

Article A

Farstadvoll, S. 2016. "Blant restene av Retiro: Forfall og kulturminner." *Primitive tider* 18: 161–181.

Abstract: *This article discusses how dilapidated material heritage could be understood as something more than just an abject phenomenon. Archaeology of the recent past offers an opportunity to consider such things from a more nuanced perspective that don't dismiss them out of hand. These nuances shed new light on how dilapidated things shape our experience of the recent past. The discussion is based on Retiro, a derelict 19th century landscape garden and country estate located in the town of Molde on the northwestern coast of Norway. The description of Retiro is based on data gathered from field-surveys conducted by the author, articles from the local newspaper and other historical sources. Central themes are the relationship between persistence and loss regarding the dilapidation of the recent past, the aesthetic aspects of derelict things, and the tension between historical representation and the present material situation of the ruinous Retiro property. The article argues that dilapidated and abandoned heritage opens up a space and material condition for confronting the past that is different from meticulously curated and arranged things. Dilapidation is not necessarily something strictly positive or negative, but rather a fundamental fact of the material world that we inevitably have to live with or think about, one way or another.*

Article B

Farstadvoll, S. 2019. "Growing Concerns: Plants and Their Roots in the Past." *Journal of Contemporary Archaeology* 5 (2): 174–93. doi:10.1558/jca.35117.

Abstract: *Plant remains have long been a source of information about the distant past in archaeology, but are undertheorized or even overlooked in the field of contemporary archaeology. This article uses the example of a derelict nineteenth-century landscape garden in a town on the northwestern coast of Norway to show how novel insights about plants can be developed which acknowledge both their past and living present, without reducing them to colonizer, universal taxonomies or proxies for a human past.*

Article C

Farstadvoll, S. 2019. "Vestigial Matters: Contemporary Archaeology and Hyperart." *Norwegian Archaeological Review*. doi:10.1080/00293652.2019.1577913

Abstract: *This article addresses things that can be described as rudimentary and vestigial; for example, an arguably out-of-place snow stake encountered in a derelict 19th century landscape garden during an archaeological surface survey. How can one can approach this stake without removing or overlooking its vestigial character? The term hyperart is introduced to develop the concept of vestigial objects. Hyperart was conceived by the Japanese artist and author Akasegawa Genpei, who defined it as "useless but beautifully preserved objects connected to some form of real estate." That is, things that in one way or another have become vestigial and meaningless. An underlying link is shown between the concept hyperart and an archaeologically inspired approach to the material world. The rudimentary and detached are regarded as an integral part of the anthropogenic environment, and it is theorized that such recognition is important in depicting both past and contemporary human environments.*

Article D

Farstadvoll, S. *forthcoming*. "Mold, weeds and plastic lanterns: ecological aftermath in a derelict garden." In *Heritage Ecologies*, edited by Þ. Pétursdóttir and T. R. Bangstad. Routledge.

Abstract: *This text explores the ecological aftermath of Retiro an apparently abandoned 19th century landscape garden. It explores three "unconventional" facets of Retiro that constitute and continue to shape the place today, namely fungi, invasive organisms, and "feral" artefacts. By highlighting how interactions between anthropogenic things and non-humans is a part of an ecological landscape, the author hopes to weave an intricate picture of how such places inhabit the present day. The text concludes that a heritage place cannot be separated from its ecological context that is an inherent part of its being, and thus, to articulate heritage as place it is necessary to establish connections to things that might usually be seen as inconsequential or even irrelevant.*

Article E

Farstadvoll, S. *forthcoming*. "Feral Heritage: The Case of a Ruining Landscape Garden." In *Contemporary and historical archaeologies of rurality and the rural*, edited by D. Lee. Archaeopress.

Abstract: *Retiro is a derelict landscape garden and country estate located in the town of Molde on the north-western coast of Norway. It should not be confused with the more famous namesake Parque del Retiro in Madrid. The estate with its garden and villa was built in the 1870s in a rural landscape dotted with fields, humble farmsteads, stone fences, copses, and several other summer estates. The gradual state of disrepair started as early as the interwar years while the surrounding rural environment has been replaced by an urban landscape. This text explores the complexity of a place that can be regarded as an urban interstice, a rural remainder, and a kind of feral wilderness: How can we characterize the present-day Retiro, which is a remnant of a once rural landscape that has slowly been enveloped by a growing city? The question of how sites are categorized is relevant for how sites are researched, interpreted, and managed. The text concludes that while it is difficult to make absolute distinctions between purely rural and urban sites, it would be a mistake to ignore the differences altogether.*

Article A

Blant restene av Retiro
Forfall og kulturminner

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Flassende maling, smuldrende mørtel, saltutslagen betong, oksidert armeringsjern og falmede tekstiler – forfall kan være og ramme så mangt. I en tradisjonell forstand gir ordet forfall gjerne assosiasjoner til tap, skade og andre negativt ladede begreper, særlig når det dreier seg om kulturminner. Selv om det har blitt skrevet mye om de positive og interessante karakteristikkene til forfall, ruiner og ikke minst avfall innenfor samtidsarkeologi og relatert litteratur (se for eksempel Edensor 2005; DeSilvey 2006; González-Ruibal 2008; Burström 2009; Dawdy 2010; Olsen 2010:166-172; Cherry 2014; Kobiałka 2014; Olsen og Pétursdóttir 2014; Viney 2014), så er dette ting som stort sett fortsatt blir oppfattet som negativt og problematisk. Disse holdningene kommer godt til syne blant annet gjennom mangfoldet av artikler i lokalaviser og nyhetsnettsider som omtaler besværlige ting i forfall, som for eksempel skjemmende bilkirkegårder (Heen 2010), forlatte romleirer (Flekkøy og Taylor 2014), farlige kråkeslottruiner (Hansen 2010), rusten piggtråd fra krigen (Aaserud 2014), båtvrak (Sandvik 2015), eller falleferdige hoppbakker (Braathen 2014).

Denne artikkelen drøfter hvordan forfall kan bli sett på som noe mer enn et utelukkende negativt og nytteløst fenomen. Målet med dette er ikke å ignorere eller undergrave forfallets vemodige og negative aspekter, men i stedet fremheve nyanser som kan bli glemt og oversett i vårt møte med forlatte ting og forfall. Noen av nyansene denne artikkelen drøfter er blant annet hvordan forfall fremhever ting på en kronologisk mangfoldig måte, og hvordan dette gir en mer variert forståelse av hvordan den materielle fortiden er affektivt tilstede som en del av samtiden.

Utgangspunktet og inspirasjonen til denne problemstillingen er Retiro, en landskapshage, park og sommervilla bygget rundt 1874 på Fannestranda i Molde. I dag ligger Retiro forlatt og er mer eller mindre overgitt til seg selv, men har i de siste 11 årene vært i fokuset til en rekke interessegrupper bestående av både akademikere og ikke-akademikere. Alle disse interessegruppene, blant andre kommunen, fylkeskommunen og ett privat eiendomsselskap, ønsker på en eller annen måte å rette på den «bedrøvelige» situasjonen til Retiro. Motivasjonen til denne artikkelen er å presentere et alternativt perspektiv som en motvekt til meningene som dominerer den offentlige oppfatningen av Retiro. En av samtidsarkeologiens oppgaver er å sette ting som blir sett på som marginalt, forkastelig eller uønsket i ett nytt lys, og derfor ha en samfunns- og kulturkritisk rolle (Harrison og Schofield 2010:286). I stedet for å se etter løsninger på forfallet til Retiro, retter artikkelen blikket mot hva man konkret kan finne og oppleve i det. I min forstand er dette viktig fordi forfall, ruiner og avhendede ting er noe man ikke kan unngå

å møte, og det er en av måtene både den nære og fjerne fortiden blir erindret og opplevd. En reflektert forståelse av hva som inngår i forfall, selv om det kan variere i karakter fra sted til sted, og fra ting til ting, er viktig om man skal danne en innsikt i hvordan den materielle fortiden er en del av samtiden.

Veien fra landskapshage og sommerbolig til samtidsruin

I dag er Retiro et sted som verken er ute av syne eller utenfor rekkevidde. Det befinner seg midt i et urbant strøk vis-à-vis Fannestrandvegen som er en av de store innfartsveiene til Molde. Fra utsiden viser parken seg som et stort og variert skogholt. Både om vinteren og sommeren kan forbipasserende se hentydninger av bygninger og strukturer bak et stadig større og tettere forheng av trær og krattskog (se figur 1).

Mitt første møte med Retiro var i 2011 under en liten spasertur som tilfeldigvis tok veien gjennom parken. Noe av det første som møtte meg var en rekke med åpne søkesjakter gravd av fylkeskommunens arkeologer på jakt etter automatisk-fredede kulturminner. Synet av sporene etter en arkeologisk undersøkelse ga en fornemmelse av at noe var i ferd med å skje med Retiro. I rapporten fra undersøkelsene kan man lese at kommunen har planlagt å bygge en veitrasé, Knausenlinja, som vil kutte gjennom det sørvestlige hjørnet av parken. Alle de 13 søkesjaktene var negative, og rapporten konkluderer med at "Det ble ikke registrert automatisk fredete kulturminner under dette arbeidet, og det foreligger derfor ingen konflikt i dette området." (Johnston og Johnston 2012:14). Sjaktene var kanskje tomme for fredede kulturminner, men i jordmassene kunne man se glasskår og andre fragmenter av ting som hintet til en annen fortid.

Beveger man seg inn i parken møter man en vegetasjon som veksler mellom tette kjerr med løv- og bartrær, lysninger omkranset av mektige grantrær, til kratt med viltvoksende parkslirekne (*Fallopia japonica*). Parkens fortid avslører seg sakte og tilfeldig gjennom overgrodde steinmurer, et mangfold av uvanlige tre- og plantearter, slyngende stier, forsenkninger

Figur 1. Retiro sett fra et skrått fugleperspektiv mot nord. Retiroparken er den sammenhengende vegetasjonen midt i bildet, hvor man også kan skimte den hvitmalte villaen. Kartdata: Google Earth, CNES/Astrium 2016.

og andre arkitektoniske inngrep i terrenget. Glimtvis ser man at det i villniset fortsatt er noe igjen av Retiroparken som man kjenner igjen fra gamle fotografier, reisebøker og andre historiske skildringer. Men denne fortiden er ikke alene, parken har blitt infiltrert av seinere tilkomne ting, et eklektisk mangfold av sykkelrammer, trehytter, plastposer, isoporinnpakninger, elektriske artikler, graffiti og tomgods.

Retiro ble anlagt på Fannestranda av den danske konsulen og handelsmannen Christian Johnsen og hans kone Jensine Wilhelmine. Fannestranda var en god plass for både hager og sommerboliger på grunn av stedets gunstige klima med fønvind og sørvendte åser som skjermer mot den kjølige nordavinden (Jakobsen 1953:435; Vestad 1961:11). Langs stranda fant man også flere andre herskaplige gods med hager og sommervillaer, blant annet Lubbenes, Lergrovik og Kviltorp (Rønsen 2007:21-26). Landskapshagen til Retiro, ofte omtalt som Retiroparken, ble bygd på en del av Fannestranda som har blitt beskrevet som uryddig, kupert, mindre pent og preget av djupmyr (Parelius 1953; Vestad 1961:10). Retiroparken endte opp som byens største hageanlegg (Sylthe 1999:29), og dekker i dag et areal på omtrent 8,4 hektar.

Retiroparken ble anlagt i landskapelig stil (se figur 2), som ble kjent i England på slutten av 1600-tallet og utover på 1700-tallet gjennom tenkere, arkitekter og kunstnere som William Kent (Bruun 1987:172), Lancelot «Capability» Brown (Bruun 1987:172), Sir William Temple (1908) og William Gilpin (1794), for å nevne noen. Retiro ble laget med klassiske landskapshageelementer som slyngende stier, naturalistiske tjern og stedegen natur, men parken viser også impulser fra sin samtid, spesielt fra de viktorianske og romantiske trendene i den siste halvdelen av 1800-tallet (Lund *et al*. 1935:242-245). Ved siden av de nasjonalromantiske og stedegne innslagene inkorporerte Retiro også eksotiske planter og trær, blant annet japansk sypress (*Chamaecyparis obtusa*), dragetrær (*Dracena*) og viftepalmer (*Phoenix*) (Vestad 1961:14). I parken ble det bygget et veksthus med oppvarming, hvor blant annet varmekjære planter fikk overvintre og fremmede frukter som vindruer, tomater og fiken kunne dyrkes (Parelius 1953; Eikrem 2015:51). Parken hadde et rikt repertoar av planter og hageaksenter og inneholdt blant annet et lite tjern bygget for å etterligne vill norsk natur, men som også var prydet med italienske statuer av Triton og Herkules. En mindre blomsterhage, også kalt prydhagen, var plassert sør for villaen som var bygget i en ekstravagant sveitserstil (Eldal 1998:168). Bare noen meter øst for villaen ble det anlagt en stor gartnerbolig.

Retiro ble besøkt av en rekke kjente personer, blant andre Keiser Wilhelm II og musikeren Ole Bull. I en periode i februar 1877 bodde Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson i villaen. Bjørnson var en venn av Christian Johnsen og de brevvekslet med hverandre. Fannestrandveien og Retiro var trolig inspirasjonen til Bjørnsons beskrivelse av Atlungenes gård og park i fortellingen *Støv* fra 1882 (Adam 1960:261). I denne fortellingen finner man også en personlig beskrivelse av de store og ruvende bartrærne i parken og den omkringliggende yngre løvskogen nede ved fjorden (se Bjørnson 1887:5).

Forfallet til Retiroparken kan man spore tilbake til mellomkrigstiden da interessen for parken tapte seg og vedlikeholdet ble for kostbart. Parken mistet deretter sin faste rytme (Vestad 1961:16). Som så mange andre steder ble også Retiro merket av krigen. Etter at statsrådenes funksjonærstab, blant andre Einar Gerhardsen, brukte Retiro som et midlertidig hovedkvarter under regjeringens flukt i april 1940 (Gleditsch og Gleditsch 1954:48-51), ble eiendommen overtatt av okkupasjonsstyrkene (Parelius 1953). Tyskerne bygget en garasje like nord for villaen og bruke parken som et skjul for lagring av maskineri (Parelius 1953; Vestad 1961:17). Parken var opprinnelig åpen for allmenheten på søndagene (Eikrem 2015:50), men det ble det slutt på når ett av Christian Johnsens barnebarn i 1953 overtok eiendommen. Retiro ble deretter inngjerdet og mer avstengt for offentligheten. På dette tidspunktet hadde Retiroparken forfalt så mye at den ble omtalt som en ruin av lokalhistorikeren Nils Parelius (1953). Øyvind Vestad

Figur 2. Et grovt kart over Retiro før forfallet. Produsert med hjelp av kartmaterialet av H. G. Dahl fra 1886 (Jakobsen 1953:438), flyfoto, fotografier og informasjon fra Vestads (1961:12) samtaler med gartner Jakob Chr. Jakobsen. Tegnet av: Stein Farstadvoll.

beskriver i sin hovedfagsoppgave fra 1961 om eldre hager i moldeområdet, hvordan han trengte kjentfolk til å finne frem til dryppgrotten i den sørøstlige delen av parken som var nedvokst av kratt (Vestad 1961:13). I et jubileumsskrift fra Molde og Romsdal Turistforening fra 1964 blir Retiro betegnende nok omtalt i preteritum (Parelius *et al.* 1964:107).

I 2005 ble Retiro solgt ut av familien Johnsens eie. Den nordlige halvdelen, som for det meste består av parkanlegget, ble kjøpt av Molde kommune, mens den sørlige halvdelen hvor alle de stående bygningen på eiendommen befinner seg ble solgt til det private selskapet Planor Bolig AS. I de 10 siste årene etter salget har det blitt ytret en rekke meninger om forfallet i Retiro. I etterordet til sin masteroppgave om sommervillaene på Fannestranda skriver Berit Rønsen dette om samtidens Retiro:

> Forfallet har dessverre ført til at villaens historie for mange er gått i glemmeboken … Store grantrær tett i tett langs eiendomsgrensen, en rusten smijernsport som leder inn til krattskogen, murer overgrodd av eføy, og en fuktig gjengrodd fordypning i terrenget, er i dag skygger som minner om en glemt storhetstid. (Rønsen 2007:88)

Arkeologen Britt Solli har omtalt Retiro som et mulig tilfelle av kulturkriminalitet, hvor innaktiviteten til kommunen, fylkeskommunen og Planor har ført til en tilstand med akselerert forfall (Solli 2012). Molde kommune ved blant andre arealplansjef Jostein Bø, beskriver Retiro som et sted preget av dårlig vedlikehold, forsøpling og en tilstand som ikke inviterer til aktiv bruk (Hundvebakke 2012b; Molde kommune 2014a:13-14). I en masteroppgave i arkitektur fra 2012, hvor forfatteren ser for seg Retiro ombygget til et livssynsnøytralt minnerom, blir samtidens Retiro referert til som en gjengrodd skog som er kaotisk, uryddig og lite besøkt (Kjørsvik 2012). Facebook-gruppen «La Retiroparken Leve» er et eksempel på

Figur 3. En port fortsatt låst med kjetting og hengelås på den vestlige kanten av parken. Til venstre for porten går det en sti gjennom et hull i gjerdet. Foto: Stein Farstadvoll, oktober 2015.

hvordan lokale privatpersoner og naboer har oppfattet samtidens Retiro (Hundvebakke 2012a). Målet med gruppen blir beskrevet som "... å få igang en storstilt dugnad for å få ryddet i Retiroparken, så den igjen kan bli til glede for byens innbyggere". En anonym leserkommentar i lokalavisen beskriver godt stemningen i dagens offentlige diskusjonen om Retiro: "Tenk for en idyllisk plass det har vært, og kan bli!" (*Romsdal Budstikke* 2009). Retiro som en samtidsruin kan således sies å ligge konseptuelt fanget mellom «har vært» og «kan bli». Men, kan man finne noe annet i forfallet, i skyggene av den glemte storhetstiden som Rønsen nevner?

I skyggen til storhetstiden

Om man tar en tur innom Retiro i dag vil man forstå at mange personer opplever parkens tilstand som tragisk, slik det kommer frem i et annet anonymt leserinnlegg i lokalavisen: "Som jentunge syntes jeg Retiro-området var som et vakkert eventyr. Forfallet smerter meg." (*Romsdal Budstikke* 2010). Og det er ikke til å komme vekk fra at ting har gått tapt eller er falt ut av syne. Etter nærmere 70 år langt fravær av omsorgsfulle gartnere har vegetasjonen vokst ut av menneskelig kontroll og forvillet seg, statuer blitt knust, murer kollapset og bjørke-kratt invadert de tidligere så fargesprakende blomsterbedene. Utover selve parken, så har forfallet til villaen og gartnerboligen fått særlig med oppmerksomhet. Da villaen ble restaurert på 50-tallet ble all snekkerglede, verandaer, samt den øvre etasjen i annekset fjernet. I kommunens planer om å restaurerer villaen ønsker man å gi den tilbake fasaden den opprinnelig hadde i 1880, mens innsiden skal modifiseres til en standard som passer for en moderne barnehage (Molde kommune 2014b:9-10).

Likevel er det slående hvor mye av Retiro som fortsatt er bevart etter å ha vært etterlatt til seg selv i et dynamisk og urbant landskap. Om man sammenligner de tidligste flyfotografiene av

Figur 4. Halen til Tritons hippocamp. Kun denne biten og noen fragmenter fra pidestallen er det som er igjen av fontenen. Til høyre i bildet ligger den omtalte mursteinen. Foto: Stein Farstadvoll, mai 2015.

Figur 5. Skogstjernet i dag, overgrodd med mose og villnis. Sett fra øst mot vest. Foto: Stein Farstadvoll, mai 2015.

Fannestranda fra 1947 med de siste fra 2014, kan man observere hvor lite eiendommen har endret seg i forhold til det omkringliggende landskapet. Da Retiro ble bygget lå det landlig til, ca. 2 km øst for bykjernen til Molde, som på den tiden var en liten kjøpstad med rundt 1700 innbyggere (Det Statistiske Centralbureau 1878-1881:9).

På enkelte fuktige partier langs stiene i parken finnes sponplater og planker som har blitt lagt der for å dekke over gjørmepytter; kanskje det er gjort av den lokale velforeningen eller noen andre initiativtakere. Slike ting finner man over alt i parken, som kanskje derfor ikke er så forlatt som man får følelsen av før man går inn i den. Stien som kutter midt gjennom eiendommen fra øst til vest er i dag brukt som en snarvei og trimløype. Langs denne stien gikk det tidligere en allé med nåletrær, trolig edelgran, som ble rasert av nyttårsorkanen i 1991. Rundt stien finner man fortsatt enkeltstående, og klynger med grantrær. Kratt med både unge og eldre trær, etterkommerne til den opprinnelige alleen, åpner opp for en bruddstykkeaktig kontinuitet. Noen plantearter har overlevd godt i det forlatte landskapet, som Vestad observerte allerede for rundt 55 år siden:

> Det er naturlig at enkelte planteslag har tatt overhånd ... Særlig fremtredende er Abies alba … Videre har Picea abies greid seg godt, og det samme kan sies om Pinus sylvestries ... Hedera helix fortjener å bli nevnt. Den liker seg godt når den får stelle seg sjøl .... (Vestad 1961:16).

Parken kan bli beskrevet som en frodig og vital ruin, hvor forfallet ikke bare gjelder artefakter men også vegetasjonen.

Et av de mest kjente innslagene i Retiro-parken er «Atlanterhavet», et lite tjern med to små holmer og en rekke viker langs en slyngende «kystlinje» som i sin tid ble anlagt i det nordvestlige hjørnet av parken. I dag ligger tjernet delvis gjemt i skyggen av en lund av forvokste trær, deriblant gran, bjørk, edelgran og furu. Enkelte steder på bunnen av det tørre tjernet stikker det opp rustne vannledninger, men det mest iøynefallende er en samling med fragmenter fra den sønderknuste Tritonfontenen; bare halen til hippokampen og deler av pidestallen ligger tilbake (se figur 4). Blant fragmentene ligger det en murstein, kanskje et medskyldig vitne om hvordan Triton endte opp som en ruinhaug. Det er åpenbart at Triton mangler flere deler; kanskje har noen tatt med seg fragmenter hjem. På en av holmene stod det en liten «jakthytte», som i en hageestetisk sammenheng kan betraktes som en *folly*[1]. Jakthytten er for lengst borte, men man kan fortsatt se en svak firkantet tuft der den en gang stod. Under kraftige regnskyll blir tjernet delvis fylt med vann, som gir en hentydning til dammens opprinnelige og tiltenkte utseende. Stiene som går forbi tjernet er fortsatt godt brukt; selv i det åpenbare forfallet fortsetter «Atlanterhavet» å tiltrekke seg oppmerksomhet. Rundt tjernet finnes flere nylige tilføyelser, som for eksempel en godt brukt bålplass, et par ramponerte benker, restene en løvhytte bygget av barn, en malplassert vindusramme av impregnert treverk, samt inskripsjoner skåret inn i omkringliggende trær.

