Experiential Themes in the Conservation of the Whaling Industry

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SHORED AGAINST OUR RUIN

Experiential Themes in the Conservation of the Whaling Industry

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PART A – INTRODUCTION

A.1 Introduction

The aim of this dissertation is to critically evaluate the possibilities for experiential conservation, with particular reference to the conservation of industrial sites.

This dissertation is structured in three parts: an introductory section, the main thematic discussions, and a conclusion. A gazetteer of the sites used for the case study is provided as an appendix. The focus on industrial conservation in this dissertation will be provided through the case study of the sites of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century whaling stations in Scotland and Iceland.

The introductory section contains: the aim and general overview, the literature review and background to the topic, an explanation of the methodology used, and an overview of whaling stations as a building type, including a short history of the modern whaling industry and a discussion of whaling stations’ relevance as a case study for this topic.

The central section, the main discussion of themes, is made up of three chapters, each with the same structure. Each chapter moves from the general to the specific: first, the wider application and context of the theme is examined; second, the theme’s application and use in conservation is discussed, and hypotheses developed as appropriate; and finally the theme and hypotheses are applied to, or discussed with reference to, the case study of whaling stations.

The three themes were selected to give as wide-ranging and relevant a discussion of experiential conservation as possible within the length of the dissertation. They are not intended as distinct, exclusive approaches, but rather as discussions of some of the main existing and potential issues in experiential approaches to conservation. The first theme assesses the relevance of deconstruction theory to experiential conservation, particularly as a way of understanding the relationship between material and experiential approaches. The second theme considers how conservation projects can be used to inspire the imagination, with reference to the writings of W.G. Sebald. The third theme considers possible
experiential effects of details and fragments in conservation projects, using concepts of exformation, montage and collage.

The concluding section assesses the themes together, commenting on issues they raise and discussing the success of this dissertation in achieving its aim.

A.2 Literature Review and Background

The role of theory in the modern conservation movement has traditionally been that of a search for the ‘right’ way of treating historic buildings. This dissertation seeks instead to view conservation theory as a functional tool and a cultural construct in the tradition of Alois Riegl and Jacques Derrida. This chapter considers whether conservation, understood in the sense of the Burra Charter as “retain[ing] … cultural significance” (Australia ICOMOS 2000) is always best served by existing conservation theory’s focus on the preservation of physical material.

Mainstream conservation theory, as represented by international charters and definitions of best practice, is a modernist practice, materialist in approach. Although in recent years it has sought to broaden its scope, it remains a product of nineteenth-century consumer culture.

The modern conservation movement, which can be dated for these purposes from the publication of William Morris’s 1877 Manifesto for the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (Morris, SPAB Website), is based on several key aspects of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century modernism. The methods and concepts used in conservation, from J.J. Winckelmann in the eighteenth century to the World Heritage Convention (UNESCO 1972), are based on the classification of values, such as historical or cultural value, and the selection of examples which are then compiled into state-controlled lists to be governed by principles “rationally applied by a skilled elite” (Pendlebury 2009, 20-1). It also values tradition as a means of affirming national identity in the face of technological change (Pendlebury 2009, 20-1). Central to this is the modernist concept of history as the on-going development of civilisations (Riegl 1982, 21). This shows a relationship between progressive

1 William Morris 1834-1896: An English textile designer, artist, writer and political campaigner. A prominent member of the Arts and Crafts movement.
2 ‘Modernism’ here refers to the general cultural movement, affecting all aspects of society, rather than the architectural Modern Movement.
modernism and the conservation movement as a “complex dialectic”: both are based on change, as action and reaction respectively (Pendlebury 2009, 20-1). The fact that conservation is deeply bound up with nationalist concepts of identity also shows its modernist character, as the idea that the inhabitants of a territory share cultural and psychological attributes relies on the same ideas of classification and selection outlined above.

That conservation is a modernist practice, in the terms of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, shows its origins in a specific time and culture. This is also evident in its overwhelming focus on material ‘authenticity’ and ‘integrity’, which are obsessions it shares with nineteenth-century consumerism. Andreas Huyssen describes the desire for material authenticity as a reaction against mass production, “analogous to [Walter] Benjamin’s aura”, and emphasises that “[b]oth have to be framed historically rather than ontologically” (2011, 52-3). Authenticity was central to Morris’ opposition to the restoration of historic buildings, and has since become central to mainstream conservation theory, from the 1964 Venice Charter (ICOMOS 2005) to the 1994 Nara Document on Authenticity. The concept of integrity, an “undivided or unbroken state, material wholeness, completeness, or entirety” (Jokilehto 1999, 298-9), is the partner concept to authenticity, seeking primarily to ensure that original fabric is not removed or added to by conservation work. The importance placed on the conjoined concepts of authenticity and integrity therefore means that the lineage of conservation theory which followed Morris and John Ruskin in the late nineteenth century until the mid-twentieth century could more accurately be termed ‘material conservation’, that is conservation for which the physical substance of the building or site is of prime importance, an end in itself.

Towards the end of the twentieth century an attempt to broaden the scope of conservation was made, through the development of “values-based” conservation (Orbaşlı 2008, 38), which takes the non-material importance of sites, such as symbolism or emotional responses, into account. Whilst this approach acknowledges the importance of intangible values to conservation, usually by referring to the Burra Charter, its method of operation draws deeply on the tradition of material conservation which preceded it, as can be seen in its classification of ‘significances’, which draws on Alois Riegl’s analysis of the modern conservation

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3 Reproduced as Annex 4 in (UNESCO 2011)
4 John Ruskin 1819-1900: A leading art critic in Victorian Britain. In his Seven Lamps of Architecture (1849) he argued against the restoration of historic buildings.
5 See (de la Torre 2002)
movement in 1903 (Riegl 1982). This system tries to fit a wide range of motivations for conservation into a materialist framework, so that each ‘value’ can be commodified and rated, and buildings prioritised for conservation as appropriate. Furthermore, the importance of authenticity and integrity remains, and conservation is still defined as “…the action taken to prevent decay” (Feilden 1982, 3). Values-based conservation must therefore be considered an evolution of material conservation, rather than a new discipline, as it retains its mind-set and priorities.