Som et motstykke til det velkjente «Atlanterhavet», finner man i den motsatte enden av parken det mer ukjente Skogstjernet, også kalt Fjellvatnet (se figur 5). Dette tjernet har med tiden gått i ett med den anmassende vegetasjonen. For å oppdage at det er noe mer med denne mosefylte forsenkingen hjelper det med et arkeologisk blikk. Gjennom forfallet kan man si at tjernets utseendemessige ambisjon har over alle forventninger blitt oppfylt, fordi det er vanskelig å se det i dag som noe annet enn et vilt tjern overvokst med myr og mose. Noen meter sør for Skogstjernet ligger den nevnte dryppgrotten, fortsatt like innkapslet i et kratt av grantrær som Vestad observerte på 1960-tallet (Vestad 1961:13). Den tørrmurte konstruk-

[1] I sammenheng med arkitektur blir en folly beskrevet som bygning som ikke har noen annen funksjon enn å være et dekorativt og estetisk objekt. Kan oversettes fra engelsk til norsk som «dårete».

Figur 6. En oppbygd plattform støttet opp av en tørrmur overgrodd med gravmyrt. Muren ligger like sørvest for veksthuset i parken. Foto: Stein Farstadvoll, september 2011.

sjonen er fortsatt like hel, men rustne kroker kilt mellom steinene i taket og forsvinnende flekker med murpuss er falmende hint om et tidligere utseende.

Forfallets annerledeshet

Hvorfor blir forfall nødvendigvis oppfattet som noe negativt? Dette spørsmålet kan virke selvinnlysende og naivt, men er noe man må spørre seg når man først reflekterer over forfall. Forfall, vannskjøtsel og øde(-)leggelse blir ofte sett på som en negativ konsekvens eller et symbol for noe annet enn hva som ligger i det rent materielle. Det kan for eksempel være symbol på fraflytting, fattigdom, økonomiske nedgangstider, mangel på respekt for normer i et samfunn, eller til og med ett tegn på svakhet hos den regjerende makten i en nasjon (Schönle 2011:219-230). Som sett ovenfor, så har tilstanden til Retiro blant annet blitt sett på som en konsekvens av spekulativt forfall og en passiv kulturvernmyndighet (Solli 2012). I dette blir valget å ikke forhindre forfallet en handling i seg selv. Det er ikke til å komme vekk fra at forfall ofte er sterkt politisk ladet, og blir således lett en grobunn for metaforer og allegorier.

Foruten det symbolske har forfallet selvsagt en materiell karakter som påvirker hvordan ting oppleves. Forfallet kan konkret oppleves som truende, fordi det både kan skape og tydeliggjøre farer. Falleferdige hus med smuldrende gulv og åpne avgrunner, råtnende og sykdomsspredende materie, jern rustet til spisse og sagende kanter, perforerte gjenstander som lekker skadelige kjemikalier. I Retiro er det tette villniset et sted som kan skjule trusler og «urenheter» – dette kan være alt fra uautoriserte teltleirer eller svarte-

listede planter som platanlønn (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) og gravmyrt (*Vinca minor*) (Gederaas *et al*. 2012:36, 179; Gaarder og Vatne 2013) (se figur 6). I denne forståelsen er forfall noe som potensielt kan true økologi, klima og i det hele den underliggende stabiliteten til verdenen man lever i. Det skumle med disse tingene er nettopp at de kan med sine frigitte og uforutsigbare kvaliteter påvirke både mennesker og sine omgivelser, noe som man ikke helt har kontroll på.

Er det noe mer med forfallet enn symbol for våre feilsteg eller frastøtende materielle kvaliteter? I dette er det lett å glemme at forfall er noe som ligger i naturen til tingene selv som ikke er knyttet til verdiladede observasjoner. Integriteten til Retiro ligger på et vis i spenningsfeltet mellom løse gjenstander, som det gjenværende inventaret i bygningene eller andre små og flyttbare gjenstander, og det faste, store og solide, som staute sypresstrær, murfundamentet til veksthuset eller lafteverket til villaen og gartnerboligen. Noen ting spiller på sin størrelse, hvor de smetter inn mellom og under andre gjenstander, slik som potteskårene som stikker opp av jorda på det oppmurte platået utenfor veksthuset. Små ting unnviker lett våre blikk, men som minner kan de være like virkningsfulle som de store (Olivier 2011:29). Det er åpenbart at man taper ting i forfallet, som for eksempel jakthytten på holmen i «Atlanterhavet» eller huskestativet som stod midt i parken på den nå helt overgrodde lekeplassen. Selv om Retiro omformes og reduseres gjennom korrosjon, erosjon, biologiske prosesser og ikke minst menneskelige aktivitet, så er det ting som standhaftig blir værende der på tross av forfallet. Mye av det tapte er heller ikke helt forsvunnet, bare gjemt ute av syne under et akkumulerende lag med humus og vegetasjon. Fra et arkeologisk synspunkt så er ikke forgjengelighet det mest karakteristiske med ting, men snarere dets gjenstridige og «klebrige» kvaliteter (Olsen 2013, 2015). Forfall er ikke nødvendigvis noe som alltid reduserer mengden med ting, det kan heller virke stikk motsatt fordi det gir muligheten til nye ting å anmasse seg.

Forfall skaper en ruin-økologi hvor landskap, planter, dyr, ting og mennesker er med på å skape en alternativ stabilitet. Herluf Grüner observerer i en artikkel i Romsdal Budstikke fra 2011 at "[i] dag er det bare spor igjen etter parkens storhetstid", men at "[f]or den som er litt mer observant vil fremdeles finne mange forskjellige trær og planter som ikke er helt vanlig i en skog på våre kanter." (Grüner 2011). Det er uomtvistelig at gjenstander, planter og strukturer har gått tapt i forfallet, men det er også åpenbart at noen ting vedvarer som en påminnelse om stedets fortid(er). Forfallet åpner opp for en annerledes og bokstavelig talt «levende» kulturarv. Materielle kulturminner lever ikke bare videre på våre premisser men fortsetter å være på sine egne ikke-menneskelige måter.

I området rundt villaen kan man fortsatt finne ting som minner om snekkergleden som en gang preget bygningen. I det åpne vedskjulet i den østlige enden av garasjen, finner man blant annet planker og en bjelke fra det tidligere dekorerte mønet til villaen gjenbrukt som støttebjelker til vedstabler. Om man så ser opp vil man oppdage et stort sopplignende hageornamentet som en gang stod i blomsterhagen. Titter man inn gjennom vinduet i lagerrommet i gartnerboligen, kan man se lent inntil en av veggene «kronen» som prydet toppen av tårnet som ble fjernet fra villaen på 50-tallet. Lengre inn i selve parken finner man alt fra morkne stabler med bygningsmateriale til gardinfragment og henslengte vindusrammer fra gartnerboligen. Gjennom å dra ting ut av sin sammenheng bidrar ruinering og forfall til å fremheve ting som vanligvis ville ha vært ubemerket i en ferdig og komplett helhet (Andersson 2001:24, 45). Nærmest som i en museumsutstilling «ser» man ting som vanligvis ligger utenfor rekkevidde eller er tilslørt av en tilsynelatende helhet. Forfallet tilbyr en opplevelse av fortiden som er annerledes enn det vi møter i tilrettelagte og velpleiete kulturminner, eller i det som skildres gjennom bøker og andre sekundære fremstillinger.

Forfallet åpner opp for rom og situasjoner hvor hverdagslige ting blir fremhevet på en annerledes måte enn man forventer å se de. I

Figur 7. Det øvre bildet viser før og det nedre bildet etter at området vest for ruinen av veksthuset ble delvis ryddet for trær og søppel. Foto: Stein Farstadvoll, september 2011 og mai 2015.

dette kan vanligvis ubemerkelige, hverdagslige og trivielle gjenstander og minner få plass til å sette seg selv i fokus (Grabowski *et al.* 2014) – hvor man kan støte på en VHS-spiller, ett gulv dekket med ukeblader fra 70-tallet eller ville kratt med parkslirekne (*fallopia japonica*) i full blomst. Det som støter i forfallet, gir også en åpning mot ting som overasker og alluderer til en nærværende og materiell fortid. Forfallet og ruiner artikulerer en tilstedeværende fortid i samtiden som er umulig å gjenskape på andre måter. Morkne planker i kjelleren og utedoen til gartnerboligen som ellers ville ha blitt byttet ut for å holde forfallet på avstand, avsløres som et impromptu arkiv for både inskripsjoner fra 1800-tallet og moderne sprayboksgraffiti. Ruiner, forfall og ting forlatt til seg selv frister oss til å stille spørsmål, utforske og oppleve dem. En slik arkeologisk nysgjerrighet som har opphav i tingene selv kan være verdifullt på en annen måte enn som det tilsynelatende fullstendige og ferdig forklarte. Forfallet er ikke alltid en avslutning, men starten på en annerledes varighet som ikke kun tilbyr mangler og tapte muligheter. Det frister heller med uforutsette opplevelser og alternative utgangspunkt for å erindre fortiden.

Søppel, skjøtsel og estetikk

Tilstanden til Retiro blir i dag overveiende sett på som et problem som trenger en løsning for å frigjøre stedets «egentlige» potensial, enten det er som boligtomter, barnehage eller en istandsatt landskapshage. Søppel, hærverk og villnis er noen av tingene som står i veien for dette. Her er det ikke bare snakk om at ting blir skadet eller går tapt, men også noe som rammer estetiske forutsigelser. Lappeteppet av mosegrodde fotballsko, barnevogner og kasseroller i skogkanten, flassende maling, tette bjørkekratt og ugjennomtrengelige villnis av edelgran, avviker fra nåtidens funksjonelle parker og hager med slagord som "... 'sol, lys og grønt' ..." (Bruun 1987:203). Retiro er beskrevet som en av byens største «grønne lunger», grøntområder og grøntareal (Molde kommune 2014a:14), men det er også bli sett på som byens største mørklagte område. Retiro mangler belysning og ligger nattestid som en mørk lomme blant de vanligvis flombelyste urbane omgivelsene. Noen av egenskapene Retiro har tilegnet seg i forfallet er at den gir ly til det som blir frastøtt fra andre steder.

I en reportasje i lokalavisen fra 2014 ble det bemerket at det var store mengder «søppel» i Retiroparken, som "[g]amle madrasser, ødelagte barnevogner, elektriske artikler, klær, emballasje og metallrester." (Lange 2014). Selv om kommunen ikke ville kommentere hvem som stod bak dette (Henriksen 2014), ble «gjerningspersonene» i to anonyme kommentarer omtalt som «tiggere» (*Romsdal Budstikke* 2014a og 2014b). Det er kanskje ikke tilfeldig at kommunen har gjort inngrep, eller «strategisk skjøtsel», for å åpne opp enkelte partier av parken. Dette er godt synlig spesielt rundt veksthuset og et område i parken nord for villaen, der trær og kratt er kuttet ned (se figur 7). Dype hjulspor etter traktoren som fraktet søpla ut av parken kan man også observere i restene av den gamle kjøkkenhagen. Det kan være mange grunner til dette, men det er trolig at området ble åpnet opp for å gjøre stedet mindre attraktivt som tilholdssted for "ikke autoriserte personer"[2]. For å forhindre at dette skulle skje igjen, ble det under paragraf 3 i forskrift om politivedtekt i Molde og Møre og Romsdal satt et forbud mot overnatting, camping og telting i blant annet parker og grøntområder i tettbygde strøk (Forskrift om politivedtekt 2014). Her ser man at noen ting kan bli så uutholdelige at selv et forfallent sted som Retiroparken blir ryddet for å opprettholde en estetisk standard. Til tross for at kommunen i 2014 gjorde et forsøk på å rydde vekk det uønskede samtidsarkeologiske tilfanget, finner man fortsatt gjenstander spredt

[2] Betegnelsen kommunen opererer med når de referer til mennesker som har tatt seg ulovlig inn i blant annet villabygningen (Molde Kommune 2014a:14).

Figur 8. Dryppgrotten sett fra vest mot øst. Foto: Stein Farstadvoll, mai 2015.

rundt om i parken, som en mødding gjemt bak murene i veksthuset, en blå vannpistol i skyggen av et stort grantre, eller en fotballsko kamuflert av et lag med grønn mose. Disse «ferske» minnene blir en del av Retiros materielle biografi; med sine rustne, morkne og algebekledde overflater finner den anmassende samtiden seg godt til rette i Retiros forfall.

Lokalhistorikeren Nils Parelius som vokste opp som nabo til Retiro på Lubbenes, husker fra sin barndom at turer i Retiroparken "... virket som et overveldende og fremmedartet eventyr." (Parelius 1953). I et annet barndomsmemoar blir Retiroparken beskrevet som et spesielt affektivt sted:

> Når det gjelder denne parken, må jeg ty til det ordet som ikke var så vanlig den gangen: skummel. Trærne var så høge, så tette, solstrålene trengte seg ikke ned til de smale stiene … Inne mellom stiene var det et lite tjern, uff, man snakket om spøkelser og drukning. (Wist 2004)

Landskapshager, spesielt de som ble inspirert av romantikkens strømninger på 1800-tallet, hadde ikke bare ambisjonen om å skape et sted for praktisk nytte selv om parken både hadde praktiske innslag som kjøkken- og frukthager. Disse hagene hadde også som mål å vekke følelser hos de besøkende, som opplevelser av det behagelige, fryktelige og uventede (Bruun 1987:178; Sylthe 1999:30). Retiro ble bygget som et estetisk objekt, et konstruert sted som skulle gjøre et inntrykk på sansene og følelsene til de besøkende. Immanuel Kant plasserte lysthager i samme kategori som malerkunsten; malerier avbildet naturen, mens hager var en vakker omorganisering av naturen (Kant 2000:196-201). I motsetning til et maleri så avbilder ikke Retiroparken noe, men er et konkret sted som presenterer sine former materielt, som Kant (2000:200) forklarer det. Man vet godt hva som skjer med at maleri om det forfaller, hvor motivet viskes vekk av falmende farger og flassende maling. En hage og park forfaller på en annerledes måte; her samler det seg nye ting, noen ting mister sin opprinnelige form men får i bytte en annen. I stedet for at fargene falmer, kommer det kanskje til syne et helt nytt spekter av farger – dette trenger ikke å være noe nytt i den betydning at det kommer fra ingenting, men heller at det er noe som allerede ligger i tingene som kommer til syne.

Det pittoreske er en av de positive kvalitetene som har blitt assosiert med forfall, da spesielt med tanke på ruiner (Gilpin 1794:7-8; Schönle 2011:222; Woodward 2002:118-120). Forfall er et velkjent motiv i kunst, film og skjønnlitteratur (Yablon 2009; Hell og Schönle 2010; Schönle 2011), det har også hatt en sterk rolle i estetikken til lanskapshager, hvor det i mange tilfeller ble konstruert kunstige ruiner som *follies* (Hunt 1992:179-180; Woodward 2002:126). Dryppgrotten i Retiroparken kan fra bli forstått som en slik simulert ruin; «grotten» er bygget inntil en bergvegg som et lite tørrmurt og tønneformet steinhvelv (se figur 8). Den enkle, men teknisk gjennomførte konstruksjonen sammen med et torvtekt tak, har en form som skaper assosiasjoner til arkitektur langt eldre enn sveitservillaer eller oppvarmede veksthus. Det er vanskelig ikke å bli slått av den smått ironiske tanken om at denne strukturen som opprinnelig ble bygget for å virke antikk og falleferdig, til slutt har blitt hva det etterlignet. Å knytte forfallet for tett til eksklusive estetiske kvaliteter av å enten være vakker, fryktelig eller stygg, kan være uheldig fordi det kan også redusere ting til troper og universelle generaliteter. Man må imidlertid være forsiktig med å si at forfallets estetikk er utelukkende en sosial konstruksjon uten noen form for tilknytning til en konkret materiell virkelighet.

For noen kan det være tungt å se et spektakulært og ærverdig sted som Retiro bli forlatt til forfallet. Som fylkeskonservator i Møre og Romsdal fylkeskommune Bjørn Ringstad skriver: "Vi kan ikke ta vare på alt 'det gamle' som er rundt oss, men når det dreier seg om kulturminner av stor lokal, regional eller nasjonal verdi er det fylkeskonservatorens plikt å si i fra" (Ringstad 2014). Det er alltid noe som blir umarkert og ureflektert forlatt til forfallet, men når det rammer det spektakulære skaper

Figur 9. Den nordvendte baksiden av Villa Retiro. I dag er nesten alle vinduene til bygningen blitt dekt over med sponplater og malingen har begynt å prelle av. Foto: Stein Farstadvoll, mai 2015.

det en storm av meninger. Mange ting blir kastet og forlatt uten at man ofrer det noen tanker eller bekymringer. Mye av den materielle fortiden kan sies å være en underbevisst del av samtiden (se Olivier 2011:188, 192). Den tinglige fortiden fremtrer ikke alltid ved første øyekast som vakker eller estetisk behagelig; dette kan sies å gjelde for mesteparten av materialet arkeologer håndterer (Olsen 2012:76). De fortidige omgivelsene må ikke alltid være tiltalende og behagelig for å være verken informativt eller tilby noe minneverdig.

Historie, samtid og det som støter

Tilstanden til Retiro i dag støter både sanser og prinsipper, men den akkumulerte og fortsatt opphopende fortiden åpner opp for mye mer enn bekymringer og dikotomier mellom det stygge og skjønne. Retiro er ikke bare en scene for en tragedie om forsømmelse og tap. I forfallets fravær av kalkulerte valg, finner man at noen ting blir trukket fram i deres materielle varighet, mens andre får et dunklere nærvær. Dette til forskjell fra et estetisk kultivert og renset landskap klargjort for formidling, hvor prinsippet om kronologisk renhet og enhet har fått råde. Den rekonstruerte hagen ved Chateauet i Molde kan brukes som et eksempel på dette. Denne hagen som stod ferdig i 1918 var bygget i en nyklassisistisk stil, men under den tyske bombingen under andre verdenskrig ble eiendommen rammet av 8-10 bomber (Sylthe 1987). Etter lengre periode med forfall i etterkrigsårene, er hagen i dag rekonstruert; krigens herjinger og bombekratrene er i dag kun erindret på et skilt i hagen med en liten tekst illustrert av et lite svar-hvit bilde. Chateauet er et godt bilde på kulturminneverns-idealet om det tidsmessige rene og stilistiske eksemplaret; et godt utsnitt av 1918 med minst mulig tidsmessige forstyrrelser. Til forskjell fra Chateauets mono-kronologi finner man i Retiroparken en kronologisk mangfoldighet,

hvor ting fra forskjellige tider og opphav ligger ved siden av hverandre i forfallet. For eksempel den flassende malingen på villaen viser en slik flertydig og materiell temporalitet; i takt med at den hvite malingen skaller av avdekkes villaens tidligere oker-brune farge (se figur 9).

Bekymringene rundt Retiros forfall kan beskrives som et sammenstøt mellom to objekter. Det første objektet er det historiske Retiro, som man kan beskrive med ord som «opprinnelig» og «autentisk». Det fremtrer gjennom beskrivelser i tekster og ikke minst i fotografier som det finnes rikelig av fra Retiros glansdager på slutten av 1800-tallet og første halvdel av 1900-tallet. Det historiske objektet Retiro blir evig ungt og uten de konkrete samtidige materialiteter som forvillet edelgran eller den smuldrende murpussen på fontenen i blomsterhagen. Dette kan sies å være en oppfatning av hvordan Retiro burde være; fritt for råtnende trestammer, gjengrodde stier, henslengte ølbokser, knuste statuer og potteskår. Dette er det konkrete objektet Retiro som i dag kolliderer med det historiske Retiro-objektets tidløse og kronologiske rengjorte representasjoner. Forfallets tid og utstrekning blir en «ikke-tid» og et tomrom i en strengt historisk forståelse av parken. I det asynkrone forholdet mellom historiske representasjoner, segmenterte og fryste øyeblikksfotografi (Olivier 2001), og det forfallende Retiro, oppstår det utilpass spenning mellom det som var og er – et rom for sammenstøt, forstyrrelser og ufrivillig erindring (Benjamin 2002:211, 2003:315, 2007:202; Olsen 2010:118-119).

Som sett så kan ting som man assosierer med forfall også vise en affektiv og alternativ akkumulasjon av fortid. Forfall blir som regel ikke planlagt når noe blir produsert eller bygget, selv om det finnes unntak som for eksempel sett i Albert Speers (1970:55-56) teori om ruin-verdi eller når ting blir konstruert for å svikte og falle fra hverandre innen et planlagt tidsrom (Tischleder og Wasserman 2015). Kanskje Retiro er et sted man kan finne et «stille rom» (Kjørsvik 2012; Meisingset 2013) som skiller seg fra det hverdagslige og velregisserte bymiljøet. I

Figur 10. En kjærlighetserklæring risset inn i stammen til et grantre ved den østlige bredden til «Atlanterhavet» Foto: Stein Farstadvoll, september 2011.

denne fredelige uordenen kan ting bringe opp i dagen uforutsette kvaliteter og minner. På flere steder i Retiroparken, særlig i området rundt «Atlanterhavet», finner man navn, figurer og ord skåret inn i trestammer. Ristningene rundt om i Retiro består som regel av banale motiver som for eksempel «S+E ♥» (se figur 10). Disse ristningene har ingenting å gjøre med Retiro fra 1874, men gir et innblikk i at ting ikke stopper å skje selv om parken tilsynelatende er overlatt til seg selv. De er også ting som har fått muligheten til å bli til gjennom den gjenværende fortiden. Nye muligheter og premisser ble skapt etter at gartnerens omsorg for parken opphørte.

Man kan si det finnes nok et sammenstøt i Retiro, hvor oppfatninger om uberørt natur og villmark blir utfordret fordi forfallet kan bli sett på som en naturlig prosess hvor også ting produsert av mennesker inngår. Retiro er et sted som kan rette oppmerksomhet på skillet mellom konseptene om natur og kultur(minner). I de siste årene har lokale personer begynt å benevne Retiroparken for Retiroskogen (Holsbøvåg 2010:47). Parken har blitt omtalt samtidig både som en tragedie og en «grønn lunge»; I forfallet har Retiro inntatt en ambivalent posisjon som en villmark hvor dyre- og plantelivet blomstrer, samtidig som det er et falleferdig sted hvor en historie er i ferd med å bli borte. Grove og ruvende trær, de opprinnelige plantene som har holdt til i Retiro siden den ble bygget, utfordrer et stillestående bilde av den «autentiske» parken og hagen slik den fremstod på slutten av 1800-tallet. Hvordan vil den heterogene ansamlingen med materielle minner i Retiro fremtre i en forskjønnet og restaurert park med nye innslag som asfalterte slåballbaner og skateanlegg (Molde kommune 2015:23), til forskjell fra det man finner i forfallet?

Å si at forfall er en «god» ting kan virke som en selvmotsigelse, og på enkelte måter er det det også; forfall handler på en side om at ting blir borte og uklare, men på den andre siden åpner det også opp for et møte med samtidens arkeologiske fortid (se Lucas 2004). Som jeg har argumentert for i denne teksten så kan et sted som Retiro som både er forfallent og overlatt til seg selv fremheve aspekter med fortiden som ikke kommer frem om det «settes i stand». Når ting får forfalle eller ligge i fred, gir det muligheten til at andre små historier kan oppdages, slik som restene etter en forlatt teltleir eller inskripsjoner på trestammer. Forfallet kan sette fokus på små hendelser, historier og nyanser i samtidens samfunn som ellers ville ha blitt sett på som uønskede i en kontrollert formidlingssammenheng hvor forfallet ikke blir sett på som en del av stedets biografi (se Shanks 1998). I et samfunn opptatt av å forskjønne, restaurere og bevare, så kan det være nyttig med et reflektert bilde på forfall som ikke bare fokuserer på tap, fare, eller det heslige, fordi samtiden etterlater seg også et arkeologisk materiale som er en informasjonskilde og som tilbyr opplevelser man ikke finner andre steder.

Avslutning

Reguleringsplanen har lenge vært på overtid (Bjørnerem 2012; Landsvik 2014), og Retiro har nylig blitt pekt ut av fylkeskonservatoren som et aktuelt grøntanlegg som kan vurderes i sammenheng med Riksantikvarens registreringer av kulturhistoriske landskap av nasjonal interesse, «KULA» (Harnes 2016). Forfall av ting som blir oppfattet som viktige kulturminner er som regel oppfattet som uønsket, men det er et uunngåelig aspekt som tilhører våre materielle omgivelser. En alternativ tilnærming er å la ting være som de er, og «bevare» forfallet slik det er (se Pétursdóttir, 2012:42-45, 2014). Men en tilnærming som baserer seg på ikke-intervensjon krever forståelse fra både forvaltningsmyndighetene og menneskene som må leve med eller i nærheten av tingene det gjelder.

Forfallet gjør det åpenbart at det finnes en tilstedeværende fortid som alltid vil ligge utenfor det som er offisielt anerkjent og ivaretatt som kulturarv. Hva man arver er noe man ikke alltid har kontroll eller oversikt over. Dette finner man også på et sted som Retiro, som er omtalt som et nasjonalt klenodium med stor kulturhistorisk verdi (Neergaard 2014). Første setning i andre paragraf i Kulturminneloven lyder slik: "Med kulturminner menes alle spor etter menneskelig

virksomhet i vårt fysiske miljø, herunder lokaliteter det knytter seg historiske hendelser, tro eller tradisjon til." (LOV-1978-06-09-50 2009). Den lovgitte definisjonen av kulturminner er altomfattende; klimatiske endringer, mikropartikler av plast i fjordene og naturalisert kjempebjørnekjeks kan ifølge loven være kulturminner. Selv i vår tid med stort fokus på resirkulering, gjenbruk og avfallsreduksjon, er det alltid noen ting som blir forlatt til seg selv. I og rundt det som forfaller finner man en tilfeldig, uforutsett og ikke-lineær akkumulasjon med ting (Olsen 2010:168, se også Olivier 2011), ting som er «ute av hånden» (Pétursdóttir 2014). Samtidsarkeologien gir en mulighet til å oppriktig møte, oppleve og tenke på slike steder som de er, som for eksempel nedlagte sildefabrikker på Island (Pétursdóttir 2013:17-25), sovjetisk infrastruktur på Kolahalvøya (Olsen 2015), eller et sted som Retiro.

Forfall og at ting blir overlatt til seg selv er et viktig fenomen fordi det er noe som alltid vil hjemsøke omgivelsene mennesker oppholder seg i (Edensor 2005: 151-153). Tings varighet, endring og sammenfall, er noe man uunngåelig må forholde seg til, bevisst eller ikke. Forfall er ikke så mye noe rent positivt eller negativt, men heller noe man ubestridelig må leve med. Mats Burström har fremhevet at samtidsarkeologisk materiale, som for eksempel en bilkirkegård, kan åpne opp og tilby eksistensielle refleksjoner (Burström 2009:141-142). Materialiteten til forfallet er ikke bare et speil hvor vi kun ser oss selv, men byr oss også til å tenke på og oppleve tingene selv og hvordan de er. Forfall og materiell arv er koplet sammen med eksistens, til hva som er, hvordan det er og når noe slutter å være. Gjennom å dvele ved forfallet og ødelagte ting støter man på noe grunnleggende i vår levde verden. Arkeologi og kulturminnevern er noen av måtene man i dag forholder seg til forfall, både når det gjelder tap og varighet.

Takk

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Summary

This article discusses how dilapidated material heritage could be understood as something more than just an abject phenomenon. Archaeology of the recent past offers an opportunity to consider such things from a more nuanced perspective that don't dismiss them out of hand. These nuances shed new light on how dilapidated things shape our experience of the recent past. The discussion is based on Retiro, a derelict 19th century landscape garden and country estate located in the town of Molde on the northwestern coast of Norway. The description of Retiro is based on data gathered from field-surveys conducted by the author, articles from the local newspaper and other historical sources. Central themes are the relationship between persistence and loss regarding the dilapidation of the recent past, the aesthetic aspects of derelict things, and the tension between historical representation and the present material situation of the ruinous Retiro property. The article argues that dilapidated and abandoned heritage opens up a space and material condition for confronting the past that is different from meticulously curated and arranged things. Dilapidation is not necessarily something strictly positive or negative, but rather a fundamental fact of the material world that we inevitably have to live with or think about, one way or another.

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Article B

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Growing Concerns: Plants and Their Roots in the Past

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Abstract

Plant remains have long been a source of information about the distant past in archaeology, but are undertheorized or even overlooked in the field of contemporary archaeology. This article uses the example of a derelict nineteenth-century landscape garden in a town on the northwestern coast of Norway to show how novel insights about plants can be developed which acknowledge both their past and living present, without reducing them to colonizer, universal taxonomies or proxies for a human past.

*In the shadow of the dilapidated villa's north-facing wall (Figure 1), a lonesome red elderberry bush (*Sambucus racemosa*) has found a place to settle its roots. During the last six years, it has grown from a small sapling into a large bush producing red pungent berries. In a picture of the villa, probably dating from the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, a cast iron bench stood on the spot where the bush grows today. Rødhyll, which is the plant's Norwegian name, were probably introduced to Norway in the eighteenth century as an ornamental garden shrub (Fremstad and Elven 1999); the plant is indigenous to southern and central Europe, but is categorized as a high-risk invasive species in Norway. It is impossible to determine if this lone elderberry bush grew from a seed dispersed from a plant that originally grew in the estate's landscape garden, or if it was carried to this spot from somewhere else inside a bird's belly.*

It took me several visits to the site before its presence became apparent. The shrub hid itself in photos taken during the last six years, which also inadvertently recorded its growth. The imposing mass of the villa, with boarded up windows and exfoliating paint, drew more attention than the "garden variety" bush growing in its shadow. This bush will

Keywords: contemporaneity; entropy; garden; heritage; memory; plants; ruins

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probably be removed without any further thought when in the near future the villa is either renovated into a kindergarten or demolished because of the advanced decay of its timber framework. The elderberry bush is quite young, but it is also in one sense quite old – a distributed object of self-aggregating biotic matter, nourishing itself on soil and gravel that once covered the old carriage entrance and on falling detritus from the decaying villa.

FIGURE 1. The elderberry bush growing in the shadow of the dilapidated villa, July 2017 (photograph by author).

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Introduction

Plants cover large stretches of our planet's terrestrial surface and thrive in its expansive oceans. Aside perhaps from bacteria, plant life is likely the most substantial organic component of the biosphere. Except for some exceptionally large fungal colonies (Sipos *et al.* 2018), which are classed as eukaryotic organisms, plants are generally the largest organisms on the planet. Their lifespans may be long, such as the five-thousand-year-old bristlecone pines (*Pinus longaeva*) of the Californian mountains (Currey 1965), to ephemeral, such as the six-week lifecycle of the small thale cress (*Arabidopsis thaliana*) (Johansson *et al.* 2004). Plants are mostly photosynthetic and autotrophic organisms, and as the base of the pyramid of life they generally sustain all other life on the planet. As such, the existence of us humans is dependent on plant life. In fact, the very word "human" is argued to be etymologically derived from the Latin word *humus*, which means earth, soil or close to the ground (cf. Harrison 2008, 6; Sax 2011, 21). Humus is today a term describing the dark soils closest to the surface, composed mostly of decomposing organic plant matter. Thus, the term "human" can be said to recall how plants and humans have always been entangled in a complex web of relations, where plants have affected us as much as we have affected them (van der Veen 2014, 808–809).

Plant remains have been made use of in archaeological research since the first-half of the nineteenth century. One of the first studies in archaeobotany – or paleoethnobotany as it is also called (cf. Hastorf 1999) – was published in 1826 by the German Botanist Carl Kunth on the remains of fruits and seeds in Egyptian tombs (Kunth 1826; Miksicek 1987, 211). In Norway, the first study was conducted in the 1920s by the botanist Jens Holmboe, on remains uncovered during the excavation of the Oseberg ship (Holmboe 1927; Hjelle *et al.* 2016, 294). Remnants of vegetation are of great importance for many archaeologists: pollen, seeds, phytoliths and charcoal offer valuable data about ancient climate and diet, as well as the movement of peoples and objects. However, archaeology also engages with living plants, which likewise disclose relevant information about the past; an example here is relict plants (Solberg *et al.* 2013; Kristjánsdóttir, *et al.* 2014).

Archaeological interest in plants has not been limited to what they can reveal about the life of humans in the past or human–plant interactions. How plants interact with other non-human agents is also an important aspect of archaeological research, and not least of cultural heritage management (cf. Caneva *et al.* 2008): to understand the archaeological record, an archaeologist must consider how archaeological features both influence and are influenced by their surroundings, and one example of how this relates to plants is Michael Schiffer's work on formation processes, where floralturbation is among the many formative processes that shape and change remains as time progresses (see Schiffer 1996 [1987]). Even if Schiffer envisioned this interaction between plants and archaeological remains as a source of bias and distortion of an initial systemic context, it nevertheless puts focus on a how plants act and interact.

The central concern in this article is the relationship between contemporary archaeology and plants. One aspect of this relatively new addition to the archaeological subdisciplines has been to focus on how the past is part of the present (cf. Olivier 2011), not as static reminder of a distant past, but as things, sites and landscapes that still

have the capacity to engage actively with both humans and non-humans (Olsen and Pétursdóttir 2016, 41–42). Non-human agency has lately been thoroughly debated in the humanities and social sciences, and theoretical approaches such as actor-network theory, post-humanism, new-materialism and speculative realism have increasingly emphasized non-anthropocentric perspectives (for how these theories have been debated within archaeology see e.g. Domańska 2006; Olsen 2010; Hodder 2012; Fredengren 2013; Sørensen 2013; Witmore 2014; Thomas 2015; Edgeworth 2016). How, though, do plants fit into all this, and into an archaeology that focuses on the recent past, the present – and even the future?

The French botanist and biologist Francis Hallé writes in his 2002 book *In Praise of Plants* that plants have been overlooked, partly because they are too familiar, ubiquitous and blend into the background, but also because they are the absolute "other" – too strange and different to evoke the sympathy and admiration felt in relation to our fellow mammals or other fauna (Hallé 2002, 32–35). Looking through the literature on the archaeology of the contemporary world and recent past, plants are mostly mentioned in passing, with a few exceptions (see Andersson *et al.* 2007; Andersson 2014; Moshenska 2014; Harrison 2017). This is not to say that plants have been ignored by the theoretical discourses central to contemporary archaeology, even if there is a lack of explicit reflection on them; "symmetrical archaeology", for example, emphatically acknowledges the independent existence and ontological importance of non-human beings such as plants (cf. Olsen 2003, 88; Shanks 2007, 590–591; Olsen *et al.* 2012, 11–14; Olsen and Witmore 2015, 188–189), while Christopher Witmore (2014, 206) states that in archaeology, or any discipline for that matter, "nothing should be excluded because of an arbitrary divide between made and unmade objects, artefacts and ecofacts or externs, kinetic and inert, humans and non-humans". To include non-humans, thus, is also a matter of recognizing the difference between them, their otherness and distinct character, or perhaps even our inability to comprehend the essence of them (cf. Harman 2013, 97) – for example, to recognize "things as things" (Pétursdóttir 2012, 218).

The study of things and places that can be described as ruinous, abandoned, derelict, rejected and so on, together with discussions on how the past is experienced through such phenomena, is central in contemporary archaeology (e.g. Buchli and Lucas 2001; González-Ruibal 2008; Desilvey and Edensor 2012; Lucas 2013; Pétursdóttir and Olsen 2014; Harrison and Breithoff 2017). The starting point of this article is a derelict landscape garden in Norway, a post-abandonment landscape where plants are vigorously present, and which serves to exemplify how plants fit, or grow, into such localities. How can we look at plants either through an archaeological lens that refrains from reducing them to proxies for a human past and present or to agents distorting the past? This is one of the challenges for an archaeology of the contemporary world that attempts to distance itself from old dichotomies and various "centrisms". The theme explored in this article is how plants quite literally connect to the past while also being a dynamic and thriving part of the present day, discussed in relationship with the three concepts of continuity, growth and memory.

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A Derelict Garden

Molde is a small town on the west coast of Norway. If you look at a satellite image of the town, you might notice a large, roughly rectangular green space in the western part of the narrow town interposed between the fjord and a forest-clad hillside. This conspicuous mass of vegetation is the remnant of the Retiro landscape garden – not to be confused with the famous Buen Retiro Park in Madrid, from which it gained its name. Today, the garden's closest neighbours consist of a sports centre, a large cemetery, residential areas and an open park extending from the original shoreline of the property. Thus, while originally located on the outskirts of Molde the town has since the post-war years gradually encircled Retiro, rendering it a green enclave within the urban townscape.

Retiro was conceived as a country villa and a landscape park built as a summer residence by the industrialist and Danish consul Christian Johnsen. The construction of the villa, gardener's residence and the garden itself was finished in 1874. The property had a circumference of approximately 1.2 km and the total area measures 8.4 ha. Although the garden was a part of Johnsen's private estate, it was open to the public on Sundays (Eikrem 2015, 50). The landscape garden was influenced by both Romantic and English Victorian design, with an eclectic range of garden accents that included mass-produced Italian plaster statues, serpentine paths and ponds. Retiro was not only rural in its placement, but in some sense designed to look and feel rustic, by artistically accentuating the character of the autochthonous vegetation and rural culture. A telling example is a small hunting lodge folly built on one of the "islands" in an artificially made pond named the Atlantic Ocean. The garden also incorporated a range of non-native plants imported from all over the globe, including Douglas fir from North America (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), pearl bush from Asia (*Exochorda giraldii*), hogweed from Persia (*Heracleum persicum*) and many other exotic plant species.

Over the past 85 years, the Retiro property, and notably the landscape garden, has fallen into disrepair: causes for the decline include prohibitively expensive maintenance costs, the disruption caused by the Second World War and changes in ownership. A local historian, after visiting the property in 1953, commented that the garden could not be characterized as anything but a ruin (Parelius 1982 [1953]). A decade later, a garden historian observed how some plants, despite being abandoned, continued to thrive in the now derelict landscape and still lent it an air of "romance" (Vestad 1961, 16). This could be said to hold true even today, where amongst overgrown paths, birch thickets, empty ponds, decomposing tree trunks and yesterday's garbage, one can still encounter plants that have persevered in the absence of a gardener. Invasive plants such as Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) and silver fir (*Abies alba*) thrive in the present-day Retiro amongst a rich conglomeration of local plants. A survey of the Retiro's biodiversity in 2013 noted that it contained a rich variety of old deliberately planted trees (Gaarder and Vatne 2013). However, the surveyors also recommended the removal of species that are defined as "high risk" invasive species by the Norwegian Biodiversity Centre (cf. Gederaas *et al.* 2012).

The vegetation is still Retiro's most prominent feature, and although it has remained untouched by a gardener for many decades, local people nevertheless still refer to it

Figure 2. A person walking between a yew and holly tree in the old flower garden south of the Retiro villa, October 2015. The trees were originally trimmed bushes with neat, topiary shapes (photograph by author).

as the Retiro Park. Recently, however, the local newspaper has started to brand it the "Retiro forest" (Holsbøvåg 2010, 47), which underlines the tension between a past architectural landscape and the present derelict appearance. Retiro probably contains a larger number of old trees than the forests in the town's hinterland. In its derelict isolation from other rural woodlands, it has been partly spared from commercial logging and forestry. Some areas in the garden contain trees and plants that have lived there since before the garden was even constructed, as remnants of a rural ecology that was integrated in its original design.

Plants in Ruins

Ruins overgrown with vegetation is a familiar motif in western art, as seen in Thomas Cole's early-nineteenth-century landscape paintings (cf. Yablon 2009), or the recent photographs of intruding vegetation around abandoned cars, shops and homes by Arkadiusz Podniesiński (2015) in the closed off "red zone" enveloping the remains of the Fukushima nuclear power plant. Plants engulfing human structures can be seen as an allegory for human absence, something other or natural taking over the human and artificial. In his essay "The Ruin", Georg Simmel writes that the incursion of vegetation on an abandoned human-made structure is a "returning home", in that the vegetation recolonizes a previously artificial structure, as a creative blend of the natural and human (Simmel 1958, 381–383). In his book *In Ruins*, Christopher Woodward mourns the mass of trees and flowers archaeologists removed from the Colosseum in Rome in 1874, which had been a part of the ruins for generations (Woodward 2001, 24–31). In the discussion of industrial heritage and plants the notion of plants as colonizers is

Figure 3. Yellow archangel enveloping a derelict vacuum cleaner, June 2016. When introduced to non-native environment, such as Norway, this species is defined as noxious and invasive. The vacuum is also in some sense invasive in the landscape garden, but not multiplying like the feral archangel (photograph by author).

prominent, but as illustrated by the German term *Industrienatur*, such vegetation can also be regarded as welcome or at least tolerable additions to previously desolate and barren landscapes (Bangstad 2014, 60–62; DeSilvey 2017, 110–113).

Plants often find themselves at home in ruins and archaeological sites (Moshenska 2014), and Schiffer highlights how vegetation can obscure and "utterly hide" structures and surfaces (Schiffer 1996 [1987], 211, 257–259). He notes that plants can be regarded as "agents of disturbance", in that they physically alter sites and structures; trees with their large roots especially can rearrange stratigraphy and the position of artefacts (Schiffer 1996 [1987], 210–212). Biodeterioration is seen as a threat to material heritage, and covers the complex relationship between vegetation and human-made things, which involve a range of physical and chemical processes (Caneva *et al.* 2008). However, Schiffer does not see plants exclusively as agents of entropy, and points out that they can stabilize sediments with their roots and help to protect things from other agents (Schiffer 1996 [1987], 212).

Can plants be regarded as something other than colonizers and vestiges of human intentions at such sites? Unlike the flora that had found its home in the Colosseum due to its nutritional and sheltering materialities (Mote 2015, 129–130), the vegetation in Retiro was from the very outset an intrinsic part of both the landscape architecture and the preceding environment. Plants can have vast and complicated life spans (cf. Hallé 2002, 103–104), and while many of those that inhabit Retiro today have changed

in appearance and distribution over the years, such plants can be viewed as remnants that survive and grow in the garden's persistent aftermath[1] following an abandonment event, rather than as objects that colonize, disturb and transplant abandoned things.

Archaeology intersects with a range of other disciplines in the humanities and social sciences which investigate things and ecologies of the present. One such discipline is human geography, where research on cultural ecology and human–plant geographies has increased significantly in recent years (Jones and Cloke 2008; Head and Atchison 2009; Pitt 2015). Anthropology also has a rich history of discussing plants, and has engaged a range of themes such as symbolism (Rival 1998), growth (Ingold and Hallam 2014), materiality of life (Rival 2012) and affect (Archambault 2016), to mention a few. Ethnobiology is another discipline that explicitly studies the interrelationship between humans and the biota, both historically and in the present day (Albuquerque and Alves 2016). These disciplines have recently emphasized human–plant relationships, usually from a non-anthropocentric angle that acknowledges the agency of the non-human (see Daly *et al.* 2016), and which sometimes goes under the banner of "multispecies" approaches (cf. Haraway 2008, Kirksey and Helmreich 2010). However, what can archaeology bring to the table? Archaeology investigates things, sites, structures and contexts which in some way have been disconnected from or left by humans, highlighting and bringing into focus non-human things, processes and beings, but the interaction and being of things is not necessarily embedded in a strict human/non-human dichotomy. It is not the case that humans are absent, or undesirable, in such archaeological orientations or perspectives. When the non-native yellow archangel (*Lamium galeobdolon*) is left to its own devices in Retiro, the link to past human actors such as the site's gardener is weakened, but not erased. However, the relationship between the creeping plant and the stone wall terraces on which it grows becomes more prominent or, at least, accentuated.

Making the "afterlife" of objects itself important (cf. Pétursdóttir 2014, 337–340), creates an opportunity to go beyond the human–plant entanglement. A concern with how things exist apart from humans, however, does not exclude that these beings might eventually have a relevance for and impact on human beings. The way plants "remember" the past (cf. Olsen 2003) is clearly relevant to how the past is disclosed to us. Instead of approaching the relationship between plants and material heritage through the preservation/destruction dichotomy, it is possible to conceptualize a different kind of continuity. This means one has to accentuate the specificity of plants, beyond the taxonomies and descriptions found in natural sciences such as botany and biology.

Different Continuities

A large grove of trees grows on the bank of the aforementioned "Atlantic Ocean", one of the two artificial ponds of Retiro. Old photographs of the site, dating to the presumed "golden age" of the garden from around the 1880s to the 1930s, show that the pond used to be framed by a thicket of mostly broadleaf such as birch and rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), with a scattering of scots pines (*Pinus sylvestris L.*) and Norwegian spruces

1. The word "aftermath" has an interesting etymological origin in this context. It was originally used to refer to the second crop of grass or plants growing in a field after it had been harvested (*Oxford English Dictionary* 2017a).

FIGURE 4. One of the spots on the brim of the "Atlantic Ocean" pond that is kept in place by vegetation, May 2015. As seen in this picture, the roots of beech and birch trees form a solid root-weave that merges with the edge of the pond (photograph by author).

(*Picea abies*). The trees surrounding the pond today are mostly conifers such as silver fir and Norwegian spruce, but there is also some beech, birch and scots pine. The roots of these trees hold the steep brim of the pond together many places, reverberating Michael Schiffer's (1996 [1987], 212) observation that vegetation isn't always an agent of disturbance, but may also help maintain and preserve things by keeping erosion at bay. The roots and other organisms that keep the brim together also hold the past in reserve – while its immediate appearance has changed, the pond is still there.

Curiously, the bottom of the pond has not been completely colonized by trees despite its rich sedimentary soil, even though leaf-litter and other organic detritus have started to create a dense layer of humus. This can most likely be explained both by human intervention and micro-environmental dynamics. With regard to the former, someone has trimmed small bushes of willow (*Salix caprea*) around the pedestal of a fountain, which today is encircled by the smashed remains of Triton riding a hippocampus. In

conversations with local people, it has come to attention that during heavy rain the pond can suddenly reappear, despite that the heavily corroded pipes that fed water into the pond are now clogged with decades of accumulated plant debris. The pond can be described as a vernal pool, an ephemeral body of water that regularly fills and dries up. This interesting dynamic offers a recurrent memory, an opportunity on particularly rainy days to encounter the memory of a filled pond. These flickering memories, caused by things and natures interacting in a range of different ways, are fluid yet concrete.

The temporality of a vegetative site such as this pond could be said to adhere to a *kairotic* character (cf. Witmore 2007), as opposed to the orderly and detached arrangement of chronological time. Michael Shanks thinks of this alternative Greek term for time as "the moment of discovery or opportunity, when the past flashes up in the present and prompts reaction" (Shanks 2012, 134–135). This kairotic intervention of the past in the present is described by Christopher Witmore as contingent, chaotic and in some sense "weather like", which resonates well with the ephemeral character of the vernal pool. Plants hold a peculiar kairotic character, in the sense that they grow, bloom and in the end wither. They can create sudden kairotic folds; dependent on seasonality and weather, a carpet of blooming periwinkles (*Vinca minor*) outside the old greenhouse at Retiro can reveal at the right moment temporal folds that allude to a past aesthetic order.