Considering the development of conservation theory in the twentieth century a material approach is unsurprising, as the typical subjects of conservation at this time (churches, palaces, castles and stately homes) had originally been designed for their material qualities, that is to say as “works of art”. The conservation theory of Cesare Brandi, which was an important influence on the Venice Charter (Jokilehto 1999, 239), is based around the concept of the “specificity of a work of art, claiming that it was the result of a unique, creative process” (Jokilehto 1999, 228). This form of conservation theory is clearly not designed for general application to all building types: in particular it offers no guidance for the conservation of industrial or defence sites, which were seldom designed for their aesthetic qualities. Whilst material approaches to the conservation of such sites are possible, a focus on preventing decay ignores the fact that such sites are usually conserved primarily, if not exclusively, for their intangible worth. A factory’s buildings and equipment are of course necessary for a detailed understanding of its operation and its effect on local society and identity, which suggests that the conservation of physical remains needs to be the means to an end, rather than an end in itself. That mainstream conservation theory has failed to develop a specific theoretical approach to industrial sites, despite their quantity and historical importance, can be understood as a consequence of the conservation movement’s founders’ opposition to industrialisation, and of an antagonism between the conservation of working-class history and a theoretical framework designed to conserve the built legacy of the social elite.

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6 Alois Riegl 1858-1905: Austrian art-historian.
7 Cesare Brandi 1906-1988: Italian art critic and historian who wrote extensively about conservation and restoration.
8 An estimated 70% of Britain’s building stock dates from the time of the Industrial Revolution (Cossons 1987, 12) quoted in (Clark 2005)
9 See the discussion of the architectural impact of John Ruskin’s view of mass production in (Swenarton 1995)
It is possible, however, to trace an alternative approach to historic sites, one for which the experience of a place, rather than its material content, is the main focus, much truer to the spirit of the Burra Charter. There is a long tradition of valuing the emotional and philosophical experience of ruins above the ruins themselves, dating back to the Picturesque movement in the eighteenth century. In 1767 Denis Diderot wrote, “The ideas ruins evoke in me are grand. Everything comes to nothing, everything perishes, everything passes, only the world remains, only time endures” (Diderot 2011, 22). Such a reaction to ruins is at odds with academic historical-educational interpretations, a point made by Christopher Woodward: “…the artist is inevitably at odds with the archaeologist. In the latter discipline the scattered fragments of stone are parts of a jigsaw, or clues to a puzzle to which there is only one answer, as in a science laboratory; to the artist, by contrast, any answer which is imaginative is correct” (2002, 30). This emotional response clearly relies on the physical material of the ruins, but is not innate to them; rather it is the visitor’s subjective reaction which generates the experience. Riegl coined the term “sensory perception” to describe this phenomenon, but linked it only to decay caused by age, likening it to “religious feelings” without analysing it further (1982, 24). Such an understanding fails to take account of the variety of possible interpretations of ruins, ranging from nostalgia to “fantasies of power and domination” to a contemplation of the vanity of imperial power (Huyssen 2011, 53-4).

An emphasis on the experience of sites can also be seen in the early industrial archaeology movement. R.A. Buchanan defines the discipline as “a field of study concerned with investigating, surveying, recording and, in some cases, with preserving industrial monuments” (1982, 22-23), which clearly shows that active engagement with sites is prioritised over their conservation. He confirms this by stating that “[t]he fundamental technique of the industrial archaeologist is … a posture of imaginative sympathy towards the subject” (30-1). This approach stems in part from its dual nature as both the archaeology of industry (especially the Industrial Revolution) and the conservation of industrial buildings and sites, and also from its socially inclusive and multidisciplinary participation (Palmer 2005, 59; Buchanan 1982, 21; Cranstone 2005, 77). Whilst the discipline may have evolved since Buchanan’s definition was written10 this still strongly suggests the possibility of an ‘experiential’ conservation of industry, as a more suitable alternative to a materialist approach.

10 See Blockley (1999).
This strand of thinking has yet to be fully articulated into a theoretical approach to experiential conservation; doing so would support more appropriate responses to site types for which existing theory was not designed, such as industrial or defence sites. By having purpose-designed theory based on the experience of sites, to sit alongside restoration or material conservation, unnecessary debates over the authenticity or integrity of material might be avoided. This would also move beyond arguments and concepts rooted in the Victorian era to address contemporary attitudes towards history, subjectivity and participation. Given the subjective nature of experience, such theory would need to avoid frameworks and instead investigate a non-hierarchical network of ideas. This would necessarily take time to develop, but it is possible now to explore a selection of themes drawn from existing practice, which would begin to identify the issues which would need to be addressed, and the new experiential approaches to conservation to which it might lead.

A.3 Methodology

Methodology of research:

The decision to limit the study of the modern whaling industry to examples in Scotland and Iceland was determined primarily by a desire to survey a large and varied group of sites, from contrasting cultural contexts regarding whaling and conservation, within the tight material and temporal constraints of the project. Both Scotland and Iceland were highly important centres of the whaling industry, yet whilst Scotland had stopped whaling altogether by the end of the 1960s (and off its own coasts in the early 1950s) Iceland continues whaling to this day. All the former sites of modern whaling stations in the two countries were visited by the author, and a gazetteer of site information was compiled (see appendix). The Scottish sites were surveyed on a research trip in April 2012, the Icelandic sites in June-July 2012. Survey methods used on site were basic: a photographic record was made of each site, and where the extent of remains warranted it a simple measured survey of the plan was made. The aim of this survey was to enable an understanding of the site, rather than to produce a detailed record. These trips were supplemented by documentary and archive research, notably from the Christian Salvesen archive at the University of Edinburgh.

The literary aspects of the research were conducted by desktop review of primary and relevant secondary sources. Research into existing conservation projects was done through a
desktop review of published sources where possible; otherwise the relevant project teams were contacted directly for the relevant information.

**Methodology of analysis:**

The basic principle of analysis used was that of ‘reparadigmatisation’: a selection of literature was analysed with a view to isolating and abstracting its main principles and identifying systems of thought which could then be applied to conservation. Central to this method is the understanding of any human creation, including a building or industrial site, equally as a ‘text’, the same understanding which allowed Jacques Derrida to apply ‘deconstruction’ to architecture\(^{11}\). This understanding allows a translation of ideas between disciplines, with the aim of cross-fertilising disciplines with concepts not previously applied to them.

The analysis of these concepts in existing conservation practice is supplemented by applying them to the case study of whaling stations. Whaling stations are considered here not with a view to generating concrete proposals for their conservation, or even necessarily proposing their conservation at all, but rather as a means for a more in-depth discussion of the themes of the dissertation. As whaling stations are good examples of contested industrial ruins, this analysis should highlight theoretical issues of relevance to the wide spectrum of site types considered in this study.

**Methodology of writing:**

When writing the dissertation clarity of the communication of ideas was prioritised, in order that the resulting work might be easily read and understood for further development and application in practice. This is at odds with the criticisms of categorisation and academic writing contained within the text; however, were this dissertation to be written in a subjective, ‘rhizomatic’ or non-definitive manner, there would be a risk of losing comprehensibility as a consequence. Given the study’s imperative for the clear communication of ideas to allow further theoretical and practical development, a regular, explanatory style was adopted.

\(^{11}\) See Papadakis (1989)
A.4 Brief overview of whaling stations

History of the modern whaling industry:

The ‘modern’ whaling industry dates from the 1860s, when a package of new equipment and techniques industrialised the industry\textsuperscript{12}. Prior to this whaling was generally done on long ocean voyages (‘pelagic whaling’), with hunting done by hand from longboats deployed from the main ship, on board which the whale would be processed\textsuperscript{13}. The whale would be stripped of its blubber (a process known as ‘flensing’) which would then be boiled down for oil. Modern whaling, pioneered by the Norwegian Svend Foyn off the coast of Finnmark in the Norwegian Arctic in the 1860s and 1870s, introduced a number of innovations: the introduction of faster, steam-powered catching vessels (‘catchers’), along with a technique of inflating whale carcasses, allowed new species of whales to be caught (the rorquals, which include blue and fin whales); grenade harpoons were developed which could kill whales much more swiftly and efficiently than previously; and the shift to processing whales in shore-based factories allowed much larger, more efficient equipment to be used for processing oil and new by-products such as bone-meal and guano (Tønnessen and Johnsen 1982, 6-7, 11, 16-17, 26-27).

Whale oil was in such demand as it was a raw material for a wide range of industries. In the modern era soap manufacturing played a key role, particularly Lever Brothers Ltd. (later Unilever), which some years bought the entire world’s production of whale oil. Other uses of whale oil were for lubrication, in the manufacture of jute and textiles, for tanning, and significantly, after the invention of hydrogenation in the early twentieth century, for foodstuffs such as margarine\textsuperscript{14}. In addition, a number of by-products could be obtained. Guano (fertiliser) and cattle feed were made from the leftover carcasses, and glue could be made from the gluewater (waste liquid produced when blubber was boiled down for oil). Baleen had many uses, based on its elasticity and light weight, from ladies’ corsets to sofas and brushes for chimney sweeps. Whale meat has been consumed as a by-product, but not in large quantities, and only rarely in Britain. The only whaling industry for which meat, not oil,

\textsuperscript{12} This chapter is largely summarised from Tønnessen and Johnsen (1982), the main history of the modern whaling industry. References to the summarised sections are given at the end of each paragraph.

\textsuperscript{13} This era of whaling provides the setting for the novel Moby-Dick (Melville 1988).

\textsuperscript{14} For an in-depth account of the effects of hydrogenation on the whaling industry see Jackson (1978, 178-186)
Figure 1 – Harpooning a Whale. *Reproduced from* Vamplew (1975).

Figure 2 – Bunaveneader Whaling Station, Harris (S.5). Note freshly caught whale on slipway waiting to be flensed. *Reproduced from*: The Islands Book Trust (2008).
was the main product historically is Japan, and this falls beyond the remit of this study. The most important market globally for trading whale oil in the modern era was Glasgow, where virtually all the whale oil produced in the North Atlantic was traded (Tønnessen and Johnsen 1982, 50-3).

From its beginnings in Norway, the industry subsequently expanded globally. One of the most important territories for modern whaling was the previously uninhabited island of South Georgia in the South Atlantic, which from 1904 not only hosted several whaling stations, but became the base for the early modern pelagic whaling industry. The industry in each area followed a similar pattern: after initial development there would be a rapid expansion, which would lead fairly quickly to a collapse in whale stocks and the failure of the industry. For this reason whaling stations in a given area were usually built, and then abandoned, within the same short space of time. After declining somewhat in the inter-war years there was a post-Second World War boom in whaling, fuelled by a need for raw materials in war-ravaged Europe. This was directly accompanied by the introduction of international regulation through the 1946 *International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling* and the International Whaling Commission (IWC) set up to administer it. Following the collapse in the market for whale oil in the 1960s, and the continued depletion of whale stocks, a moratorium on commercial whaling was imposed by the IWC effective 1985/6 (International Whaling Commission 2011, para 10e).