In scholarly work on the relationship between ruins and memory, the idea of the "haunting" thing is often associated with human presence, embodiment and material absence (cf. Edensor 2001; 2005, 157–159; Bille *et al.* 2010). A ghost or similar entity is referred to in Norwegian as *gjenferd* (apparition); this points to something that repeatedly appears, which is a well-known motif in ghost stories. The plants of Retiro can be said to have a haunting or spectral character, with their ability to promote a past by regrowing, spreading and persisting. Plants lie dormant and reappear – this haunting aspect is familiar with regards to invasive species such as the notorious Japanese knotweed, which also inhabits certain sections of Retiro. Here, these plants are not recolonizing or rewilding a once sterile site, but are rather continually reappearing, and are in that sense revealing the material past as much as veiling it (cf. Marder and Tondeur 2016, 50). Rather than thinking about Retiro as "overgrown", "regrown" or "rewilding", it might be more pertinent to regard it as just growing, because adding prefixes can insinuate changes that displace and detach the plants from a past. The plants were already inherently wild when they were introduced to the garden as aesthetic objects (cf. Morton 2015); the plants cultivated here were never "non-wild", and the derelict garden we encounter today is the result of a potentiality that was already present even before the garden was established.

Accumulative Growth

Retiro is something more than just a landscape returning to an original, primordial wilderness. The landscape was in its creation embedded with its future, which we encounter today. The Retiro landscape garden has a second pond that sometimes goes by the name "the forest lake", but is largely forgotten unlike the locally well-known "Atlantic Ocean" pond. One reason for the pond's obscurity might be that it has become too ideal, too similar to what it was meant to represent – that is, a picturesque Norwegian

Figure 5. One of the Japanese knotweed thickets in Retiro in June 2016, before it was sprayed by herbicide. Despite its invasive nature, the noxious knotweed has not spread into the deeper parts of the landscape garden, and mostly grows in areas that have been kept free of large trees (photograph by author).

forest tarn. A perfection has thus been inadvertently achieved by an ecology of plants in the absence of a gardener. For an observant eye, a small patch of a sedge species not commonly found in the local area, reveals its opaque performance in the past as an ornamental pond.

Retiros's vegetative past is capable of re-forming itself as a palimpsest of a dynamic, yet persisting mass of biotic and non-biotic things; some that endure, and others that retreat into the accumulating humus. If we take the presentness of Retiro seriously, its feral nature is not typified by the erasure of preceding things, but a different continuity – a malleable and plastic solidity. There is a general dichotomy concerning material heritage; on the one hand, it is seen as something that can be reconstructed or maintained in an equilibrium, but on the other, there is an idea of releasing it into an entropic existence, a state of accepted transformation, and in one sense loss. "Negative entropy", or negentropy, is an interesting concept when talking about decay and entropy (cf. Schrödinger 1944; Serres 1982, 73–82; Witmore 2007, 210–211). Explained simply, negentropy is the opposite of entropy, and denotes a non-isolated system that drifts towards order, as opposed to decay and disorder.

From an anthropocentric standpoint, Retiro is exclusively an entropic site, where human-made structures such as paths, stone walls or the large wooden villa fall apart into disorder. However, from a negentropic viewpoint, the derelict garden is a vibrant and emergent ecology – far from everything is engulfed by decay and disorder; things

are rather developing, emerging and persisting, often in bewilderingly different ways. Plants as material remains can be seen as an illustrative example of unruly heritage (cf. Olsen and Pétursdóttir 2016). The growth of some plants, such as the unruly Japanese knotweed, pushes sometimes uncomfortably into the present day. In a recent attempt to control the vegetative past at Retiro, the local authorities have doused herbicide on several knotweed colonies throughout the garden. Despite this intervention, the knotweed started to reappear immediately. Ironically, another blacklisted and invasive plant, creeping jenny (*Lysimachia nummularia*), seems unaffected by the poison, and has started to thrive in the brown, muddy and toxic earth.

There is the concern that things that grow, such as plants, can be conceived of as replaceable. This might be a pitfall when judging a site such as Retiro, because even when things repeat, regrow and propagate, there may still be something lost if they are replaced. This "something" can be the specific ecological composition of a place, where replanting would erase its genuine palimpsestal character. In broad ecological terms, this might for example include the relationship between a large Norwegian spruce and a thicket of small birches and rowan protecting its precarious bulk from wind gusts (cf. Gardiner *et al.* 1997). An extensive material intervention in the vegetative landscape of Retiro, such as thinning the underwood, would be an entropic event dissolving robust negentropic relationships that have developed through the years. Plants do not passively live in a world; they also, as material witnesses, remember their environment, and at

FIGURE 6. The trunk of a silver fir crushing a fence that cut the landscape garden in half after the northern part was sold to the municipality some decades ago, May 2015. Through the years, windfallen trees has relentlessly flattened sections of this fence and inadvertently reconnected the two halves (photograph by author).

the same time have an impact on it (cf. Marder and Tondeur 2016, 24). In Retiro there is a range of trees with arborglyphs, which are carvings made in the bark of trees. Such inscriptions can be seen as cultural modification of plants (cf. Mallea-Olaetxe 2010), inscribing them with some human significance that can be transcribed. On the other hand, there are also inadvertent arborglyphs, markings left in trees which record events that were not intended to be "read" in the future. Examples include a tractor driving through the garden on paths too narrow to fit its bulk, thus scarring tree trunks, or the municipality's selective pruning of trees to make the garden less inviting and sheltering for campers. Plants are more than canvases that passively record the passing of human history. Their roots stretch into the soil and extract nutrients from things that were, not only consuming things but also affixing materials and other vestiges of the past.

Nourishing Memories

Plants contain memories, such as trees propagating and incorporating into their being toxic residues of the First World War in northern France (Saunders 2014). Plants have a temporal depth as a part of their biological being, which in trees can manifest as growth rings, seasonal fluctuations and dispersal. The tree serves as an apt metaphor and visualization of changes through time, such as evolutionary branches for species and languages. Ecological temporality (cf. Brice 2014, 948–951; Lodwick 2017, 5, 22) is a phenomenon that is not exclusive to a human–plant relationship, and that has implications on an ecological scale that includes other non-human beings and objects. It can pulse back and forth between different states, not really in a clear linear way but rather by growing and shrinking, making a site offer widely different affective experiences on a temporal scale which includes repetitions and returns, as exemplified by the aforementioned elderberry bush described at the start of this article. The past keeps returning, perhaps slightly different but still similar, a vestigial reverberating of something that was.

Rather than just colonizing the ruins of Retiro, the elderberry bush, with its serrated green leaves and purple stems bourgeoning with red berries, fuses the site together in its own way. The concrete steps leading down to the flower garden, between the villa and the gardener's residence, are punctuated by another elderberry bush, whose seed settled in one of the cracks of the crumbling cement. Under the bush, a spreading carpet of moss merges with disintegrating mortar from neighbouring walls, indigestible shards of smashed glass bottles, a rusty heater exfoliating white paint, a wooden garden bench broken into two pieces and some pungent flowering herb Robert (*Geranium robertianum*). On the steps, dead and living plant matter, such as fallen elderberry leaves, sun-bleached remains of cotton curtains and orchard grass (*Dactylis glomerata*), interlace as a heterogeneous present, chronologically discordant, continually diverging and enduring. The elderberry has obstinately planted its roots in the middle of the steps, but they are still wide enough to accommodate other beings passing through or seeking a place to settle. Its burrowing roots create further cracks in the cement, opening up for other things to occupy these ledges; they accumulate both artefacts and organisms, from paint flakes to flower petals from an English dogwood (*Philadelphus coronarius*) shrub above the steps.

The past can in instances such as Retiro be seen as "nutritional", both metaphorically and concretely. "Nutrition" has etymological roots in the Latin word *nūtrīre*, which can be

FIGURE 7. The elderberry bush on the concrete steps, June 2017 (photograph by author).

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translated as "to bring up, rear, nurse, foster, preserve" etc. (*Oxford English Dictionary* 2017b). A growing biomass creates a surplus of matter; in other words, it produces new matter, entities and not just waste. Retiro has several times had its material "surplus" extracted and reclaimed in seemingly unforeseen ways. The most recent example is a large silver fir that inhabited the remnants of the flower garden by the old villa, that was chopped down to serve as a Christmas tree in/at the town hall square. In 2012, the French wood sculptor and artist Olivier Ledoux made a bench decorated with carved depictions of fish and roses from a large silver fir from the forest of Retiro.

Retiro is each year endowed with a bounty of plants that are edible, which even include some species regarded as invasive and noxious. One of these crops consists of spring shoots of the despised Japanese knotweed, which despite its bad reputation can be eaten by humans. The nutritional aspects of Retiro's present heritage also consist of ecological relationships between non-humans. The ruin of the old hothouse at Retiro is today unintendedly nursing a crop of silver fir saplings, while its grey plastered wall offers appetizing surfaces for green algae, moss and graffiti. Human agency, materiality of artefacts and the variety of plant all influence how the landscape appears today. A broken emerald green wine bottle lying at the base of a birch tree in a dense thicket just east of the gardener's residence is an example of this kind of interaction. Based on the embossed markings on the base of the bottle, which spells out "0,7 L De", it is of German make and dates to the 1940s. The bottle was probably disposed of by one of the German personnel who stayed at Retiro after the property was taken over as makeshift barracks and military headquarters during the Second World War. Glass has no nutritional value for plants, but the bottle's fractured contours have created an unintended terrarium, its concave surfaces capturing moisture and heat while giving shelter from a turbulent environment.

Material vestiges with partly anthropogenic entangled origins, such as the landscape and structures at Retiro, are incorporated into how plants grow, feed and advance through the environment. This is especially poignant in the era of the Anthropocene, which not only calls to attention human impact on the world, but also how objects are entangled in such a way that they are hard to grasp (Morton 2013a, 18, 194). The philosopher Timothy Morton (2013b) has written about how causality can be regarded as an aesthetic phenomenon, where relationships between objects can in a sense be weird and contradictory. Every translation is imperfect, and no paraphrase is identical to its source (Harman 2012, 188–189; 2013, 61). The present-day Retiro is certainly not identical to its past, but the memory of the past is at the same time contingent. The dissolution of objects, such as the hunting lodge folly that once stood on one of the small islands in the "Atlantic Ocean" pond, is gone, but its evanesce is remembered by a small, square depression in the terrain, now occupied by moss and the roots from a large neighbouring spruce and several beech trees. In one sense, the roots inhabit the memory of the lodge, feeding on the decomposing plant matter accumulating in the shallow depression. The plants are not only a part of Retiro as elements of an archaeological site, but they are also themselves in some sense archaeological sites.

FIGURE 8. After the Victorian hothouse was gradually left alone, feral silver firs settled in its derelict remains, September 2011 (photograph by author).

Concluding Remarks

An archaeology of the contemporary world that acknowledges living plants in its investigations has the potential to adopt an approach which puts the contemporaneity of living plants in the foreground, rather than focusing either on what the plants were – that is, their use, position and prominence in a specific chronological segment of the past – or on their timeless and universal botanical properties. Such an approach to plants can help to highlight interesting ways in which pasts emerge in the present, both for human experience and companionship with other objects. By taking plants seriously as both present beings and as vestiges of the past, one can avoid reducing them to the background or as biotic veneer on archaeological things. The emphasis of the research can be directed in such a way that objects such as plants get a more prominent role by highlighting their "plantiness" (Head *et al.* 2012, 3–4, 27). One way to approach this is to develop new tools to describe and think about plants, such as ideas of continuity, growth and nutritional memories, which have been discussed in this article. These concepts seek to highlight plants and their specific being, which may manifest itself in different and interesting ways depending on the specific environment. A silver fir growing in Retiro may be genetically indistinguishable from another tree growing in a central European forest, but its specificity may be inseparable from its ecological circumstance.

With its focus on the present day, archaeology of the contemporary plant world has an opportunity to explore perspectives that go beyond human–plant entanglements, and to produce different perspectives of how they themselves both bring forth a past

and open up different continuities and material trajectories to the future. As part of our contemporary archaeological assemblages, plants are more than colonizers, disturbing agents and human proxies when they are a part of an archaeological site. They have a substantial impact on not only how we experience the past, but also how the past materializes for other things, whether a derelict factory overgrown with ruderal vegetation, an Iron Age burial mound covered by trees or a derelict garden such as Retiro. Their interconnectedness with remains of human activity and synchronously unruly autonomy (cf. Olsen and Pétursdóttir 2016) create an emergent past which is hard to pin down.

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Article C

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Vestigial Matters: Contemporary Archaeology and Hyperart

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This article addresses things that can be described as rudimentary and vestigial; for example, an arguably out-of-place snow stake encountered in a derelict 19th-century landscape garden during an archaeological surface survey. How can one approach this stake without removing or overlooking its vestigial character? The term hyperart is introduced to develop the concept of vestigial objects. Hyperart was conceived by the Japanese artist and author Akasegawa Genpei, who defined it as 'useless but beautifully preserved objects connected to some form of real estate'. That is, things that in one way or another have become vestigial and meaningless. An underlying link is shown between the concept hyperart and an archaeologically inspired approach to the material world. The rudimentary and detached are regarded as an integral part of the anthropogenic environment, and it is theorised that such recognition is important in depicting both past and contemporary human environments.

A RED PLASTIC STAKE

(C3H6)n, polypropylene, is a synthetic, semi-crystalline, thermoplastic polymer. It was first polymerised by American chemists Robert Banks and Paul Hogan in 1951, and later patented by Phillips Petroleum in 1953 (Morris 2005, p. 76). In 2013, approximately 55 million tons of polypropylene were sold on the global market, making polypropylene the second most produced plastic in the world (Ceresana 2018). As a polymer, it is composed of long and entangled chains of molecules, which result in certain useful macroscopic properties like strength and flexibility. It is a versatile material used to manufacture many different objects, such as kitchen utensils, food packaging, textile, and microbeads in facial cleansers, just to mention a few. Due to its resistance to decomposition, for instance being indigestible by bacteria, it can last for centuries before it starts to disintegrate through photodegradation, chemical dissolution, and mechanical abrasion (i.e. Tocháček and Vrátníčková 2014). Today, polypropylene permeates the globe and can be found in natural environments like flotsams in oceans and on beaches, or even in the gastric system of Fur seals on the desolate Macquarie Island in New Zealand (Eriksson and Burton 2003).

A range of different polypropylene objects, such as bottles, bags, a rake, and countless other things can also be encountered in a derelict garden on the western coast of Norway. Retiro is a 19th-century landscape garden located in the town of Molde, not to be mistaken for its more famous namesake in Madrid. I came across one of the mentioned objects in a dense thicket of silver fir, maple, oak and rowan (Figure 1). There was a bright-

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red roadside snow stake planted in soil formed by decades of accumulated plant detritus, mostly leaf litter. The encounter happened when surveying the site. Generally, I searched for things that I in some sense assumed belonged to the site, like fragments of statues, feral garden plants, or other material traces that pointed to meaningful things that had taken place there. However, there were things that interfered with easy explanations; objects that in some sense did not really reveal how or why they had gotten there, like the stake.

Snow stakes are placed along the snowy roads everywhere as winter approaches, and they are subsequently removed as the spring sets in. They mark the edge of snow-covered roadways with strips of reflective stickers, making the job of ploughing snow easier and driving in difficult conditions safer. The invention of the flexible snow stake used along motorised roads has been credited by some to the Norwegian road caretaker John G. Aase in 1928 (Kleppa 2008). The stakes were originally made out of wood, and sometimes imported bamboo, but more recently they have been made from thermoplastics. Every year, some of the stakes escape the yearly cycle, either by being flung away by the plough, lost during transportation and storage, or perhaps displaced by mischievous persons. People usually rely on them without offering them a second thought; they are objects that one knows and expects along the side of the road when winter comes.

Nevertheless, here it was, as firmly planted as the dense ticket of trees and bushes surrounding it, carefully integrated in its surroundings and yet literally reflecting its misplacement. How does this snow stake fit into the ruin of a 19th-century landscape garden, which is regarded as a national heritage site by both scholars and local heritage officials (see Rønsen 2007, pp. 88–91, Ringstad 2014)? The public reaction to this object would probably be to simply dismiss it as waste, as illustrated by complaints made by local people, which led the local municipality to remove large amounts of waste material that had accumulated in the garden, left there by 'unauthorised campers' (see Henriksen 2014, Lange 2014). From the perspective of cultural resource management, the stake might also be seen as out of place and thus indicative of how the garden has become neglected heritage; the tragic consequence brought on by lack of action from both private owners and the local authorities (e.g. Solli 2012). From this angle, the stake is an inauthentic and an anachronistic contamination of a historical landscape of a specific past; the spot where it stands was originally a small gravel covered playground, with a swing and a croquet field. The stake does not belong in this past, amongst Victorian dresses, straw hats, and trimmed birch trees. From both these viewpoints, the stake can be conceptualised as 'dirt' or pollution. It might in some sense be perceived as 'matter out of place' (Douglas 2002, p. 50), contravening an order based on values, practices, and ideology.

It was potentially, as Douglas might claim, the stake's out-of-placeness that drew my attention to it, on that summer day of fieldwork in the derelict garden. Nevertheless, I could not help but also sense the aesthetics of its neon-redness, illuminated by the green biotic frame of the forest embracing it. Surely, it appears out of place with our preconception of how and where a snow stake ought to be. This was an embodied experience, drawing on my sensory embeddedness in the surroundings (Pink 2008). Its inoperable location draws attention; there are no nearby roads for it to demarcate, and it has not been repurposed in any new discernible function. However, it also shares this inoperable out-of-placeness with many other objects in the landscape garden. Objects, which in their present day derelict states may just as well be seen as part of the garden's ecology. Thus, it felt appropriate to consider whether there was a different way to think about this object, which does not simply

Fig. 1. *The red polypropylene snow stake. First encounter. Photo: Author, October 17, 2015, 16:42.*

reduce it to waste and a problem to be solved (cf. Lucas 2002).

Drawing inspiration from the vestigial character of the snow stake, this article explores objects that can appear to us as trivial, non-functional, vestigial, or out-of-place. Although many things in Retiro can be described as vestigial, the snow stake will take a leading role in this article because it was the object that inspired this discussion. This choice might seem arbitrary, but that further amplifies the theme of vestigiality and de-contextualisation. So, how can we approach such an object without erasing or overlooking its vestigial character? To investigate this question, this article attempts to draw inspiration from innovative ideas and theories originating in Japan that can broaden the understanding of vestigial objects in academic fields such as contemporary archaeology. By

examining the concept of hyperart, developed by the Japanese artist and novelist Akasegawa Genpei, as an analytical tool to define vestigial objects, this article aims to discuss an archaeologically oriented approach that highlights such objects. As will be discussed, there are interesting similarities between hyperart and the relatively new subfield of the archaeology of the contemporary world (see Harrison and Breithoff 2017).

The relationship between art and archaeology has in recent decades been a topic of discussion and critique (see Renfrew 2003, Harrison and Schofield 2010, pp. 105–119, Dixon 2011, Schofield *et al.* 2012, Russell and Cochrane 2014, Chittock and Valdez-Tullett 2016, Thomas *et al.* 2017). As we will see, hyperart as an artistic concept can arguably be linked to a type of archaeological orientation towards a contemporary material environment, which makes it an interesting example of an intersection between art and archaeology. The archaeology of the contemporary world and recent past has certainly been the subfield of archaeology that has had the most interaction with art and art theory. An artistic approach to material culture can be seen as a way to highlight both the unusual and mundane, making us see things in new and different light (Bailey 2017). However, this can equally be claimed to work in the opposite direction, where the archaeological sensibility towards things and the past can inspire artists (i.e. Blazwick 2001, Roelstraete 2013, Holt 2013, p. 222).

HYPERART AND SEEING THE HUMOUR IN THINGS

Hyperart can be understood as material vestiges, things that have become detached from their intended purpose and function. Dependent on one's experience and expectations, hyperart can appear as familiar objects that in some sense have become unfamiliar. Through his eventful career, Akasegawa worked with, amongst other things, avant-garde, neo-dada, and conceptual artwork. He noticed his first piece of hyperart, which was a staircase that he could not make any sense of, in 1972: the staircase led nowhere and for some inexplicable reason the banister had recently been repaired. The staircase was neither entertaining, useful, nor ornamental, but a 'pure' non-functional object (Akasegawa 2009, p. 8). Recalling this first encounter, one of his common descriptions of hyperart became a 'beautifully preserved but ultimately useless object attached to some kind of real estate' (Akasegawa 2009, p. 168). Another central aspect with Akasegawas definition of hyperart is that the 'hyper-artists' make their pieces unintentionally. In the end, hyperart is 'not so much "art" as something that exceeds art', therefore its name *hyper*art (Akasegawa 2009, p. 16).

The purity Akasegawa saw in the staircase is different from the chronological purity imagined by the heritage management, or the pristine purity of a litter-free garden. This pure 'triviality' rests on the purposelessness of the objects and its liberation from the burden of being meaningful. However, why should we care about things that are supposedly trivial and decontextualised, like the red snow stake in the landscape garden, when there are seemingly more meaningful things to attend to? Alternatively, might it actually be this lack of immediate meaning that makes objects such as the stake alluring? This kind of object poses a challenge to how we think about and approach material culture – especially when it concerns stranded objects in our contemporary environment. The concept of hyperart lends itself to thinking about these issues as it encourages the search for apparently aimless objects that are embedded in the present material landscape. As Akasegawa writes, 'I only hope that it will help to spread the instinct to better observe the world around us' (Akasegawa 2009).

In the preface of the English translation of his book *Hyperart: Thomassons*, Akasegawa

admits that hyperart was made up on the go and, as a result, seems to have been perceived as a sort of joke by some (Akasegawa 2009, p. 2). On the one hand, this light-hearted engagement with the concept can be regarded as superficial and frivolous, but on the other hand, it might also be the sort of attitude necessary to engage with such things. Humour, which Akasegawa employs heartily in his engagement with hyperart, is one of the ways to make vestigial and nonsensical things visible (Figure 2). To acknowledge and even be concerned with strange objects, such a doorknob on a doorless wall, a telephone pole that is still maintained after having been decommissioned, or a small eave protecting a non-exiting mail slot from rainwater (see Akasegawa 2009, pp. 23, 43, 224), a 'sense' of humour is perhaps needed. Looking beyond the categories of waste and pollution, the luminous snow stake can thus evoke a humorous image of an object unexpectedly misplaced in a foreign environment.

MODERNOLOGY AND THE ART OF DESCRIBING THE EVERYDAY

To get a better grip on the origins of Akasegawa's idea of hyperart and its tentative archaeological ancestry, it is necessary to take a closer look at the ethnographic work of Wajirō Kon (1888–1973). Akasegawa's work with hyperart was explicitly inspired by Wajirō's 'modernology' (cf. Marotti 2015, p. 95), a discipline that was developed to investigate 'what unfolds today before our very eyes' and 'the everyday life of today's cultured people' (Wajirō and Adriasola 2016, pp. 65–6). Akasegawa and his companions worked with hyperart while he was teaching modernology at an alternative art school during a 15-year tenure (Akasegawa 2009 p. 57, Tomii 2009, p. 389). In his Introduction to the book *Study of Street Observation*, Akasegawa wrote that he employed methods inspired by modernology in his teaching to create the study of hyperart (Kuroishi 2016, p. 575).