Initially neglected or dismantled for scrap, some whaling stations have now been regarded as historic sites to be protected. At Cheynes Beach in Western Australia a more or less complete preservation and restoration strategy was possible, as the station only stopped operating in the 1970s (Duncan Stephen and Mercer Architects 1996). On the remote island of South Georgia access is prohibited to most of the whaling stations due to dangers from asbestos and decaying ironwork. The station at Grytviken has been made safe for the visiting public but at the expense of a large number of the structures.\(^{15}\)

The history of modern whaling in Iceland dates back to 1865, when the world’s first modern whaling station was established in Seyðisfjörður (appendix I.1, *Error! Bookmark not defined.* ) on the east coast by the Americans Thomas Roys and Gustav Lilliendahl. This was experimental and closed after two years; the industry was mainly active in Iceland from

\(^{15}\) See (Basberg 2004) and (Purcell Miller Tritton 2011).
1883-1915. During this period the main figures in the industry were Hans Ellefsen, who ran the stations at Sólbakki (I.6, Error! Bookmark not defined.)

Figure 3 – The whaling station at Stekkeyri, Hesteyrarfjörður (I.9).

Figure 4 – The whaling station at Suðureyri, Tálknafjörður (I.8).
and Asknes (I.13, Error! Bookmark not defined.), and the Bull brothers (Marcus and Johannes), who entered into partnership with Christian Salvesen & Co. of Leith, and were with them variously involved with the stations at Hesteyrarfjörður (I.9, Error! Bookmark not defined.), Hellisfjörður (I.15, Error! Bookmark not defined.), Meleyri (I.11, Error! Bookmark not defined.) and Fagraeyri (I.16, Error! Bookmark not defined.). By the time the Icelandic Alþingi (Parliament) banned whaling in 1915 the depleted stock levels had already proved unsustainable for many companies, who moved on to new hunting grounds. Whilst it lasted the industry played a large part in the Icelandic economy: during the period 1883-1915 17189 whales are known to have been caught, yielding 618,838 barrels of oil. This accounted for up to 25% of Iceland’s exports each year. Apart from the reopening of the Tálknafjörður station (I.8, Error! Bookmark not defined.) from 1935-9, whaling did not recommence until after the Second World War. In 1948 the whaling station on the Hvalfjörður (I.18, Error! Bookmark not defined.) opened, and has operated intermittently until the present day (Tønnessen and Johnsen 1982, 75-83).

The whaling industry in Scotland was much smaller, with only five whaling stations ever being established: at Bunaveneader on the Isle of Harris (S.5, Error! Bookmark not defined.), and at Olna (S.3, Error! Bookmark not defined.), Collafirth (S.4, Error! Bookmark not defined.), and Ronas Voe (S.1, Error! Bookmark not defined.; S.2, Error! Bookmark not defined.) in Shetland. These were all established in 1903-4, at the peak of the whaling industry. Having ceased operations during the First World War, Bunaveneader, Collafirth and Olna reopened in 1920, with Collafirth closing soon after. By 1929 all whaling in Scotland had ceased; Bunaveneader reopened in 1950 to close two years later (Tønnessen and Johnsen 1982, 88-95).

**Typology of whaling stations:**

Developing rapidly in a short space of time, whaling stations tended to be laid out and constructed on similar lines wherever they were built. The layout and construction of the whaling stations in South Georgia is discussed in detail by Bjørn Basberg (2004)\(^\text{16}\); the general principles are the same for all modern whaling stations.

The situation of whaling stations was affected by both maritime and terrestrial factors. A sheltered harbour was needed, protected where possible from prevailing winds, and with easy

\(^{16}\) This chapter is largely summarised from here; references are at the end of each chapter.
access to the hunting grounds. A reasonably deep, easily navigable harbour was also essential for the supply vessels as well as the catchers. Flat land was needed for the processing area, and was preferred for the whole station. This needed a plentiful fresh water supply, ideally coming from a height to allow hydro-electricity to be generated. These factors favoured

Figure 5 – Generic diagram of a whaling station in South Georgia. *Reproduced from* Basberg (2004).

Figure 6 – Flensing a Sperm Whale. *Reproduced from* Vamplew (1975).
fjords as sites for whaling stations, which means that whaling stations are generally set in stunning scenery (Basberg 2004, 77-8).

The layouts of whaling stations followed a standard model. At the centre would be a large courtyard, known as the ‘flensing plan’, where the whale was cut up into its constituent parts (the earliest nineteenth century stations lacked this, instead flensing the carcasses on the beach at low tide (Tønnessen and Johnsen 1982, 39-41)). On one side of the plan would be a slipway down to the sea, up which the whale carcasses were winched. On the other sides the processing sheds were located: separate equipment was used for meat, bone and blubber, to extract oil and convert solid matter to bone meal or guano (fertiliser). The processing areas were connected to refinery and packing buildings, which stored the various end products in oil tanks or storage sheds. There were also a variety of support structures. A jetty or pier was essential, for both whale catchers and supply ships. A boiler house, with coal or fuel oil storage attached, provided steam for the pressure cookers, and also hot water and heating. Workshops were included to service the buildings and machinery; on larger stations they included a ship repair yard. Accommodation was in barrack blocks, except for the manager and his family, whose villa usually stood slightly away from the main site. For remote sites a wide variety of ancillary functions would be accommodated, such as a church or farming facilities (Basberg 2004, 70-2).

Construction methods used to create whaling stations were mostly lightweight, using corrugated iron or timber planked cladding and timber- or steel-framed structures, as buildings were generally prefabricated and brought to site by ship. Certain structures (such as chimneys and try-works, where blubber was boiled in the open air on early sites) would be built from brick or concrete blocks as required. Foundations would typically be brick or local stone rubble topped with cement. Managers’ houses, of a higher quality, would often be shipped direct from Norway as a kit, to traditional Norwegian designs (Basberg 2004, 73-6).
Justification as a case study:

As ruins, the sites of whaling stations are among “… probably the most testing ground of all for conservation practice” (Bell 2008, 261). They are characteristic examples of disused industrial sites, and are particularly suitable as a case study for this dissertation due to their contested status and inspirational qualities.

Whaling stations as a building type show many of the typical problems associated with conserving industrial sites. Most sites have very few physical remains as their buildings were typically built from lightweight pre-fabricated components, and removed after production had ceased. This left only what needed to be built in brick or concrete, or equipment which was too large to remove (such as blubber boilers). Evidence of the removed buildings and equipment is usually limited to a few contemporary photographs at best. This is a perfect illustration of the conflicts generated by applying the concept of authenticity to industrial sites, as most whaling stations could only be completed to a level which permits a detailed understanding of their historical value through conjectural reconstruction; the exact opposite of the Nara Document on Authenticity’s concept of authenticity. In common with many types of industrial site, it is not possible to recommence operations at whaling stations for educational purposes, even at a small scale. Although the buildings and equipment could theoretically be restored to working order, commercial whaling is currently prohibited under paragraph 10(e) of the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling Schedule (International Whaling Commission 2011), so it would be impossible to procure the carcasses needed for processing. Moreover, in the few countries where whaling does continue, it does so as a different industry to that pursued historically, producing meat (for which there is still a small market) rather than oil (for which the market has long since disappeared). The challenge of communicating the operation of the site without working demonstrations therefore suggests alternative approaches to interpretation. The uniqueness of the whaling industry, fundamentally different from fishing or shark-fishing (its closest industrial relatives), whilst an additional reason to conserve the sites, does mean that any restoration work, particularly of equipment, is subject to extra costs and difficulties such as sourcing accurate designs for replacements.

Whaling stations demonstrate the contested nature of industrial sites: different groups, on the one side historians at a national and international level, and on the other historians and enthusiasts at a local level, apply different estimations of historical value to industrial
heritage. Whaling does not form a major part of most national historical narratives, either in Scotland where the modern industry was relatively small, or in Iceland where it was much larger (and continues). Similarly the role of the whaling industry in pioneering Antarctic exploration and its influence on international co-operation for marine conservation are not widely remembered (Tønnessen and Johnsen 1982, 9; 153-5). Whaling stations are more likely to be commemorated for their importance to their local area. These include Bunaveneader on the Isle of Harris (S.5, Error! Bookmark not defined.) and Svinaskalistekk at Eskifjörður (I.17, Error! Bookmark not defined.) in Iceland, both of which present the site with information boards erected by local organisations. Industrial sites therefore have a role in the competing identity struggles of different social groups, and highlight the subjectivity of all appreciations of value, even historical value which is ostensibly objective.

Whales and whaling have a particularly strong ability to inspire and provoke emotional reactions, which could be termed an ‘imaginative potential’. The most famous example of this is Hermann Melville’s 1851 novel *Moby Dick* (Melville 1988), which imbues every aspect of whales and whaling with a loaded, dark symbolism which would degenerate into parody were it not for the emotional power of its subject matter. A widespread interest is also evident in contemporary attitudes to whales: the scale of the global whale-watching industry, and the passionate anti-whaling campaigns fought by organisations such as Greenpeace, demonstrate a specific attraction to whales not extended to other marine life. A specific example of the imaginative potential of former whaling stations is yachtswoman Ellen MacArthur’s reaction to the remains of the whaling stations on South Georgia, which had such a strong emotional effect on her that she later abandoned her career as a consequence:

That day, as Jerome and I walked around Grytviken doing some filming, there was an eerie silence … In awe, I spoke to the camera: ‘It’s like an isolated beauty but yet you see all this here and you can’t believe it. This was a massive industry with thousands of tons of steel work employing thousands of people and now it’s a dead, empty space.’

(MacArthur 2010, 235-6)
Figure 7 – Store No. 3 at Leith Harbour, South Georgia, 1997. *Reproduced from* Basberg (2004).

Figure 8 – The try-works at Tálknafjörður (I.8).
PART B – THEMES

B.1 Deconstruction and Conservation

B.1.a General Textual Context

Some of the ways in which experiential conservation might operate, and its relationship with material conservation, can be understood using elements of Jacques Derrida’s theories of ‘deconstruction’. ‘Deconstruction’ is a term coined by the philosopher Jacques Derrida\(^\text{17}\) to describe an approach to analytical thinking which seeks to disrupt institutional hierarchies and conventional ways of operating\(^\text{18}\). Although the theory and terminology was developed by Derrida in the late twentieth century, it seeks to describe a universal, pan-historical method of analysis: “I don’t think Deconstruction belongs to an epoch or a period, even a modern one” (Derrida 1989, 73). One of the main methods in ‘deconstruction’ is the process of ‘reinscription’, which is centred on the identification of core principles of the subject, termed ‘sanctions’ by Derrida (typically established institutional hierarchies or dialectic oppositions). These are then reconceived or reinvented in a different way, rather than being dismissed; the aim is “to construct, so to speak, a new space and a new form, to shape a new way of building in which those motifs of values are reinscribed, having meanwhile lost their external hegemony”. The reinscribed values then form an ‘archive’: because the sanctions have been reinscribed, not discarded and replaced, evidence of them remains in the new values. (Derrida 1989, 73)

Reinscription has been used in many different creative forms: by way of illustration examples are discussed here of reinscription applied to the novel, and to social historiography, to demonstrate and explore its applications.