Wajirō was an ethnographer who later in his academic career expanded his work to include architecture, design and urban planning. In the beginning of the 20th century, Wajirō studied Minka – traditional houses and dwellings in Japan, Korea and even Manchuria. In 1923, a great earthquake hit the Kanto Plain on Japan's main island Honshū resulting in an environmental catastrophe that had a great impact on Wajirō's work. The Great Kanto earthquake had a Richter magnitude of approximately 7.9, and devastated both the city of Tokyo and Yokohama. In the aftermath of the earthquake, Wajirō conducted a phenomenological survey of the makeshift barracks and shelters built by the survivors, focussing on themes such as fashion, architecture, property and behaviour (Weisenfeld 1998, Wajirō 2015, p. 195). The survey also included artistic work that involved decorating and painting some of the dreary makeshift buildings. The work which was done by avant-garde artists, architects and sculptors, gave the project an artistic flare (Kuroishi 1998, pp. 128, 132).

This was the birth of the discipline of *kōgengaku*, 'modernology' in English, which was founded by Wajirō together with his colleague Yoshida Kanekichi (Gill 1996, pp. 198–9, Wajirō and Adriasola 2016, pp. 66–7). *Kōgengaku* is a neologism in which the word for archaeology *kōkogaku* has the character '*ko*', meaning 'old, ancient', replaced with the character '*gen*' meaning 'the present, now, current' – so, modernology could alternatively be translated as 'archaeology of the present day' (Gill 1996, p. 199, Wajirō and Adriasola 2016). This wording was perhaps an attempt to contest the idea that studying the material culture of the ancient past was more worthy than that of the everyday life in the present (Gill 1996, p. 199).

Modernology investigates things that would be described as trivial or were ignored by most other academics at the time (Gill 1996, p. 199, Kuroishi 1998, p. 149), with an emphasis on

Fig. 2. *The vestige of an entrance. A typical example of hyperart located in the city of Vardø in Norway. Photo: Author, September 23, 2016, 14:34.*

observation, surveying everyday life and how things change. In the 1930s, Wajirō travelled to both Europe and America, looking for some similar use of the name in the west, but found none (Christy 2012, p. 188, Wajirō and Adriasola 2016, p. 66). Never-the-less, it is interesting to note that he did his work simultaneously as Walter Benjamin's work on Baudelaire's Paris (Erber 2016, p. 8). One of the questions modernology examines is the unconscious behaviour of people in their everyday lives (Kuroishi 1998, p. 147), which requires the modernologist to use her legs like Benjamin's *flâneur* and seek 'refuge in the crowd' to observe the everyday environment (cf. Benjamin 1999). Rather than constructing elaborate theories that would in some sense abstract everyday life, modernology focuses

on the meticulous collection of data, drawing, photography, and visual descriptions (Cheung and Luo 2016, p. 145, Kuroishi 2016, p. 7). With expressive forms of visual documentation that were partly inspired by the expressive methods of avant-garde artists of the time, modernology was recognised by some for its value as art (Kuroishi 2011, p. 56).

Modernology employs methodological aspects from anthropology, botany, geography, sociology, and not least archaeology (Kuroishi 1998, pp. 145–6, 2016, p. 6). Wajirō thought of archaeology as a methodology dealing with material remains of the past, while modernology is a thing-oriented methodology dealing with ongoing phenomena (Kuroishi 1998, pp. 145–6, 2016, p. 7, Wajirō and Adriasola 2016, p. 69). Wajirō wrote that modernologists should look at modern things as curious objects and as if they were thousands of years old (Gill 1996, p. 206):

> If we are to borrow the stance of archaeologists, it is like their position toward ruins and remains. We look at things displayed in show windows, just as if they were objects displayed at a historical museum. (Wajirō and Adriasola 2016, p. 68)

Modernologists examine everything from broken, useless and abandoned objects, to the movement of ants, cigarette stubs on the street, patterns of cracks on broken rice bowls, or the footsteps of people walking on the street (Kuroishi 1998, p. 52, 2016, p. 6, Wajirō 2015, p. 206). It is not difficult to see how this rather strange and mundane selection of material might have inspired Akasegawa in his concept of hyperart. Nevertheless, this assemblage of banalities and everyday objects also resonates with the material that contemporary archaeologists and their multidisciplinary colleagues are concerned with, including everything from abandoned herring factories and the material culture of homeless people, entropic gardens, to graffiti and ballast (i.e. Zimmerman *et al.* 2010, Pétursdóttir 2014, Graves-Brown and Schofield 2016, Burström 2017, DeSilvey 2017).

THE UNFAMILIARITY OF THE PRESENT DAY

There are interesting similarities between modernology and the field of archaeology of the contemporary world and recent past that have been developing over the last two decades (see Buchli and Lucas 2001a, Harrison and Schofield 2010, Graves-Brown *et al.* 2013, Harrison and Breithoff 2017). Wajirō insisted that a modernologist must look at all the houses in a village as a whole, both old and recent, not just the thatched-roofed house a native ethnologist would be drawn towards (Christy 2012, pp. 146–7). In some sense, both Wajirō's archaeology of the present day and contemporary archaeology situate themselves in the present and look at things as they are in the fleeting moment, whilst at the same time acknowledging their past (Figure 3). Both stress that fieldwork, to head out and gather data and document things in the field, is what distinguishes its research from the deskbound approach of a historian (cf. Lucas 2004, p. 111, Christy 2012, p. 147, Pétursdóttir 2012, p. 585).

Another similarity is modernology's focus on small details and things in the mundane and everyday world, an approach that recognises broken teacups as being just as interesting as grand boulevards (Christy 2012, p. 188). The indiscriminate approach of archaeologists to material culture was an important inspiration:

> [W]e should proceed in the manner archaeology treats relics and remains, that is, things from past eras. Just as archaeologists obtain artifacts from the excavation of tombs, we devote ourselves to the creation of charts presenting our analyses and records of even the minutest things found in each and every room of people's houses. (Wajirō and Adriasola 2016, p. 70)

The call for investigating everyday things that are considered trivial and mundane is a familiar topic in contemporary archaeology (cf. Graves-Brown 2000, p. 1, Buchli and Lucas 2001b, pp.

Fig. 3. *The stake during wintertime, perhaps seeming a bit less out of place when enveloped in a snowy landscape. Photo: Author, February 13, 2016, 14:58.*

2–3, 9, Olsen 2010, Kiddey 2017, pp.133–135). William Rathjes' Garbage Project that started in the 1970s demonstrated that even the most banal things such as soiled diapers and rotten meat could be as interesting as any ancient artefact (Rathje and Murphy 2001). One of the central ideas that have influenced archaeologies of the contemporary world have been articulated by Paul Graves-Brown in the book *Matter, Materiality and Modern Culture*: 'The purpose of this enterprise, then, is to make the familiar unfamiliar, to lead the reader to make their day-to-day experience and re-examine how things around them shape practice' (Graves-Brown 2000, p. 1). This concept has been discussed and reflected on over the last 18 years (e.g. Buchli and Lucas 2001b, pp. 9, 13, Campbell and Ulin 2004, Graves-Brown

2011, Harrison and Schofield 2010, pp. 11, 109, Harrison 2011, Myers 2011, pp. 140, 159, Kiddey and Schofield 2011, pp. 5–6, Pétursdóttir 2014, p. 336, Harrison 2016, p. 166, McAtackney and Penrose 2016, p. 153, Harrison and Breithoff 2017, p. 206). A concept related to the idea of making the present unfamiliar is that of 'prehistory' generally not being a chronological concept, but rather an ontological distinction between text and material culture. Instead of defining prehistory chronologically as a time before writing, it can be seen from a different perspective as a category of material time existing independently from and synchronous with textual history (Lucas 2004). To say that material culture, such as the snow stake, is in some sense prehistoric resonates with how modernology conceptually re-viewed contemporary material culture as ancient. However, it can be argued that this re-viewing of contemporary objects is not necessarily a form of alienation, but rather a shift in perspective that brings things closer in order to see them anew.

'THOMASSONS' AND THE ART OF BEING UTTERLY USELESS

Modernology's lesson is that to study the present day – modernity – it is necessary to investigate the things that are generally regarded as mundane and trivial. Unlike modernology's focus on human behaviour, Akasegawa's investigations of hyperart addressed the strange character of vestigial objects themselves (cf. Wajirō and Adriasola 2016). Searching for hyperart involves looking beyond the everyday façade of irrelevance for pointless things in the environment (cf. Jun and Thompson 2012, p. 484, Erber 2016, p. 9). Similarly to modernology's 'thousand year gaze', this implicates an archaeological orientation towards a material environment: instead of looking for the intentional and meaningful, attention is being directed to the apparently purposeless, useless, rudimentary, or accidental. This is a radical reversal of more conventional approaches to material culture, which seek to disclose and reveal a deeper meaning in or behind things (cf. Olsen 2003, 2010).

Another name Akasegawa used for hyperart was 'Thomassons'. This name was inspired by American baseball player, Gary Thomasson, who played his two final seasons from 1981 to 82 for the Japanese team Yomiuri Giants (Akasegawa 2009, pp. 2–3). However, even after signing the most generous contract in the Japanese baseball league at the time, he played miserably and almost beat the strikeout record in the league. Akasegawa noticed that the name Gary Thomasson written in Japanese characters could alternatively be read as hyperart. For Akasegawa, Thomasson became the perfect example of hyperart: frivolously financed while being utterly useless, and again hinting at the significance of humour in his work. Akasegawa saw hyperart as an antithesis to a capitalist worldview that 'doesn't allow for this sort of uneconomical thing' (Akasegawa 2009, pp. 6–7). In one instance he refers to looking for hyperart as a 'pursuit of abnormalities' (Akasegawa 2009, p. 85). Despite this claim, he decidedly found a lot of hyperart embedded in the Japan of the 1980s, which at that time was experiencing a major economic boom. However, it might have been this time of capitalistic revelry that enhanced the presence of such useless and trivial things. One can speculate that if there were shortages of snow stakes, or plastic, the likelihood of the snow stake being misplaced and afterwards being left alone is low, as opposed to today's material excess.

Hyperart usually goes unnoticed in everyday life (Akasegawa 2009, p. 2). Its rather elusive character sets it apart from readymade objects that are turned into art by moving them into a museum (cf. Tomii 2010, p. 40) and by assigning them with a signature, such as Marcel Duchamp's famous urinal the 'Fountain' (cf. Marotti 2015). A piece of hyperart in a gallery or museum has to be there by accident and be inadvertently maintained. The radical aspect of hyperart can be said to be its vestigial

disconnection from any human purpose and intention. As Akasegawa writes, 'a work of hyperart can have an assistant, but not a creator' (Akasegawa 2009, p. 16). It is likely that the person(s) who planted the red plastic stake in the derelict garden never had any specific motives or ambitions behind the operation.

Akasegawa saw hyperart as a delicate but obstinate thing, which is always threatened by eradication, because it is regarded as useless and thus targeted by renovations and other forms of clearing (Akasegawa 2009, pp. 58, 92, 171). For hyperart to exist, things, architecture and other structures must have the opportunity to grow and persist at the same time. As Akasegawa observed, places where both really old and really new things mingle, are fertile ground for hyperart (Akasegawa 2009, p. 314). In an encounter with an empty lot left after a house was demolished, he describes being floored by an intense aura of archaeology (Akasegawa 2009, p. 90). The auratic quality of the empty lot is the archaeological knowledge and sense that there *was* a house in that lot. After being liberated from an obvious human function, its vestigial unfamiliarity accentuates the thought of what a house lot is without a house. Beyond its potential usefulness in the future and meaningful past, what is this useless lot today? From one perspective, useless things can be understood as disturbing objects that disrupt the constant drive towards consumption and utility (Kwek 2018).

Hyperart thus refers to familiar things turned weird/strange through their vestigial properties. This highlights that it is not always necessary to make things *seem* unfamiliar, but rather that the tings themselves, often in vestigial modes of being, are able to mediate their inherent weirdness themselves. Their strangeness does not necessarily mean that we notice them, nor does it appear as a prominent disturbance in the environment. It can be insidious and hide in the details, almost like puzzles waiting to be solved, such as doorways, pathways, or stairs leading nowhere, an overhang protecting something long gone from the rain, an empty alcove, or a superfluous gate. Through his students and public participation, Akasegawa collected and documented a large amount of hyperart. The 'Thomasson project' lasted from 1983 to 1987, and popularised the concept of hyperart for the Japanese public through publishing reports sent in by readers in a monthly photo magazine (Tomii 2009, p. 389, 2010, p. 43).

In a recent anthology about urban interstices, Dutch artist Guy Königstein seems to have independently rediscovered hyperart, which he calls 'paradoxical spaces' (Königstein 2014). Hyperart can be seen in some sense as concrete things, objects that can be discovered and even rediscovered. Material culture is, and will always be, infused with things and structures that are seemingly partial, vestigial, and incomplete; this is both true for derelict archaeological sites and lived in environments. As Akasegawa observes, '[a]s long people have cities, and as long they are conscious, the hyperart of Thomassons will continue to flit in and out of view, in the space between mind and metropolis' (Akasegawa 2009, p. 3). As argued by Michel de Certeau and further reflected upon by Tim Edensor, there is no place that humans inhabit that is not in some sense 'haunted' (c.f. de Certeau 1984, p. 108, de Certeau *et al*. 1998, pp. 133–43, Edensor 2001, pp. 146–64, 2005a, pp. 152–4, 2005b). The ghosts in these tales are voids, elusive 'absent presences' dwelling amid anthropogenic environments – such as an empty chair besides a desk in a disused office, or a wheelbarrow forgotten in the yard of a derelict farm. One can say that there are voids in hyperart because of its vestigial character, but rather than the haunting absences being in focus, Thomassons' rather highlight that which is very much *present*. Allegorically, hyperart is more like a shambling 'zombie' rather than incorporeal spirits and spectres. It can sometimes be hard to point out in the environment, but it is blunt when noticed, not at all like ethereal entities. Modern ruins have

been compared to decomposing bodies (see Pétursdóttir and Olsen 2014, p. 8). Akasegawa himself compares discovering hyperart with digging up a corpse, and the feeling of seeing a ghost (Akasegawa 2009, p. 310). Any anthropogenic environments will be saturated with things and nonsense, irrational structures and vestiges – material culture that no one has requested or foreseen.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL HYPERART

What would happen if archaeologists encountered hyperart during an excavation? Would they acknowledge it? Typically, archaeologists work with ancient remains, usually fragmented and incomplete. The fragmented vestiges are generally regarded as something to overcome by reconstructing it to something whole, complete, and not least *meaningful* (cf. Lucas 2012). Take for example a set of stone stairs leading to the remains of a bricked up doorway buried in a complex medieval urban context that has accumulated over centuries. The bricks in the doorway would be recorded as a fill, chronologically younger than the stairs, and interpreted as depositions marking when the stairs went out of use. Stairs leading nowhere would understandably be omitted as a 'non-object', and as something contemporary with nothing. Hyperart can be regarded as a 'bug' in the temporal machinery, objects that are out of time and synchronicity. Yet, such objects are an inherent part of the material landscapes that humans inhabit, not only as ruins, but also a part of a lived-in environment. The snow stake also shows that this is not only a temporal variability, but also a spatial displacement and severance. In one instance, Akasegawa related his experience of hyperart to a fear of 'partial' death and corpses (Akasegawa 2009, p. 313). The thought of absurd, non-functional, partial things can be troubling to include in any discussion of material culture with an ambition to clarify and make a material meaningful. Hyperart is perhaps not only threatened by extinction through renovation, as Akasegawa noted, but also by initiatives that look only for the useful and meaningful (Figure 4).

In the last chapter of his book, Akasegawa points out that hyperart is not an inherently urban phenomenon, but can also be found in the countryside and wilderness (Akasegawa 2009, pp. 342–3). One of the hyperart-reports he received from the countryside contained pictures of an abandoned railway, which displayed hyperart-like qualities even when no longer maintained in a pristine condition. These 'legend(s) of Thomassons' as Akasegawa calls them, are completely retired, just like the baseball player Gary Thomasson, and yet still form a part of the environment (Akasegawa 2009, pp. 353, 359). Archaeological Thomassons, which Akasegawa is uncertain even are instances of hyperart, retain weirdness because they still are present in the landscape despite being abandoned by caring humans. Akasegawa struggles to see them as hyperart because they are utterly abandoned by humans – the unconscious assistants. An abandoned railroad track cutting through the rice paddies only persists because of its materiality and the plants and weeds that stabilise the earthen embankment; non-humans that traditionally have no sense of meaning, usefulness, or any consciousness we can recognise – the perfect hyper-artists.

Does the roadside stake at Retiro really fit into the hyperart concept? Because the roadside stake is not absentmindedly taken care of by humans, it does not fit into Akasegawa's 'strict' definition of hyperart (e.g. Akasegawa 2009, pp. 50, 168). However, looking through his book, there are many examples of hyperart which do not seem to be taken care of. Many of his examples of Thomassons, such as 'aerial' doors leading into empty air, or 'atomic' hyperart consisting of residual impressions of torn down buildings visible on the walls of surviving neighbouring houses, have never been taken care of by 'unconscious' human intervention (e.g. Akasegawa 2009, p. 50). In one place, Akasegawa contributes the survival of hyperart

Fig. 4. *Creative repurposing of the aforementioned vestigial entrance in Vardø. The flowerpot does not erase the hyperart, but instead reinforce its weirdness. Photo: Author, August 8, 2018, 19:19.*

to poverty, in other words the lack of funds to clear away useless and weird pieces of garbage (Akasegawa 2009, pp. 8, 149, 171). The endurance of these examples must thus be, in some

sense, accidental in both its creation but also in its continuing existence, relying on the absence of human intervention and its own persisting materiality. This absence of human intervention hints at a darker side of hyperart, that in some instances it can be revealed as material traces of societal inequality. Vestigial material culture can very well be employed in research related to marginalised heritage narratives (i.e. Battle-Baptiste 2011, Reilly 2016). However, this does not mean that vestigial things are essentially 'bad' or necessarily unwanted. If one look past the strict definition of hyperart, it can rather be a concept highlighting that archaeology often encounters objects which escapes meaningful descriptions and attempts at making them understandable.

Akasegawa notes that hyperart is usually connected to some form of architecture (Akasegawa 2009, p. 78), such as a bricked-up door on a house or a fenceless gateway connected to a concrete path. This also holds true for the red snow stake. The landscape garden wherein it is located is a diffuse piece of landscape architecture where the now natural looking forest floor was carefully altered during its construction. Rather than being a product of subtraction, the stake is certainly a later addition to this architecture – not really a vestige of something that was there, but rather a dislocated vestige in itself. The stake is even more of a piece of disturbing nonsense than many of the architectural examples Akasegawa uses; it is not simply an object that has been blocked off or is falling appart but an object that has been on the move and has settled down for the moment. The stake in its dislocation highlights a disturbingly unpredictable afterlife of an object of anthropogenic origin, which in a sense defies what someone meant it to be.

One aspect of the concept of hyperart relies on the tension between what a thing was and what it has become – between past and present. One might say that in order to recognise a hyperart object, one must be familiar with its intended utilitarian function and its past. In a certain way hyperart can thus be described as a partly retrospective approach; the notion is borne out of a sensed tension between what a thing used to be and what it now is. As such, these are remembering objects, objects alluding to something that was or might have been. The snow stake also evokes a feeling of displacement from a former context, not only as a bricked up doorway or a staircase leading nowhere, but a somewhere rather than a something. This absence of somewhere, the absolute de-contextualization of things, is reprehensible for archaeology, a discipline that highly prises context and objects *in situ* (c.f. Olsen 2010, p. 155, Pétursdóttir 2017). The sharp eye of an archaeologist, or a modernologist's 'thousand year gaze', might be useful to locate such things, but might as well dispel its nonsense, weirdness and dark humour by tracing it away to previous origins and purposes. By 're-solving' the snow stake, either by conceptually covering over its present situation by tracing it back to its origin, or by tearing it out of the garden soil and planting it back beside a road, its vestigial presence would be extinguished. In a paradoxical sense, in order to appreciate hyperart, it is necessary to both know about a previously utilitarian function and at the same time disregard this knowledge and accept the thing in all its vestigiality.

In a text written before his work on hyperart, Akasegawa wrote that bringing an *Objet d'art* out of the museum and into the everyday world would liberate it from ourselves, by letting its materiality be (cf. Erber 2006, p. 10, Akasegawa 2015, Marotti 2015, p. 87). According to Pedro Erber, Akasegawa's idea of liberated objects differs from the autonomous object proposed by object-oriented philosophers such as Graham Harman, because Akasegawa 'acknowledges that this liberating process must take place within "our interior self " (*onore no naibu*) or, as he puts it even more cogently, inside our "skull" (*zugaikotsu*).

Therefore, the liberated objet cannot exist apart from a relationship between materiality and consciousness' (Erber 2015, p. 112). Yet, according to Harman himself, art cannot exist without humans as an essential 'ingredient' (cf. Harman 2014, 2017, p. 32) – so in a universe without humans there would be no art, or indeed hyperart. However, it also follows that there would be no art in a world with humans and nothing else. The displacement of the snow stake by human hands, and its original fabrication, would of course be impossible without the human 'ingredient'. The snow stake has in some sense been released from a previous task, as part of a yearly material cycle of being placed along a road in wintertime, and stored during summer. To be liberated from the drudgery of being useful, things do perhaps not always need the help of Walter Benjamin's collectors (Benjamin 1999, pp. 9, 204–11), instead they may manage this on their own. An example of things that persist far beyond their intended use is windblown plastic packing material littering the environment around recycling facilities. The loss of their practical relationship to society might seem to strip them of meaning and affect. However, this loss of apparent function and meaning can highlight different and unexpected ways of how things are, such as how plastics can be a vector for harmful organic compounds in aquatic environments.