An example of reinscribing the novel is J.G. Ballard’s\(^\text{19}\) 1970 novel The Atrocity Exhibition (Ballard 2006). Ballard expressly rejected “the techniques and perspectives of the traditional 19\(^\text{th}\) century novel, with its linear narrative, its measured chronology, its consular characters

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\(^{17}\) Jacques Derrida 1930-2004: French-Algerian philosopher who developed the practice of deconstruction.

\(^{18}\) For a general summary of Deconstruction see (Collins and Mayblin 1996)

\(^{19}\) James Graham Ballard 1930-2009: British author famous for portrayals of modernist dystopia.
grandly inhabiting their domains with ample time and space” (Huntley 2008, 24-5); instead he embarks on a radical programme of reinscription, resulting in “a profound and disquieting book” (Burroughs 2006, vii). The treatment of time here is extreme: the book is structured as a series of short chapters, each with the same characters and setting but with alternative plots (“a jarring montage of jump-cut prose”, as Jake Huntley describes it (2008, 24-5)). Time, apparently linear within each section, could be seen as simultaneous, or perhaps non-existent, at the level of the compiled book. The protagonist’s identity likewise rotates through a limited set of possibilities, reflected in his changing name. Known variously as Travis, Talbot, Traven, Tallis, Trabert, Talbert, and Travers (“a small, closed linguistic circuit” (Huntley 2008, 25)), the dislocation of the central identity prevents a safe reading of any other aspect: with much of the action based in or around a psychiatric hospital, even the protagonist’s wife is unsure whether he is a doctor or a patient (6). Furthermore, the relationship between characters and their environments, and even between the characters themselves, is also reinscribed, as the landscapes and buildings they inhabit are shown as expressions of their ‘inner space’20: throughout the chapter “You: Coma: Marilyn Monroe” (55-77) International Style architecture becomes a physical expression of paranoia and alienation, while in “The Assassination Weapon” (41-54) the characters Kline, Coma and Xero are apparently projections of the protagonist’s subconscious. When writing The Atrocity Exhibition Ballard could presumably have chosen to discard the concepts of time, character identity and setting altogether, but by using reinscription, and thereby maintaining an archive of traditions in his work, he allows readers to follow his progression: the continued use of linear narrative within each chapter allows readers to understand the complex montage effect achieved by compiling them.

Similar techniques of reinscription were used by Walter Benjamin21 in The Arcades Project (Benjamin 1999) to attempt to create a new historiography of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Rather than treat the period between the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries purely as one of linear progression, Benjamin sees his century and the previous as being essentially comparable, albeit with one at an earlier stage than the other:

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20 For a discussion of Ballard’s concept of inner space, see (Baker 2008).
21 Walter Benjamin 1892-1940: German literary critic. The Arcades Project was published posthumously, unfinished.
Figure 9 – the front cover of *The Arcades Project* (Benjamin 1999).
History is like Janus; it has two faces. Whether it looks at the past or at the present, it sees the same things.

Maxime Du Camp, quoted in *The Arcades Project* (Benjamin 1999, 14)

To achieve this new historiography Benjamin uses a montage technique of discrete facts and notes to create a history of nineteenth-century Paris in which the interconnectedness of all things is stressed, and easy comprehension of a linear system denied:

Method of this project: literary montage. I needn’t say anything. Merely show. I shall purloin no valuables, appropriate no ingenious formulations. But the rags, the refuse – these I will not inventory but allow, in the only way possible, to come into their own by making use of them. (Benjamin 1999, 460)

By bringing together the voices of “producers and consumers, politicians and intellectuals, the socially powerful, the disenfranchised and the social resisters” Benjamin creates “a panoramic examination… characterized through rapid shifts of focus” (Leslie 2006, 107). In this way, like Ballard, he makes a break from nineteenth-century narratives of progression to, in a sense, update history for the twentieth century. The archive of sanctions here is less obvious: having replaced a linear developmental history, the montage technique shows the legacy of the nineteenth-century passions for collecting in its complex assemblage of disparate elements. In this case reinscription therefore causes the work to embody a sense of the nineteenth-century material culture which forms the subject matter.

**B.1.b Deconstruction in Conservation**

This method of reinscription could be used to understand the relationship between architecture, material conservation and experiential conservation. Architecture played a prominent part in Deconstruction during the 1980s and 1990s, through a group of architects known as Deconstructivists, including Peter Eisenman\(^{22}\) and Bernard Tschumi\(^{23}\) who both collaborated with Derrida. This was, however, restricted in its scope to deconstructing certain

\(^{22}\) Peter Eisenman 1932- : American architect

\(^{23}\) Bernard Tschumi 1944- : Swiss architect
Figure 10 – A ‘folie’ in Parc de la Villette, Paris, designed by Bernard Tschumi. Sourced from Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 11 - William Morris, painted by George Frederic Watts, 1870. Sourced from Wikimedia Commons.
aspects of architecture such as dwelling, and conventions of orthogonal form, rather than comprehensively questioning the nature and role of architecture. Furthermore, to the uninitiated viewer the deconstructive aspects were not necessarily apparent, relying on active engagement by the visitor, as Derrida admitted: “Of course we can interpret [the work of Eisenman and Tschumi] in a very traditional way – viewing this as simply a ‘modern’ transformation of the same old kinds of architecture. So Deconstruction is not simply an activity or commitment on the part of the architect; it is also on the part of people who read, who look at these buildings, who enter the space, who move in the space, who experience the space in a different way” (Derrida 1989, 74).