Archaeological storehouses and heritage sites are saturated with hyperart – artefacts that are neither ornamental, useful or raise any interest, and which nevertheless are carefully curated by people, machines, and architecture that do not give many of them much thought. Even if they remain in anticipation that they might disclose something meaningful in the future, they are detached and vestigial for now. Many activities dealing with some form of collection, such as gathering descriptions, abstract data, or material samples, never lead to any clarity or profound results. Things being inconclusive, or in other ways vestigial, are even part of activities considered rational and goal-oriented. For example, Norwegian archaeological databases hold the strange artefact category of 'cuddle-stones', which are small and smooth stone pebbles that fit in the palm of your hand. No conclusive arguments have been made on the use or meaning of these stones, many of which may simply be natural rocks from the local environment, but which stood out in the eyes of the excavator. They are ambiguous and at the same time ordinary, incurious pebbles occupying acid-free storage boxes – strange vestiges resting on assumptions. The Swedish playwright and author August Strindberg scornfully branded archaeology as 'button-ology', a science obsessed with making purposeless typologies and producing worthless data (Welinder 1994, pp. 320–6, Olsen 1997, p. 22) – striking words that could also be used to describe hyperart. There is perhaps something paradoxical about an approach that acknowledges that there is something significant in trivial matter, and misplaced and nonsensical objects – something meaningful in the seemingly meaningless. Yet, there is also something irrefutable in that such objects are part of the material environment that humans and other beings and things emerge in. Can we really talk about material culture by only including apparently meaningful and informative objects? There is a loss, an absence of the weird, if every engagement with material culture has to lead to elucidation. Trivial and misplaced objects are an integral part of material environments, because it is certain that some things will dislodge themselves and drift into new environments. It is possible to argue that all objects have an inherent potential of being meaningful, even banal things like a decayed polystyrene cup can unlock meaningful and emotional memories (Kiddey 2017, pp. 133–134), but objects might also hold the potential of being utterly meaningless and have an aura of unreachable otherness.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In one section of his book, Akasegawa discussed hyperart documented in European cities such as Paris. Here he notes the distinct feel of these Thomassons, that they have a different texture, bone structure, and 'eat' different foods than those in Japan (Akasegawa 2009, pp. 259–260). Perhaps it is true that different material cultures also mean different kinds of hyperart. Each culture might have its distinct assemblage of vestigial matter, such as the dislodged and misplaced roadside snow-stakes found in Norway. Another important point made by Akasegawa is that apparently meaningless things often create a frame for the more meaningful objects in our everyday environment:

> The Thomasson – which like a steak in the middle of a plate – is inherently meaningless, so the parsley and carrots around it get all this extra emphasis, until they themselves start to seem Thomasson-like and meaningless, too. The meaninglessness gets emphasized, so the picture itself never runs out of meaning. (Akasegawa 2009, p. 303)

The snow stake is still there, just as insignificant as before. It could perhaps be promoted as an example of how human waste contaminates the environment. However, rather than polluting the oceans, it acts as a substrate for algae and other microorganisms. Soon the accumulating leaf litter will permanently burry the stake and perhaps, turn it into 'proper' archaeology sometime in the future (Figure 5). The snow stake is just one of many Thomassonian corpses that dwell in the derelict garden, which inadvertently form a frame around acknowledged historical objects such as the paths and the old venerable summer villa. There are too many vestigial objects to make sense of, making it tempting to somehow omit them from any considerations and investigations of the property. Yet, what could be gained by including them? One can argue that noticing misplacement, nonsense and vestigiality is inherent to how humans experience material environments. That is, that human interaction with material environments will inadvertently create vestigial matter, just as waste and matter out of place can be seen as a sign of life (see Reno 2014). The odd and misplaced might be perceived as something we ought to overcome and explain. Hyperart and its archaeological sensitivity to objects may however also be regarded as an alternative way to conceptualise the weird details in our everyday environment without immediately resorting it to clarifying explanations.

The archaeological relevance of the notion of vestigiality extends far beyond the confines of the contemporary. Being thoughtful of how human environments are saturated also with vestigial and apparently meaningless objects, can serve to develop alternative and more realistic images of past human environments and, thus, to step outside the usual functionalist dichotomies of the practical and the symbolic. To have a realistic picture of a human environment requires to have it populated also with the accidental, vestigial, rudimentary, fragmentary and misplaced. To be accurate one must incorporate the inherent inaccuracies of a material environment.

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Fig. 5. *The stake moving imperceptibly towards the forest floor. Photo: Author, August 2, 2017, 9:43.*

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Article D

Mold, weeds and plastic lanterns: ecological aftermath in a derelict garden

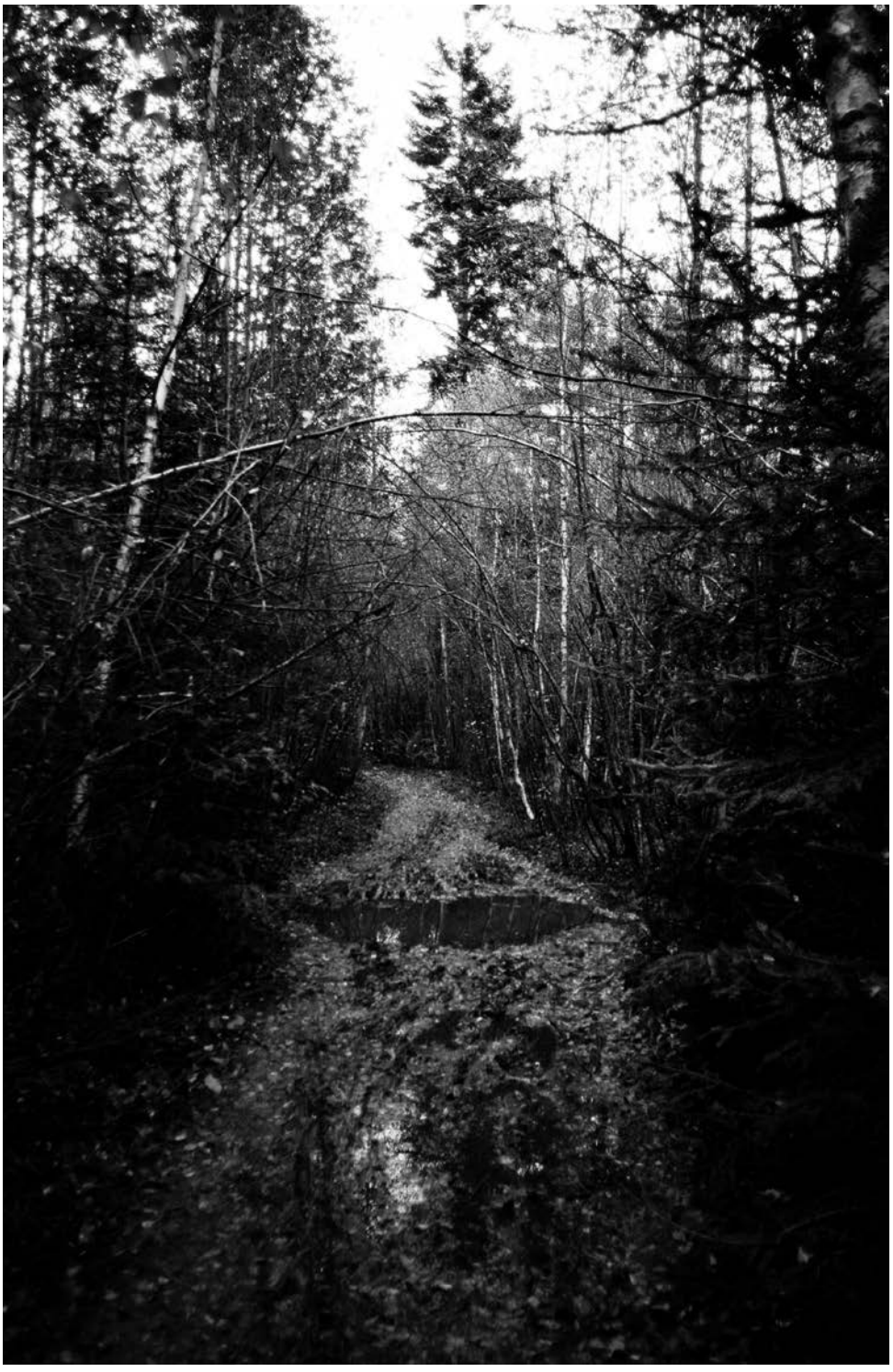
Introduction

Envisage an old landscape garden with impenetrable silver fir (*Abies alba*) thickets and creeping carpets of periwinkle (*Vinca minor*) draping crumbling stone terraces underneath a dense canopy of deciduous and coniferous trees. The anthropogenic presence in the lush landscape is revealed by a cluster of derelict buildings, a dilapidated Swiss chalet villa, a gardener's residence, and a garage, adorned with a rusty corrugated iron roof. This is Retiro, a derelict 19th century landscape garden and summer estate located in Molde, a small town on the north-western coast of Norway. The Spanish noun "retiro", which translates to English as "retirement" or "withdrawal", was the name given to the property by the Danish consul and industrialist Christian Johnsen. The name may indeed sound familiar; the garden is named after the famous Buen Retiro Park in Madrid. In his youth Christian was denied entrance to this wondrous park, which made him swear that he would himself create a garden that was open to everyone (Eikrem 2015, 50). The eight and a half hectare estate and landscape garden were finished in 1874, nestled in picturesque rural surroundings on the temperate and fertile south facing shore of the Fannefjord. True to Johnsen's promise, the garden was open to all, from the common farmer to the German Kaiser. Today however, the jointly entropic and verdant landscape exhibits another form of radical openness in its apparent dereliction that includes beings and objects that never were included on the original guest list.

This text will explore three different facets of Retiro that constitute and continue to shape the place today, namely fungi, invasive organisms, and "feral" artefacts. These examples were chosen because they are rather unconventional in the traditional frame of cultural heritage, but no less importantly because they quite literally brought attention to themselves during several seasons of field survey in the garden. These organisms and things are constituent parts of the material "unconscious" (cf. Olivier 2011) that maintains, reshapes, and inhabits Retiro. They exemplify an archaeological record that exist in parallel with common anthropocentric descriptions and historical heritage-characterizations, but which vitally contributes to the complex ecology that makes the place.

Framing heritage in this a way invites reflection on how it also affects and is affected by non-humans such as plants, animals, minerals and fungi. A descriptive engagement with such entities can foster novel insights into a heritage site as a particular ecosystem. The radical "openness" of ruinous places is an underlying theme in the field of contemporary archaeology (i.e. Olsen 2010, 166–173; Farstadvoll 2016), and though focused on the nature of a feral landscape I hope this text can expand this topic with concrete examples. Concern for this openness has, moreover, mostly been focused on relationships between humans and

derelict places (Edensor *et al*. 2011; Moshenska 2014), on acts of remembering and disclosing hidden and overlooked pasts (González-Ruibal 2008), or on how abandonment and opens affords the wondrous and mysterious nature of things (Pétursdóttir 2014). Here I want to draw attention to interactions between anthropogenic objects and other non-humans and to how these also constitute a part of this ecological openness. Based on fieldwork in Retiro – a heritage site bordering the natural and cultural – my aim is thus to weave an intricate picture of how such places are constituted, maintained and experienced.



The matter of heritage and ecology

For its northerly latitude Fannefjorden has an unusually mild climate, owing to the large hills protecting the area from cold northerly winds and the towering Sunnmøre Alps to the south that intermittently spawn warm föhn winds (Jakobsen 1953, 435; Vestad 1961, 11). These climatic circumstances make this an ideal place for growing a wide variety of plants, from exotic perennials like the castor bean (*Ricinus communis*), to large trees like the Lawson cypress (*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*) (Vestad 1961). The garden, thus, had both native and non-native plants that created an eclectic landscape exhibiting both a local and foreign character. This hybridity was further emphasized in its adornment, with statues of beings from the Greek pantheon set amidst a timber hunting-cabin folly and ponds emulating their natural counterparts found in the surrounding mountains.

No longer routinely raked and refreshed with new coats of gravel, the serpentine paths of Retiro are today pockmarked and muddy. Some are completely grown over after being blocked off by large fallen trees. Yet there are clues of people still tracing the old passages, some of which have been patched with wooden boards in the muddiest sections. Long gone, however, are the gardener and his neat topiary shaping of the boxwood (*Buxus sempervirens*) and yew (*Taxus baccata*) in the flower garden. The garden's dereliction started in the interwar period when the maintenance became too costly (Vestad 1961, 16; Parelius 1982[1953], 58). During the war, Wehrmacht forces took control over the property. The garden was used to hide vehicles, which damaged it to such an extent that a local historian described it as a ruin in 1951 (Jakobsen 1953, 437–439; Parelius 1982[1953], 58). While the northern half of the property has been owned for several decades by the municipality, the remaining section was sold by a descendant of Johnsen in 2005 to a real estate development company. Today the windows in the villa are boarded up with plywood, and the same goes for the large gardener's residence.

As an unexploited seaside property, plans to redomesticate the feral landscape garden has of course emerged. In a recent assessment, the municipality asserts that "*The old Retiro garden is accessible, but not in a state that invites active use*" (Molde kommune 2014, 13–14, my translation). One of the proposals to rectify this problem involves "rebuilding" the garden and renovating the villa to use it as a kindergarten (e.g. Molde kommune 2014; Molde Eiendom 2014). A part of the property is also currently threatened by plans for building a new roundabout and road extension. Despite these plans, and though not assigned special status by heritage authorities, both private and public interest groups see Retiro as a valuable heritage site that needs to be rescued from its current circumstance (Farstadvoll 2016). Interestingly,

however, this bureaucratic and economic inertia that has for long foreclosed the garden in a state of limbo has, as we shall see, also made it possible for a novel and alternative heritage landscape to develop.

Seeing a grove that once was an open field now covered in birch trees (*Betula pubescens*) stunted by the fierce competition for sunlight, the concerns raised about the future of the property might seem warranted. The sentiment of the municipal planners resonates with the assessment given by biologists that surveyed the area in the early 1990s: "*The efforts to clean up after ravages of the hurricane and nutrient release from the root systems of the trees have meant that the vegetation and appearance of the park now are neither particularly aesthetically inviting nor suitable for moving about in*" (Jordal and Gaarder 1995, 128, my translation). The 1992 New Year's Day Storm is regarded as the most damaging cyclone to hit Norway in modern times. Many of the garden's coniferous trees had grown tall in the absence of pruning, making their towering trunks vulnerable to the strong gusts of wind. Once the colossal organisms fell, the spaces left open in their wake, together with the accumulated biomass, triggered an ecological succession (cf. Franklin, Shugart, and Harmon 1987) – new things started to grow, pioneering species such as raspberry (*Rubus idaeus*), fireweed (*chamaenerion angustifolium*), and birch. This demonstrates that regardless of the biologists' judgment Retiro's present situation might not be as uninviting, aesthetically or otherwise. Some sections of Retiro can be hard for people to move through, but the local badgers (*Meles meles*) and roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) traverse the dense underbrush without any problems. The nature of Retiro, thus, raises awareness of a world that extends beyond the usual conceptual frames of cultural heritage use or statutory duties of the municipality.

Retiro is a place that exposes its heritage as an emergent presence that stubbornly continues to exist despite, and because of, the lack of deliberate maintenance. A motivation for engaging with such a place is to disclose the fact that these places are also constituted by non-humans, which often are overlooked (cf. Harrison 2015; Olsen and Pétursdóttir 2016; Kobiałka 2018), and how each one of them, in different ways, is involved in the unceasing formation of heritage sites. The definition of heritage this text operates with includes things that are generally thought not to belong under this term, such as modern trash, spores, and disposable plastic spoons. I regard heritage not as something we inevitably have the chance to define and choose, but as something inherited, whether we like it or not (cf. Edensor 2016; Farstadvoll 2016; Olsen and Pétursdóttir 2016). This may represent an alternative way of understanding heritage. Nevertheless, thinking heritage beyond the anthropocentric is not farfetched.

Tangible heritage is ecological because it cannot be treated apart from the "*discursive and material conditions and practices*" that ensure its maintenance as heritage sites and objects over time (Rubio 2016, 60). In Retiro, fungi, plants, and other non-human entities are part of the material conditions and practices that aggregate the park in its nascent feral state. To think ecologically, one must acknowledge the interplay between things and beings (cf. Bryant and Joy 2014, xi), but ecology also deals with the "*transformation and flux of energy and matter*" that these relationships and interactions create, maintain, dissolve, and become affected by (Begon, Howarth and Townsend 2014, 5). This text also aims to demonstrate that heritage is not a homogenous phenomenon (cf. Fredengren 2015), but rather something that emerges through a wide array of organisms and things. Even though objects should not be reduced to their momentary relations (c.f. Harman 2011), ecology shows us that it is important to see how things and beings relate and interact, or withdraw from each other, in order to begin to understand a place. Ecology thus forms an argument against the perception of purity and separation that often exist in contemporary heritage management concerning both the "natural" and "cultural" environment (cf. Latour 1993; Lowenthal 2005; Harrison 2015; Shotwell 2016). Retiro can be classified as an example of a "fourth nature", "novel ecosystem", or "eco-fusion" (cf. Kowarik 2005; Morse *et al*. 2014; Rotherham 2017), as a place where the anthropogenic heritage is inseparable from what is usually regarded as the natural environment, and vice versa. This "feral" character reflects global developments, such as pollution, habitat destruction, global warming, mass extinction, and so on. However, instead of trying to eliminate presumed historical and organic imperfections, places such as Retiro can invite an opportunity to speculate about what lies ahead. In the following I will trace a few of the feral stories I've come across through my work in the garden, and how these manifests Retiros intricate heritage.

Fungal legacy

In the center of the garden's north-eastern quadrant is a small clearing with an understory crowded with wood ferns (*Dryopteris filix-mas*). The forest floor consists mostly of decomposing leaf litter interlaced with green moss and fallen twigs, which each year become dimmer under an expanding canopy of invasive sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and silver fir. In May 2015, a gnarly and truncated branch could be seen propped up against one of the small sycamores growing along the perimeter, its bark, stained with splotches of blue, green, red, and yellow paint. A truly odd and apparently nonsensical object, but what made it even weirder was a gelatinous growth protruding from several places along its surface. The substance was reminiscent of the old folk belief in star-jelly or the "*rot of the stars*", which is a slimy matter found on the ground after shooting stars had been seen striking through the sky (Hughes 1910; Belcher and Swale 1984). Today it is understood that this substance is most likely the fruiting body belonging to some kind of jelly fungus (Nieves-Rivera and White 2006, 24). Based on it's relatively large and lobed body, the specimen inhabiting the painted branch might be the yellow brain fungus (*Tremella mesenterica*). The yellow brain fungus is not itself digesting the branch, but is rather a parasite on other fungi that metabolize the dead wood (Zugmaier, Bauer and Oberwinkler 1994). Its pale-orange, milky white and translucent fruiting body mingles with the topography of the branch, lending its own aesthetic presence to the weird chromatic collage. The astronomer Martin Beech commented that the connection between fungi and meteors in folk belief is not so farfetched, even if the existence of gelatinous meteors belongs in myth, because "*[a]s metaphors of decay meteors and fungi share a common image* …" (Beech 1989).

In October the same year the branch was still there, but the gelatinous growths were gone and replaced with gaping scars exposing moldering heartwood. The holes were the only trace left by the fungi, apart from the rotting wood beneath the bark. The pungent smell of humus, decomposing plant matter, infuses the air in Retiro during the summer and fall. *Geosmin* is the scientific name of the chemical that makes this odor, a name derived from the Greek words for "earth smell". It is commonly a metabolic by-product of fungi and other microorganisms living in the soil (Paterson, Venâncio and Lima 2007). The same chemical is also responsible for the evocative *petrichor* smell following rainfall. Strangely enough, human noses are particularly sensitive to this fungal odor (cf. Polak and Provasi 1992), which can be described as earthy and moldy (Rousseaux *et al*. 2014, 115). The reason for our sensitivity may be that it is a sign of spoiling food, but it is not always a smell we avoid, because geosmin is also what gives red beets their earthy taste (cf. Lu *et al*. 2003). Like an invisible

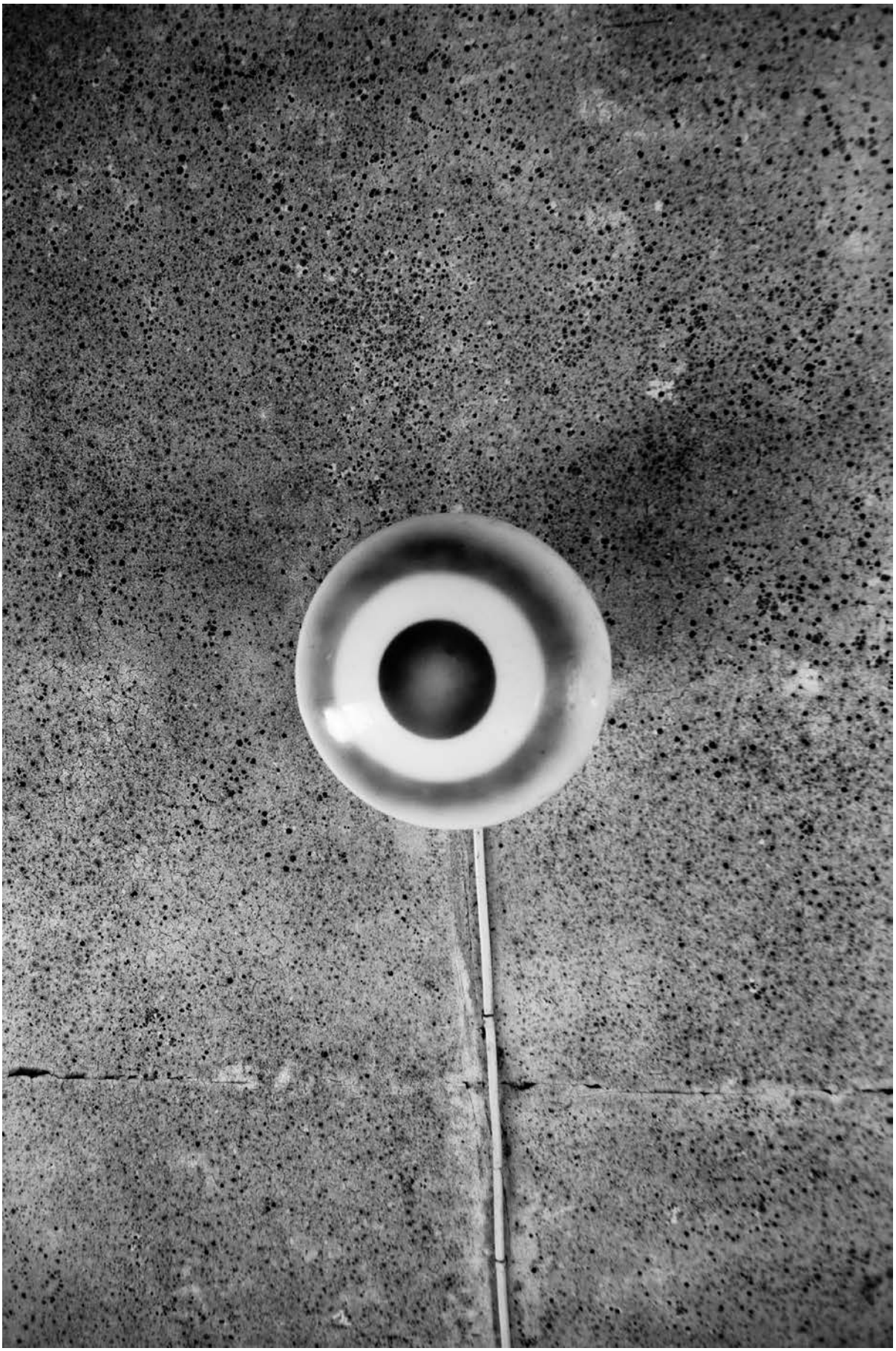
cloud, the odor permeates every corner of the garden, but can also drift with the wind and extend an olfactory presence beyond the borders of the property. Fungi are everywhere in the garden and most other places across the world.