Material conservation, however, can be understood to achieve Deconstruction in architecture much more comprehensively, through reinscription of the classical sanctions of architecture (firma\textit{t}itas, utilitas, ven\textit{u}stas\textsuperscript{24}) as well as of later concepts such as dwelling. As seen in Morris’ \textit{Manifesto of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings} (Morris, SPAB Website), each of those concepts is fundamentally reinterpreted in material conservation: aesthetic judgements are based on integrity of the original fabric, and “the appearance of antiquity”, rather than coherence to an artistic design; limited attempts are to be made to keep buildings structurally sound, by regular maintenance, such as “\text{prop[ping]} a perilous wall or mend[ing] a leaky roof”, rather than by major structural intervention; the function is understood primarily in terms of its historical value, and if the building is no longer suitable for practical uses these should be accommodated elsewhere. Old buildings are still understood to fulfil the psychological need to dwell, but in a broader sense than that of providing physical inhabitation: they are treated instead as the dwelling-places of culture, which create a ‘sense of place’ through which those who experience the building can feel they ‘belong’ in a more general sense.

In a similar vein, experiential conservation can be understood as a reinscription of material conservation’s sanctions of authenticity and integrity. This is demonstrated by the example of 18 Folgate Street in Spitalfields, now known as Dennis Severs’ House. Having purchased the eighteenth-century weavers’ house in 1979 Dennis Severs furnished it in an attempt to evoke as evocative an atmosphere as possible, as part of his lifestyle rather than as an academic act

\textsuperscript{24} ‘Solidity’, ‘Utility’, ‘Beauty’: the three fundamental requirements for architecture listed by the Roman author Marcus Vitruvius Pollo in his text \textit{De Architectura} (Vitruvius 1983, Book 1 Chapter 3.2)
Severs was open about the fact that the history he depicts is in fact fictional, part of the design: Severs invented a family of Huguenot silk weavers, who ‘lived’ in the house from 1724 to 1919. However, each room in the house is presented as if the inhabitants have left it only seconds before, each room in a different era. The detail extends to half-eaten remnants of food, unemptied chamber pots and raging log fires. This is not, however, by any means a meticulously detailed example of material conservation; the focus is instead “the space between things” – the atmosphere (Severs 2001, 17). It can therefore be understood as experiential conservation. Just as material conservation is not, but is closely related to, architecture, Dennis Severs’ House, and by extension experiential conservation, is not conservation in a material tradition, but is its reinscription.

The aim of Dennis Severs’ House is to create an authenticity of experience, rather than respecting authenticity of material and design per se. Accordingly, in creating each room Severs relied primarily on his own judgement for what embodied the spirit of each age (to which his fictional Jervis family wholeheartedly conform), and was honest about his inclusion of objects which were modern or anachronistic. Likewise, designs and craft techniques were far from traditional, as Severs was forced by a lack of funds to do much of the work himself. It would be possible to apply a conventional (material) interpretation of authenticity to the building now that Severs has died, as it could be interpreted as a singular work of art: valid as one man’s creative expression of history. This would normally suggest a conservation strategy of material preservation of the original fabric (presumably dated from the time of Severs’ death in 1999), which would be completely at odds with the authenticity of experience Severs aimed to create. Severs described his approach to time as “the ‘dramatic present’, as if things in the past were happening right now” (Severs 2001, 7). In practical terms this requires an intensive level of daily upkeep, particularly to replace the perishable items which form part of each room’s display, which is more akin to that needed for a work of theatre than to the maintenance of buildings. Integrity is another sanction of material conservation which is challenged by the House: its integrity of experience is only reliant on material integrity in as far as it affects the perception of the overall effect. Therefore the substitution of one small object in a display, say a candlestick, for a similar one would be of little consequence, but a prominent intrusion into the nature of the experience, such as a gift shop, would be disastrous. In Dennis Severs’ House the archive of reinscription can be read

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25 The details of the house quoted here are compiled from Severs (2001); Claypole (2003); McEvoy (2011).
Figure 12 - Dennis Severs’ House. Reproduced from Severs (2001).

Figure 13 - Dennis Severs’ House, fresh vegetables on display. Reproduced from Severs (2001).
as the legacy of material conservation: in the meticulously detailed furnishing of the rooms can be read the after-image of an idealised vision of material conservation, in which nothing has been lost to time, and historical value remains entire. This archival aspect is another layer of complexity in the relationship between material and experiential conservations; it is a reminder that techniques developed in material conservation may still have a place within an experiential project.

### B.1.c Application of hypotheses to whaling stations

When considered with Derrida’s concept of a ‘pharmakon’ whaling stations suggest that a reinscription of the concept of ‘significance’ is possible.

In his text *Plato’s Pharmacy* (1991) Derrida sets out a concept and terminology for understanding objects and ideas which cannot be described through dialectic oppositions. His argument centres on the use of the word “pharmakon” (‘drug’) in Plato’s *Phaedrus*, and its dual meaning as either ‘medicine’ or ‘toxin’. Derrida then picks up the word *pharmakon* as a term for all words with dual meanings which cannot be separated, which opens up the concept for more general use.