Retiro has an overabundance of cellulose in form of living and dead wood, but also in form of anthropogenic structures such as the villa and the gardeners' residence. The buildings are themselves massive biotic objects, with an inner structure composed of large, horizontally interlocked timber logs. Where there is cellulose, you will find fungi. Under the exfoliating white paint on the walls of the villa, one can gleam the remnants of ochre paint, but there are also other odd transgressions marring the weather-beaten façade. The white paint unintentionally acts as a contrasting agent to highlight the presence of algae and the rather insidious and all around infamous genus of the fungi kingdom – the black mold (*Stachybotrys*). The same effect can also be located in one of the dilapidated bedrooms in the gardeners' residence, where the ceiling is covered in thousands of black spots giving away the presence of sporangiums brimming with black spores. The mold, specifically *S. chartarum*, which is often associated with buildings (Miller 2011, 184), can create health problems for both animals and people by producing airborne mycotoxins (cf. Vesper *et al.* 2000). The fungus thrives in humid cellulose-rich environments, and the buildings offer an irresistible habitat (cf. Miller, Rand and Jarvis 2009). Without being perfectly balanced by keeping humidity in check through heating and maintaining a waterproof layer of paint, old wooden houses such as the ones in Retiro become fungal gardens brimming with readily available nutrients. Humans, thus, are inadvertently talented at creating environments perfect for black mold to colonize.

In the basement of the villa, which consists of meter thick walls of mortar and stone, one of the boarded-up windows and its frame has at some point been ripped straight out of the wall. This had was undoubtedly the work of humans, but the burglars were probably aided by fungal collaborators. Looking closely at the wooden frame, one can observe that the wood is brittle and crumbly, probably facilitating the forced entrance by making the wooden frame more persuadable. This is the blocky mosaic of "brown rot", caused by fungi metabolizing carbohydrates and cellulose in the wood, leaving behind modified lignin (Schmidt 2006, 135–138). Fungi can transform things with its metabolic abilities, making them more malleable in such a way that it literally opens up new paths. Even in a highly fragmented state wood that has been affected by brown rot lasts longer in humus because of its modified lignin (Schmidt 2006, 137). Such lasting fragments and detritus are some of the *nachleben* (cf. Tamm 2015) or "afterlives" initiated by a heterogenic collective of fungi. The derelict garden that we

encounter today is just as much the afterlife of fungi as of human influence in the past, and represents distinct but fused human and non-human legacies (cf. Farstadvoll 2019). An example of this can be encountered on the exterior wall of the privy connected to the gardener's residence. The wall is coated in a biological collage of microorganisms, creating a patchwork of colors consisting mostly of green and black among the remaining patches of pale-pink paint. Human eyes, however, are attuned and attracted to the vibrant blue-green fungal impressions dotting the biotic tessellation. These striking traces probably consist of the pigment *xylindein* produced by fungi of the genus *Chlorociboria* (cf. Edwards and Kale 1965). This "green rot" is a secondary metabolite produced within the fungi's hyphae, which diffuses into and stains the substrate (cf. Schmidt 2006, 120; Robinson and Laks 2010). This kind of "green" wood has been employed in several instances in artistic work, such as in woodcraft (Rolfe and Rolfe 1925, 161), and as a pigment in paint (Blanchette, Wilmering and Baumeister 1992, 230). At Retiro, this pigment recalls a fungal aftermath, as a reminder that also non-humans create redundant pasts affecting the present. Why fungi have different colors is still largely a mystery, which alludes to an ecology that, in our perception, extends beyond simple cause and effect (Karlsen 2014).

Having focused on the "aftermath" it is interesting to note that the fungi inhabiting Retiro can as well be part of an ecological heritage, or mycelium, extending to a time *before* the garden was constructed. A pastureland dotted with meadows, copses, and farmland, as still remembered by remnants of old stone fences and clearance cairns poking through the carpet of moss and accumulated vegetation. Before the garden's construction, the property was described as unkempt, hilly and the least pretty place in the area (Jakobsen 1953, 436), which resonates with the biologists' assessment of the present-day Retiro quoted in the introduction. Parts of this autochthonous landscape were integrated into the landscaped architecture of the garden, interweaving the new organisms with old, instigating ecological upheaval and succession. The early stage of the garden was in a sense defined by an anthropogenically initiated "*throwntogetherness*" (cf. Massey 2005). In the golden days when it was tenderly cared for by the hands of attentive gardeners, the garden was perhaps more thrown together, ecologically speaking, than in its presently derelict character. By this, I mean that a previously unmanaged ecology was replaced with a precarious and artificial ecology that hinged on a balance provided by the constant upkeep by human hands and tools.



Fungi are part of Retiros nutrient-scape (cf. Farstadvoll 2019), a mycological topography of metabolizable tissue and dangerous mycotoxins. Even the gelatinous yellow brain fungus is edible by humans despite its unappetizing appearance. Encountering a place through its nutritional properties and taste is fundamentally ecological, and one might even claim that ecology is the oldest science, because humans have always been driven to understand and adapt to their non-human environment (Begon, Howarth and Townsend 2014, 5). In turn, it is equally important to note that non-humans also adapt and react to anthropogenic influences. Fungi have almost all the sense humans have – they can "taste" chemicals and sense surfaces (Bahn *et al*. 2007). When walking through Retiro, plants, fungi and other organisms sense the soles of our boots, our limbs, and respiration, which comes into contact with the environment. The realization that it is not only we who "sense" a place, but that other beings can also sense our presence and the environment, ought to open up possible reflections on what we think heritage and heritage experience is.

In heritage conservation fungi is seen as one of the major agents leading to degradation of material culture (e.g. Caneva, Nugari, and Salvadori 2008; Sterflinger 2010). In the eyes of ecologists however, fungi are major actors in creating and maintaining biodiversity and general ecological processes such as soil formation (cf. Peay, Kennedy and Bruns 2008; Wallander 2014). Fungi do not discriminate between tree stumps in the forest or venerable heritage architecture. Heritage is nutrition and habitats for fungi, while mycophagy is part of the culinary heritage of many human cultures (cf. Pieroni *et al.* 2005). In some interpretations of Leviticus, fungi damaging buildings is even mentioned as "*leprosy on houses*" (Kauserud *et al*. 2007), which is a reminder of the ever-present fungi, even in ancient circumstances. As they literally permeate every environment on earth, fungi can be unruly and impossible to control (cf. Money, 2007; Tsing 2015). As such, it is an inseparable and inherent part of the aesthetics and ecology of Retiro, facilitating patterns and interactions that necessitate and create the presence of the garden, and which playfully overflow and percolate into neighboring places. Without fungi Retiro would not be, or at least it would be something else. When structures as Retiro are assembled, with its biotic landscape architecture and massive wooden buildings, ecological relationships and struggles are inevitably established. Cohabitating with black mold is not necessarily preferable, but it is an unavoidable part of every entanglement with wooden buildings. As such, fungi are emphatic reminders that heritage can't be excised and placed alone on its own pedestal, elevated above and beyond the very stuff it consists of.

Abducted aliens

The fungi growing in Retiro are generally endemic to the local environment or cosmopolitan species found around the globe. In contrast, a substantial amount of the plants found here are species translocated from foreign biotopes. After the gardener and the dutiful "weeding-women" ceased their work, many of these non-native plants succumbed to the alien climate and were outcompeted by other plants. However, some of them survived and even flourished (e.g. Vestad 1961, 16). After being left to its own device for half a decade Retiro has therefore become an unintended "laboratory" for studying the spread of introduced species (cf. Jordal and Gaarder 1995, 62, 128). In a recent survey of the biodiversity on the property, the biologists recorded several alien species such as silver fir, sycamore, and lesser periwinkle (Gaarder and Vatne 2013, 8). In conclusion, the report recommended exterminating the non-native species that exhibit high risk for the local environment. Many of the original plants that survive thus have the double characteristic of being both heritage and pests.

One of the most notorious inhabitants found in the garden is the Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*): a hardy perennial that annually grows smooth stems that form near impenetrable thickets. As the name implies, the plant was originally native to East Asian countries such as Japan (Conolly 1977). It is sometimes described as a plant that can outlive the gardener and the garden itself (Bailey and Conolly 2000, 93). The most substantial part of the knotweed is its network of rhizomes, a large web of roots located underground that enables a knotweed colony to spread out and infiltrate its surroundings. Its rhizomes can extend as long as seven meters away from the stand and reach as far down into the soil as two meters (Child and Wade 2000). It has an amazing ability to adapt to different soil and climate types (e.g. Rouifed *et al*. 2012). In an old catalogue from the mid-19th century knotweed is said to have many positive properties, such as being both ornamental and medicinal, and not least inextirpable (Bailey and Conolly 2000, 94). In non-native habitats, it usually propagates and spreads asexually through vegetative fragments from its rhizomes and other parts of the plant (cf. Conolly 1977; Hollingsworth and Bailey 2000). This ability to grow clonal colonies through vegetative fragments is one of the reasons the plant is so hard to exterminate and is, thus, viewed as a terrible pest, listed among *100 of the World's Worst Invasive Alien Species* by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (Lowe *et al*. 2000). In Norway, it is recorded on the so-called "black list" as a highly invasive and foreign species, and placed in the "severe" impact category (Gederaas *et al.* 2012).

The Japanese knotweed was probably introduced to Norway in the 19th century (Schübeler 1886, 592; Fremstad and Elven 1997, 7), making it an enduring addition to the

biodiversity of the region, even if it at the same time threatens it (e.g. Goodenough 2010; Schlaepfer, Sax and Olden 2011; Richardson and Ricciardi 2013). It is not known when the knotweed was first introduced at Retiro, but its presence was first recorded in the early 1960s in the flower garden by the villa and the landscape garden west of the carriage entrance (Vestad 1961). The knotweed inhabiting Retiro today is not one hegemonic blob, but consists of several separate stands. The colonies are mostly located in the southern part of the garden, which has open areas with a lower density of trees. The places where the knotweed grows mark the general areas where they were planted, and function as lingering memories of an aesthetic order of the past. It is quite rare to see the Japanese knotweed bloom in Norway, and for some reason it is becoming an increasingly scarce phenomenon (cf. Fremstad 2012). But Retiro remains one of the places one can see the small white flowers in full bloom in late autumn.

Recently a large number of the knotweed colonies in Retiro started to wither and disappear. It turned out the colonies had been sprayed with herbicide. Not many days after the colonies were sprayed, however, the brown patches of wasteland quickly became botanical battlegrounds of pioneering species fighting to inherit precious square meters of sunlight. In a twist of irony, one of the pioneer species was the herbaceous perennial creeping jenny (*Lysimachia nummularia*), which is listed in the "high impact" category, just below the knotweed (cf. Gederaas *et al.* 2012). Moreover, several smaller colonies of knotweed have survived the attack, hiding amongst the dense vegetation around the gardener's residence. Small patches have also moved beyond the property border, temporarily escaping the poison. Being an example of heritage that fights backs with a rhizomeatic persistence, there might still be a possibility to see the knotweed bloom in the garden. Thus, because of their autopoietic persistence, plants such as knotweed can be regarded unforeseen futures, memories of consequences that overlooked or underestimated their ecology.

The Spanish slug (*Arion vulgaris*) is another sticky alien that has made the garden its home. In northern Europe, the brown slug is frequently found in gardens, wastelands, cemeteries, ditches, and small grasslands (cf. Kozłowski and Kozłowski 2011; Slotsbo 2014), which are usually anthropogenic landscapes. The slugs eat a wide range of plants and animals it can catch (Hatteland *et al*. 2013, 14). In Norway, this rather insidious slug has become one

of the most reviled icons of invasive species, probably because of massive media coverage and the animal's recognizable appearance (cf. Qvenild, Setten and Skår 2014). The narrative regularly repeats stories about the slug as a pest in gardens and the attempts and methods to exterminate the gastropods.

The slug is a rather recent inclusion to Retiro. Being first recorded in Norway in 1988 (Hatteland *et al*. 2013), the town of Molde was one of the three places the species was first recorded (see von Proschwitz and Winge 1994). Partly similar to the knotweed, slugs of the *Arion* genus can self-fertilize and start colonies from one individual (Hatteland *et al*. 2015, 317). The Spanish slug took advantage of an inviting opening in the local ecology, but was not alone in its actions. The eggs of the slug are usually found in soil and can consequently be dispersed through dirt sticking to shoes or as stowaway in potted plants (cf. Slotsbo 2014), which makes their distribution ecologically intertwined with our movements and artefacts. The slug is certainly not unique to this particular garden, but it is nevertheless one small piece in the material composition, ecologically rewiring the place through its sluggish rhythms and materiality. Whatever definition one may give tangible heritage – as places – it will always and inevitably be spaces that are shared.

In the instance of Retiro, the knotweed did not invade a pristine ecology, but was rather "abducted" and grafted into a different environment. Retiro has never been "pure", not even before the garden was built. These alien species were translocated to a place that already was in some way different from an imagined pristine environment, untouched by humans and their non-human entourage (e.g. Tassin and Kull 2015). If the foreign plants and animals didn't belong here, then Retiro can be categorized as an invasive place. The knotweed and all the other non-native organisms that make Retiro can represent a sort of virulent or perhaps "pathogenic" aesthetics. If you are not learned in botany, exotic and aesthetically alluring species such as the knotweed or goat's beard (*Aruncus dioicus*) might not seem that out of place. However, the Anthropocene and current global ecological crises can in a paradoxical way appear disquietingly "attractive" – from enormous algal blooms draining lakes of oxygen triggered by agricultural runoff to beautiful red sunsets created by anthropogenic aerosol suspended in the atmosphere. Just as we cannot always control what we inherit (cf. Olsen and Pétursdóttir 2016; Pétursdóttir 2017), it also follows that we do not always know whom or what is the "heir" of a place. Consequently, memories are ecological objects if they are given room to be intertwined with a material environment (e.g. Olsen 2010; Olivier 2011).

Feral artefacts

The first things that come to mind when delving into the ecology of a garden are "natural" objects, such as trees, flowers, and soil. However, Retiro is also inhabited by a diverse range of anthropogenic artefacts and structures, such as the ruins of a Victorian hothouse, stacked stone terraces, man-made ponds, drainage channels, clearance cairns, and broken chain-link fences. These objects all have their own respective places in the local ecology: for example, the fences dictate the movement of large mammals and the efflorescent concrete of the hothouse slowly leaches mineral nutrients into the surrounding soil. At the dawn of the Anthropocene, the presence and interaction of manmade objects with ecosystems has come into focus. An interesting manifestation of this is that display cases in the zoological exhibit at the natural history museum in Oslo have been infiltrated with modern trash. One of the displays shows a taxidermied male mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) swimming in a pond accompanied by a plastic bottle. Similar to the duck the bottle has been given a placard with taxonomic information, such as species, family, order, offspring, size, and distribution. The placard for the "species" *plastic utrem*, is certainly more illustrative and metaphoric than a serious attempt to make an artefact taxonomy. Nevertheless, this placard is a subversion of a nature/culture dichotomy, by treating an anthropogenic artefact in the same way as living organisms.

When the last swan (*Cygnus olor*) that graced the ponds in Retiro died and ended up as stuffed animal on a wall in the villa (Parelius 1982[1953], 58), new organisms as well as things moved in. In the course of surveying Retiro, the aforementioned *plastic utrem* had a ubiquitous presence, not to mention its close relative *alum utrem* and *vitrum utrem*. While plastic and aluminum bottles are relative newcomers, the glass bottles have run wild in the garden since its construction. Their presence is vaguer than the newcomers' because most of them have had the time to sink into the soil thanks to the tilling of earthworms, and not least because they have become substrates for a range of different organisms. When seen as part of an ecosystem, regardless of their potentially damaging qualities, objects such as plastic bottles can be understood both as invasive and pioneering objects. Ecosystems take time to incorporate and react to new objects. A good example is when windows constitute a collation hazard for birds because they have not had the time to adapt their senses to the materiality of glass (e.g. Martin 2011).

Within a grove of spruce trees (*Picea abies*) in the south-western quadrant of the garden, I stumble over the remnants of plastic lanterns, a recent example of invasive objects. A large cemetery borders Retiro in the west, which is a likely origin for these lanterns, but the

question is how they ended up under a spruce tree. The most likely explanation lies in a known phenomenon of birds such as crows, magpies, and seagulls discovering that the stearin in lanterns and candles is edible (e.g. Higuchi 2003), even if it is not digestible like tallow. The lanterns found at cemeteries is usually made out of brittle plastic that birds have learned can be smashed open by dropping them from heights. This example of animal vandalism has been observed at the local cemetery (cf. Heen 2012). Birds are important for the dispersal of seeds for a large range of plant species (e.g. Howe and Smallwood 1982), but as seen in Retiro they can also disperse manmade objects. Though not seeds, the lanterns are objects that affect the environment in different ways, such as by dispersing involuntary memories, absorbing and leaching chemicals, or sheltering small ponds of water forming habitats for microorganisms. Birds, modern mortuary practices, and dense vegetation create a strange ecological interplay with weird mixtures of anthropogenic and organic components.

As a contrast to the recent material inclusions drifting into Retiro, there are older remnants persisting in the evolving landscape. These objects are often well established, meaning they have had the time to become integrated with the local ecology. One notable example is an assemblage of creamy-white statue fragments inhabiting the undulating depression that once was the "Atlantic Ocean" pond, now a mire covered with grass and small saplings drawing nutrients from the old sediments. The busiest paths in the garden congregate towards the pond, where the brim forms a natural roundabout. The creamy-white fragments were originally part of a statue depicting Triton riding a hippocamp while blowing into a conch. There is evidence that these vestiges draw the attention of passersby, for example, that the more ornamental fragments have been poached while the unwieldy and indistinct pieces have been left alone. This is one example of environmental selection and sorting found at Retiro, where sometimes it is the least "attractive" things that persist. After observing the haphazard collection of fragments over four years, it is evident that they are moved, mostly by humans. Some have probably been posed to create picturesque scenes for photography, and other times they have evidently been played with by children. The remaining fragments have however not yet strayed far from the original pedestal.

It is not only humans that have been drawn towards the ceramic shards, as apparent by the layer of biofilm covering their surfaces. These microscopically thin layers consist of algae, cyanobacteria, lichen, and other microorganisms, which act as a living and dynamic patina. On specific types of substrates, some types of biofilms have been documented to have bioprotective properties (e.g. Cutler *et al*. 2013), in other words they can help preserve the object they grow on. Inadvertently, these microorganisms care for the substrate they extract nutrients from and live on, and are in turn preyed upon and generate a habitat for creatures such as the Spanish slug. In the center of the curly tail of the hippocampus, a small pond regularly forms from rainwater. In this artificial cavity, the fake marble is stained green from the algae and bacteria taking advantage of the humidity. On closer inspection, the surface of the ceramic material is porous and rough, inadvertently creating a topography where organisms such as lichen, algae, bacteria, and moss can literally get a hold. Anthropogenic materials regularly interface with other non-humans, as for example through microscopic pores on the ceramic surface of the statue fragments, or the depression of the "Atlantic Ocean" collecting organic detritus that decompose and become a source of nutrients for plants. Retiro has a reciprocal and inherent relationship with a "heritage biota" (cf. Viles and Cutler 2012), which make it the place it is today. Autopoietic organisms and allopoietic

objects such as disposable plastic lanterns are both equally important in their own unique ways for the being and becoming of a place.

Conclusion

Regardless of what the future may bring, "Retiro" is neither retiring nor retreating, but rather developing and advancing, notwithstanding the inevitable ecological upheaval that looms on the horizon in form of urban "revitalization". This text has engaged with Retiro as it is encountered today in its derelict state. The presence of fungi demonstrates that the heritage of Retiro in many ways depends on the very matter it is made of – organisms that usually go unmentioned or are even regarded as damaging. The introduced plants and Spanish slug highlight the tension and dichotomy between foreign and native, and demonstrate that heritage may exist as open places leading to unforeseen "heirs". The many fragments of distant and recent pasts that constitute the landscape allude to the complex afterlife of anthropogenic objects, where they gain unintended roles in the local ecosystem.

These examples demonstrate a small piece of the complex non-human undercurrents, originating both in distant and recent pasts, which make up the specific ecology of a place like Retiro. The artefacts that contribute to the feral landscape can infiltrate consciousness as well as bodies, like black mold spores clinging to lungs. The human presence at Retiro is ephemeral, activated and partly dictated by Retiro's ecological character. Despite their disproportional impact on the environment, there are mostly no people present within its boundaries, and they make up an unsubstantial part of the biomass. As heritage, the coagulating collage of human and non-human presences, reflect an ecology in transition, heading in unknown directions. Heritage definitions that also include non-humans forces us to acknowledge the intricate ecology of a site also inform on the human experience, but without reducing a place to human conclusion – there is always something more just behind what we currently experience. This thought also correlates with an idea that science and other endeavors seeking to understand things are often more about discovering and broadening the number of known objects than reducing them to exactitudes (cf. Harman 2013, 97–99).

This begs the question of how places of heritage can be explored as inseparable from a diverse non-human realm, crisscrossed with the strange *umwelts* of black mold, knotweed, and fragments of ceramic statues. Retiro is an inviting place, but not only for the reasons that most likely become highlighted in context of history, archaeology or municipal planning. To grasp the full extent of heritage places and their ecologies, it is, I would argue, necessary to establish connections also to things that might usually be seen as inconsequential or even

irrelevant. This ecological practice is one of joining futures, of holding different loyalties and severing bonds, of acknowledging the particular presence of fungi and polystyrene packaging. The derelict garden, as observed by the biologists surveying it is, I would claim, an unintended experiment for the dispersal of plants and other introduced lifeforms. But it is also a heritage experiment, absorbing some of the material aftershocks of the modern and prosperous society that envelops it. Like a mire that can absorb torrential rain and avert floods, or a mangrove forest that protects the land from devastating storms, Retiro may from an ecological perspective also hold an absorbent and filtering character, inviting things in while rejecting others. In one way, Retiro is reconstructing, or perhaps more succinctly, *growing* dynamically without any clear plan for an imagined future. The appreciation some ecologists have started to show for the potential beneficial aspects of novel ecologies on the preservation of some species (e.g. Maclagan, Coates and Ritchie 2018), can serve as an inspiration to look closer at the ecological complexity of heritage environments that sometimes get left behind in the hunt for a pristine past. This is not a heritage that asserts comforting histories about who we were or are, but rather one that makes visible the inheritance of an uncertain future.

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Article E

Feral Heritage: The Case of a Ruining Landscape Garden

Abstract

Retiro is a derelict landscape garden and country estate located in the town of Molde on the north-western coast of Norway. It should not be confused with the more famous namesake Parque del Retiro in Madrid. The estate with its garden and villa was built in the 1870s in a rural landscape dotted with fields, humble farmsteads, stone fences, copses, and several other summer estates. The gradual state of disrepair started as early as the interwar years while the surrounding rural environment has been replaced by an urban landscape. This text explores the complexity of a place that can be regarded as an urban interstice, a rural remainder, and a feral wilderness: How can we characterize the present-day Retiro, which is a remnant of a once rural landscape that has slowly been enveloped by a growing city? The question of how sites are categorized is relevant for how sites are researched, interpreted, and managed. The text concludes that while it is difficult to make absolute distinctions between purely rural and urban sites, it would be a mistake to ignore the differences altogether.

Keywords: dereliction; urbanity; rurality; garden; feral; heritage; wilderness

Introduction

Retiro is a ramshackle abandoned 19th century landscape garden and estate. The name may sound familiar because it is borrowed from the famous Buen Retiro Park in Madrid. The Retiro discussed in this paper, however, is located much further north in the town of Molde on the western coast of Norway. Molde is a midsized Norwegian town with about 26000 inhabitants, situated on a strip of lowland on the north side of the Fannefjorden, surrounded by a hinterland dotted with small farms, mountains, and diverse woodlands. Today, Retiro is the largest green space in Molde, but it has been neglected and left mostly to its own devices for approximately 75 years, except for the estates villa and its immediate surroundings, which only started to dilapidate after the last member of the family auctioned it off in 2005. The northern half of the property was already owned by the municipality of Molde, while the southern half, containing the Retiro villa and the other buildings was bought by a private property development company. The future fate of Retiro is currently unresolved and caught up in disputes between different owners, urban planning, and the evaluation of its heritage value.

The material landscape of Retiro is today, in a sense, a composite palimpsest of mixed pasts, like all other archaeological sites. When it was built, Retiro was located in a rural setting, but today it has become completely enveloped in an urban landscape. The developments in the

surrounding landscape foreshadow change in Retiro by zonal redevelopment and expansion of infrastructure, as well as historical restoration to make it “fit” into the urban environment. The collision between the rurality of Retiros horticultural past, its derelict wilderness, and its present urban embracement, poses some interesting question: How can we characterize the present-day Retiro, a remnant of a once rural landscape today enveloped by a growing city? How does a rural past persist in Retiro, and has it become or exposed something else through its dereliction, something more akin to a feral wilderness? In addition, what can this tell us about the relationship between the rural and urban, and how can this help us rethink the relationship? These questions lead to the matter of how we define, understand, and categorize places that can appear ambiguous in heritage management and contemporary archaeology. The accelerated global urbanization, climate change, and not least the discussions of the Anthropocene, encourage us to rethink categorisation and interaction with the environment.

Figure 1: The vague appearance of a clearance cairn along one of the disappearing paths in the garden. Only visible because of a copse of overgrown silver firs (Abies alba) that has stunted the vegetation under their inumbrating branches. Photo: Author.

A derelict garden

Before delving into the present-day landscape of Retiro, it is necessary to give a brief overview of the history of the estate, which is interesting in itself and one of the reasons why there is currently growing interest in restoring the ruining property to its former glory. The construction of the landscape garden and villa was finished in 1874. It was built as a summer retreat by the Danish consul and fish merchant Christian Johnsen, who had his permanent residence in the neighbouring town of Kristiansund. The villa and the accompanying gardener's residence were elaborate for their time, made in Swiss chalet style, which was fashionable in Norway during the second half of the 19th century. The Retiro property had a circumference of approximately 1.2 kilometres and the total area measures 8.4 hectares. This is, of course, nothing compared to the large landscape gardens elsewhere in Europe, but it is an impressive example of landscape architecture in Norway. The property was located approximately two kilometres to the west of Molde, which at the time was a small country town with only 1700 inhabitants (Det Statistiske Centralbureau 1878–1881: 9). The rural landscape was dotted with small farmsteads, cultivated land, boathouses, and other features you would expect in the coastal countryside of 19th century Norway.

Retiro was not only rural in its placement, the garden was also in some sense designed to look and feel rustic, by artistically accentuating the character of the local nature and vegetation, as well as the rural culture. A telling example is that the garden had a small hunting lodge folly built on one of the islands in an artificially made pond, which was named the 'Atlantic Ocean'. However, Retiro also incorporated many non-native plants, such as silver firs, cypresses (*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*), hemp (*Cannabis sativa*), castor oil plants (*Ricinus communis*), and many other species (Lund *et al*. 1935; Vestad 1961). The imported flora, together with exotic garden ornaments, gave Retiro an eclectic appearance, where a national romantic idea of a quintessential Norwegian nature was complemented with weird alien plants, volcanic rocks from Italy, and mass produced plaster statues of classical characters such as Hercules and Triton.

Despite Retiro being a private property, the owner Johnsen kept it open to the public on Sundays (Eikrem 2015: 50). Not only the local populace took advantage of this offer. The building of the garden corresponded with some golden years of tourism in Molde, which lasted approximately from 1880 up to the Second World War (de Seve 1992). Both English and German tourist arrived in Molde by ship, and Retiro was a popular place to visit. One of the most famous tourists visiting was Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany, who even offered to rent the property Johnsen, however, turned down the offer.

For a number of reasons, such as the prohibitively expensive maintenance, the economic downturn of the 1930s, the German occupation of Norway during the Second World War, and a series of changing owners, the Retiro property, and especially the landscape garden, has fallen into disrepair over the course of the last 75 years. A local historian commented that the garden could not be characterized as anything but a ruin after visiting the property in 1953 (Parelius 1953). A decade later, a garden historian observed how some plants, despite being abandoned, continued to thrive in the now derelict landscape, giving it a continued air of 'romance' (Vestad 1961: 16). This still rings true today; amongst overgrown paths, birch thickets, spruce groves, empty ponds, rotten logs, and yesterday's garbage, one can still encounter plants that have thrived in the absence of a gardener. Alien and invasive plants such as Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) and red elderberry (*Sambucus racemosa*) blossom in the present day Retiro, displaying their ambiguous contemporary identity as persistent material memories of the garden's past and as invasive black-listed species in national biodiversity programs (cf. Gederaas *et al*. 2012; Randall 2012). A survey of the biodiversity at Retiro in 2013, noted that it contained a rich variety of old and planted trees (Gaarder and Vatne 2013). However, the surveyors' report also recommends removing species that are defined as 'high risk' by the Norwegian Biodiversity Centre. Such concerns for Retiro's floral heritage are not unfounded, considering that knotweed and yellow archangel (*Lamiastrum galeobdolon*) have started to creep outside the old property borders.

However, Retiro is not a forgotten void in the urban landscape of the present day. Recently, archaeologists, art historians, architects, heritage officials, and the local museum have shown interest in Retiro's historical past and its prospects for the future (cf. Rønsen 2007; Lange 2010; Kjørsvik 2012; Solli 2012; Ringstad 2014; Eikrem 2015). In particular, the condition of the villa has raised concerns, as evident by a string of articles in the local newspaper. The private company currently owning the villa has been accused of 'speculative dilapidation' (Solli 2012), where they gamble on leaving the building to decay beyond repair in order to make way for property development. Representatives from the county's department of cultural heritage have since the early 2000s indicated that Retiro estate is culturally valuable and should become a protected heritage site. One of the prospects for the future is to have it included in the national lists of green spaces and historical landscapes with national value. In plans for the property drafted by the municipality (cf. Molde kommune 2014), they propose to 'rebuild' the historical garden, but at the same time adapt the property to its contemporary urban surroundings by

making a kindergarten out of the Swiss chalet villa, reconstructing its façade, and open up for new housing in the south-eastern part of the landscape garden.

Entering the wilderness

Retiro is today located in the middle of a typical Norwegian residential townscape, made up by single-family houses with gardens and front yard lawns. Apart from the residential areas, its closest neighbours consist of a sports centre with several soccer fields and an open park built on the natural shore to the south. Since the post-war years, the town has enveloped Retiro, rendering its originally rural landscape an enclave within the urban townscape. How has this creeping urbanisation affected the landscape of Retiro? The consequences may not appear significant, and one might even claim that the contrast produced through the enveloping town has enhanced the gardens rural ideal. However, entering its landscape with an archaeological perspective reveals several delicate and inconspicuous traces of how it has been affected by its new urban context.

For one, the urban context has contributed to an increased accumulation and variety of different things in the landscape garden. This includes everything from vacuum cleaners, plastic grave lanterns, old LCD-monitors, pots, sweaters, food packaging, stripped bike frames, grip-seal bags, syringes, umbrellas, window frames, toys, and many other stray things. Not everything seems to be random stray objects, however, including the assemblages of left-overs from campsites. These objects can be memories of events that have occurred within the garden's perimeters, but they can also be read as material traces connecting to an over-all story about the town of Molde and its marginalisation of certain people and things that are not allowed to accumulate elsewhere. As such, one may argue that the urban surroundings have resulted in new and diverse sedimentation on the surface of Retiro, a stratigraphy in progress and deposits of otherness. Whether this is a particularly 'urban' phenomenon is debatable as the same may meet the eye wherever you find yourself today, whether in extremely remote places as the bottom of the Mariana Trench or in Central Park, New York, you will find a continuously accumulating stratum of modern anthropogenic waste.

Apart from such additions, some of the original landscape has also been exploited and cared for by the new users and inhabitants, both humans and non-humans, introduced to the garden through the growth of the town. This is especially true for the serpentine gravel paths, which originally stretched over 2 km throughout the garden. Today, approximately 1 km of paths is still accessible because people and animals have continued to use them after they were abandoned by the gardener and his rake. Continued use is further seen in the way Retiro has been

inscribed with a rich repertoire of arborglyphs and graffiti, on both tree trunks and the walls of the buildings. Furthermore, workers employed by the municipality regularly remove trees that have been toppled by strong winds. Retiro is thus in some sense still cultivated and cared for, even if it is mostly left to its own devices. The most recent evidence for this is the attempted removal of Japanese knotweed colonies throughout the garden. This is also evident in the treatment of several of the campsites, which in themselves are a form of reuse. The municipality has removed some of the accumulated litter, but the most striking thing they have done is to clear away trees and bushes at these campsites – not in order to attract more campers but rather to make them less secluded and inviting for 'unauthorized visitors' (cf. Molde kommune 2014: 14).

Figure 2: The old grotto that was a part of the landscape garden. Today it is hidden away inside an almost impenetrable silver fir thicket. Photo: Author.

Feral heritage

Retiro has certainly not disappeared in a desert of concrete and asphalt; it has rather thrived and developed mostly on its own terms. For example, the garden plants have established its own novel ecology together with local fauna and flora. In recent years, local people have tellingly started to refer to the Retiro as 'the Retiro Forest' (Holsbøvåg 2010: 47). In fact, Retiro probably contains a larger number of old trees than the 'natural' forests in the towns' hinterland. In its

derelict isolation from the other rural woodlands, it has been partly spared from systematic logging and forestry. There are surprising amounts of old snags found all around the garden, which are trees that are dead but still standing; these trees often serve an important ecological role in forests, serving as woodpecker nests, nourishment for fungi and insects, and as seedbeds for new plants (Franklin, Shugart and Harmon 1987). Some areas in the garden have trees and probably other organisms, such as fungi, that have lived there since long before the garden was constructed. These are in one sense vestiges of the rural landscape and ecology that was integrated in the garden's original design. Field clearance cairns from the former agricultural use of the area is another presence of the rural landscape predating Retiro's construction.

The landscape garden included several open areas in its design, such as cultivated fields and grazing meadows, which was a natural continuation of the farmland that the property was built on. In the north-western corner of the garden one of these fields are still visible, while the other fields are overgrown with trees to the extent that they are impossible to distinguish from the surrounding landscape. The remaining field has been kept free of trees, bushes, and other types of obscuring vegetation simply because it has been used as pasture for horses and to cultivate grass as fodder. Archaeologists that surveyed the area some years ago even employed a usually 'rural' survey method on the field, namely removing the top layer of anthrosol in trenches to reveal possible archaeological structures in the 'sterile' subsoil (cf. Johnston and Johnston 2012). Because of its apparent urban context, it is somewhat ironic that the section of the garden that is best taken care of has such strong rural characteristics.

Figure 3: Horses grazing in the small pasture field at Retiro. The surrounding unmanaged vegetation is constantly threatening to invade the meadow. Photo: Author.

The English landscape historian John Dixon Hunt (1997: 3–4, 2000: 32–75) has pointed out how horticulture can be regarded as a 'third nature'. The 'first nature' is defined as pristine and 'pre-human' wilderness, while 'second nature' is an agricultural and rural landscape. Scholars such as Ingo Kowarik (2005) have added a 'fourth nature' to the equation, which consist of an ecology that has evolved within urban and industrial landscapes, where woodlands have developed independently from direct human interference, containing a large number of non-native species. In some ways Retiro can be defined as a fourth nature; its woodland contains a good amount of non-native species, and it has had the chance to develop on its own without much human interference. However, rather than having evolved within an urban or industrial landscape, it has persisted as a remnant of a rural landscape garden and a third nature in ruin. All these different notions of nature can be both confusing and constraining at the same time (cf. Desimini 2014), but they importantly point to the concept of a hybrid and mixed landscape and an ecology that meshes the human and non-human.

The post-rural landscape of Retiro may perhaps better be described as 'feral' rather than a site that is returning to an original and natural wilderness. As Paul Farley and Michael Roberts write in their book on what they call 'edgelands', wild animals and plants rely only on their instincts and DNA, while being '[f]eral means you have a history, a proper backstory' (Farley and Roberts 2011: 158) – a kind of cultural load that is an indivisible part of someones being and becoming. They further state that today the '[f]eral is the new wild' (Farley and Roberts 2011: 158). The 'feral' does not necessarily refer only to fauna or flora; it can in some sense be applied to artefacts that have escaped human care. Farley and Roberts use the discarded 'feral car seat' as an emblem of the edgelands (Farley and Roberts 2011: 158), which are places that lie at the edges of cities and villages.

Feral heritage such as Retiro may be described as too heterogeneous to tell the orderly history we expect at well-kept heritage sites, while also lacking the purity of the utterly wild with its presumed absence of human influence and human past. The idea of wilderness and pristine nature are naturally highly contested ideas (see Nelson and Callicott 2008), making it difficult to pinpoint what really constitutes a specific environment that is perceived by some as wild. Retiro is perhaps not at the edge or the periphery of anything; it is rather a particular place unto itself, neither reducible to simply urban nor rural, natural nor cultural. This strange and perhaps ineffable intersection of categories makes Retiro a disturbance in the eyes of city planners, private property developers, and even cultural resource management officials. It is a site that on

the one hand has a distinct history, which can be read about in books or seen in old photographs, but on the other hand it has an ambiguous and palimpsest character.

In recent decades, the challenges posed by climate change and the effect this has on the preservation of cultural heritage have rapidly become more pertinent (cf. UNESCO 2007; Harvey and Perry 2015). The consequences range from biological growth and heritage sites overgrowing with vegetation, to destruction of such sites due to extreme weather chemical, biological, and physical decomposition, and permafrost thawing (Kaslegard 2011). This in turn will influence the cultural resource management sector, where the climate change will affect the preservation and trajectory of the material past through effects such as increased erosion and faunal and floral habitat alteration. In Norway, the consequence that has perhaps been most visible is how regrowth of vegetation has covered up and colonized rural cultural landscapes (Bayr and Puschmann 2019). However, at the same time, loss of wilderness unaffected by recent human enterprises, such as infrastructure development, is seen as a major concern for biodiversity and natural heritage (Norwegian Environment Agency 2014). As such, Retiros unmanaged growth falls into a paradoxical position of being too overgrown and wild for a cultural heritage status, while at the same time not wild enough for a natural heritage status, because its legacy and vegetation are too contaminated by foreign organisms and human agency to be ‘pristine’.

This is the awkward nature of the feral heritage, where the ‘improper’ mixture of human and non-human presences of its palimpsestic character, makes for a place that heritage management and official agencies do not know how to handle in any other way than to rectify it in some sense. Despite its conspicuous nature, heritage consisting of derelict matter such as non-native plant species, genetic alteration, and depleted soils left behind by horticultural and agricultural industries, is not as ‘appreciated’ as ruins of medieval castles or rock art. The modern landscape of the countryside exhibits a wildly different rurality than the stereotypical picturesque cottages, hedges, and green pastures with grazing cattle. Contemporary archaeology is uniquely situated to face these strange mixtures of heritage, from noxious fields of Japanese Knotweed, to nitrate seepage and algae blooms, because more than any other discipline, it works with the spoils, spills, and scraps of the present past. Climate change and other environmental challenges are also a kind of ‘unruly heritage’ (cf. Olsen and Pétursdóttir 2016) that we must confront, and which simultaneously muddle dichotomies such as the urban-rural and reveal the intricate interconnectedness of cultural landscapes that always have been inherently ecological.

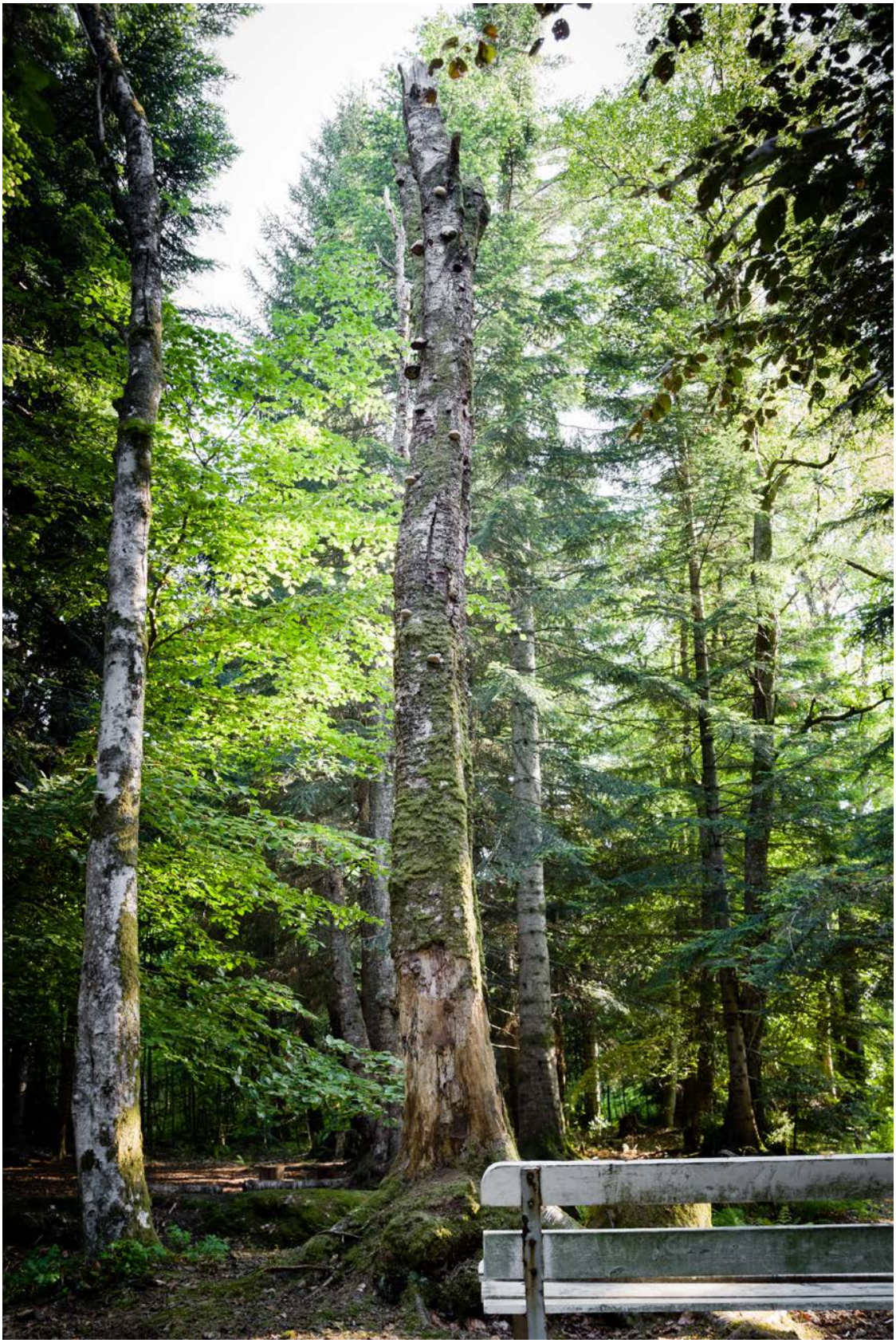

Figure 4: One of many snags in the garden standing on one of the artificial 'islands' in the Atlantic Ocean pond. This old birch snag (Betula pubescens) is an important food source for the local woodpeckers (Dendrocopos major) and birch polypores (Fomitopsis betulina). Photo: Author.

The things left behind

Despite the difficulties in dealing with categories such as rurality in a world that that by the day seems to become more uncertain, it might be wise not to dismiss them out of hand. For example, instead of employing abstract notions of rurality, it might be more fruitful to get down to earth and rather deal directly with both the human and non-human elements that are bracketed in the landscape. The idea of rurality is connected to agents such as plants, animals, geology, and humans, and how they interact, or even resist, each other. A history of the rural phenomena of cattle ranching would be incomplete if it only focused on the human side of things, while overlooking the presence and material agency of the cattle (LeCain 2017). The rural character of Retiro is far from the cattle ranches in Montana Timothy LeCain writes about, but it is nevertheless steeped in the material presence and agency of non-humans in the form of knotweed, gravel paths, crows, overgrown ponds, and storms. Such a notion of the rural might be a fruitful alternative to the emphasis on the urban that has saturated contemporary archaeology and neighbouring fields of study. What if we reversed the perspectives and studied the cities similarly to a farmstead, and fields similarly to metropolises? Would we gain interesting insights from such perspectives? In the age of anthropogenic climate change and pollution, it is perhaps necessary to employ such counter-intuitive perspectives, to see if they work or not. To begin to understand a complex place and ecology such as Retiro, it is necessary to include both its lingering rural past and its urban situation and to intermesh colourful graffiti on concrete foundations with arborglyphs carved into silver firs.

To answer the questions posed in the beginning, Retiro has not been totally transformed by the enveloping urban landscape because it retains concrete material ties to its original rural past. Retiro is a hybrid landscape, or, in another sense, a ‘recombinant ecology’ (cf. Rotherham 2017); it is perpetually becoming something new based on potentials embedded in its material past, whether it is the invasiveness of Japanese knotweed, or the old paths getting included into the architectural blueprints of a redevelopment. Despite the challenges of even finding the clear definition of what metrics constitute a city (i.e. Gaydarska 2016), it would be counterproductive to say that rurality and urbanity are illusory constructions. There is something irreconcilable between the avenue running through the centre of Molde and the pastureland and relict garden plants in Retiro – they are essentially different. Putting an urban lens on Retiro would yield different research results than a rural one – neither being truer than the other, but rather highlighting different characteristics, actors, or materials.

Laurent Olivier has noted that the contemporary process of global urbanization that has led to a disappearing rural environments, has been seen as largely uninteresting by archaeologists (2013: 122). What we stereotypically think of as rural is sometimes regarded as less dull and 'lifeless' when compared to urban landscapes (cf. Baines 2012). This generalization can surely be debated (e.g. Samuels 2012), but it is clear that much archaeological focus lately has been on post-industrial landscapes and ruins, and not least so in the development of an archaeology of more recent pasts. In some sense, this is understandable; the rural heritage of overgrown fields, deserted fishing villages, tree plantations, and fur farms, can be regarded as more materially and symbolically understated and inconspicuous than massive industrial facilities, military bases, or urban decay. Ruins in rural settings are also in some sense expected to be quaint, like the picturesque rural ruin "in harmony" with nature. Urban places are also easily accessible by scholars working for institutions that for the most part is located in the cities. The rural/urban divide, especially in the contemporary context, is moreover saturated with different kind of biases and stereotypes – from conservative hicks to latte-sipping liberals. Despite that some post-rural landscapes can be less materially striking, this does not mean they are less interesting or important. The affects and materiality of derelict and unmediated post-rural landscapes are important to investigate because they matter to people as present landscapes where one can happen upon lingering memories of rural pasts. To document and explore these places on their own terms in the present day, can lead to insight and glimpses into the otherness that such landscapes contain, cultivate, and mediate, as well as the affects they create. Places that might be regarded as rural, or even wild, as I have previously touched upon, forces one to confront non-humans more starkly than urban sites that are saturated with anthropocentric architecture, symbolisms, and not least politics. Archaeology as a discipline is especially suited and oriented towards things that are left behind (cf. González-Ruibal 2008). Hence, a period of accelerated urbanisation and centralisation is an opportunity for archaeologist to turn their attention towards the things and places that are left to their own devices.

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