The significance of whaling stations can be considered in this way. Whilst individual sites could be ascribed itemised significance according to values-based conservation (aesthetic value, historical value etc) their main significance as a building type is that they are simultaneously a legacy of mankind’s resourcefulness, ingenuity and spirit of adventure, and also of mankind’s seemingly limitless capacity for consuming natural resources. In this sense each site is a *pharmakon* of human experience; whether they represent the highest or lowest aspirations of mankind is undecideable in any absolute way. Even if an individual does settle on one of these interpretations, as Ellen MacArthur did on South Georgia

26 “Horrific as it may sound to have killed 175,000 whales on one island, I don’t believe we went there to be barbarians… To me it was a symbol of how spectacularly we can miss the point… *This is what we do.*” (MacArthur 2010, 259-60)
efforts on aspects of the site most strongly perceived by visitors and users. This would need to be considered with an awareness that certain aspects, particularly the associations and memories triggered by the experience of the site, are only partially dependent on the specific details of the site’s remains: attention in the planning stages would need to be paid to this subjective nature of perception, possibly through wide-ranging public consultations and including a continuous programme of theoretical development as part of the ongoing management plan, such as NVA have done on the Kilmahew/St. Peter’s project. This is discussed in the next chapter, along with other conservation projects which aim to inspire and provoke emotional responses.
B.2 Empathy, Imagination and experience

B.2.a General Textual Context

If experiential conservation is to move beyond its roots in nineteenth-century modernism, it will need to reflect contemporary concerns and sensibilities. Timotheus Vermeulen and Robin van den Akker describe current cultural trends as “metamodern” (2010). This is described as being between modernist optimism and postmodern irony, which “seeks forever for a truth that it never expects to find” (5). The central aspect of metamodernism is identified as being “neo-romanticism” (8): a “re-signification” of the world that seeks to heighten the experience of everyday life, born of this conflict between progressive modernism and sarcastic-nihilist post-modernism (12). This chapter will begin by examining this “neo-romantic” tendency in literature, where it can be clearly identified, and move on to discussing it as a desire for imaginative inspiration in conservation.

A trend has emerged, from the 1990s to the present day, for a type of writing which crosses and blends a number of genres in order to reach a more comprehensive understanding of history. The most influential writer to use this approach was W.G. Sebald27, whose books use this technique to grapple obliquely with the themes of exile and destruction, particularly caused by the Holocaust. This type of writing has not been formally named, and, given its span across genres, could not easily be defined. For convenience, in this dissertation it will be referred to as ‘Sebaldian’, simply because it is most strongly associated with Sebald. It suggests an effective way to communicate inspirational and imaginative approaches to the history of places, and as such offers parallels to experiential conservation.

In his most famous work, The Rings of Saturn (2002), Sebald focuses on the theme of destruction. Structured around a walking tour of East Anglia, the locations Sebald visits become the starting points for digressive passages discussing loss and destruction. One of the most evocative passages is triggered by a newspaper article Sebald reads in the Crown Hotel in Southwold. After feeling “for some time… a sense of eternal peace” he comes across an article which describes the war crimes committed by Croatian militia during the Second

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27 Winfried Georg “Max” Sebald 1944-2001: German academic and author, based in University of East Anglia, Norwich.
World War, and the complicity in those crimes of the Heeresgruppe E intelligence division of the German Wehrmacht. He then continues:

In this connection one might also add that one of the Heeresgruppe E intelligence officers at that time was a young Viennese lawyer whose chief task was to draw up memoranda relating to the necessary resettlements, described as imperative for humanitarian reasons… In the post-war years this officer, who at the very start of his career was so promising and so very competent in the technicalities of administration, occupied various high offices, among them that of Secretary General of the United Nations. And reportedly it was in this last capacity that he spoke onto tape, for the benefit of any extra-terrestrials that may happen to share our universe, words of greeting that are now, together with other memorabilia of mankind, approaching the outer limits of our solar system aboard the space probe Voyager II. (Sebald 2002, 98-9)

Here all the key elements of his writing come together: travel writing, the context in which this passage takes place; autobiography, in the form of Sebald’s memories which connect the passage together through associations; historical research, which supplies much of the content; and a philosophical or emotional meditation on human behaviour, triggered by the closing revelation that our species chose to represent itself to the universe with someone personally involved in genocide.

*The Emigrants* (2002) deals with exile, by telling the stories of four emigrants Sebald is personally connected to. These characters were compiled as amalgams of real historical figures, a device Sebald uses to retain enough historical and emotional truth to enable empathy, whilst giving him as the writer more freedom to arrange and compose the book. As in all his other works, he uses a first-person narrator, ostensibly Sebald himself, who as a young man emigrated from Germany to England. Sebald the narrator is able to meet these semi-fictional characters and relays their stories to the reader entirely plausibly. The story of Paul Bereyter is a good illustration of this technique of personal connection: by tracing one individual’s path through twentieth-century Europe, the cultural and emotional aspects of the Third Reich and the Second World War come to the fore. Only one quarter Jewish, Bereyter survives the war, but nonetheless the manner of his subsequent suicide, laying himself down on a railway line, is symbolic of the central role the railways played in the Holocaust.

There are several aspects of Sebald’s technique worth highlighting for their possible application in conservation. In the passages above, and in his discussion (in *The Rings of
Saturn) of the Nazi silk-worm breeding programme, Sebald veers close to a direct discussion of the Holocaust, but avoids it; the digressive form of writing he uses allows instead the construction of more subtle and complex allusions, which can be understood by the reader without the writer risking an insensitive or otherwise flawed treatment of such a highly charged subject. Sebald is thus writing about the Holocaust in the distanced manner advocated by critics like Theodor Adorno28 and Saul Friedlander, which tries to avoid any “cathartic emotional effects” a more direct depiction might lead to (Gregory-Guider 2007, 517-8). This indirect approach could be useful for the management of sites with a violent or otherwise symbolically fraught history, such as battlefield or defence sites. The ‘rhizomatic’29 way in which the books’ subjects are connected to one another increases their significance and deepens the understanding of their context, by situating places, people and objects within complex webs of relationships: silk, herrings, and the writer Thomas Browne are used as three strands through The Rings of Saturn, through which different aspects of Sebald’s subject matter find new associations and meanings. Thus we find connected, through the book, such diverse events as the Taiping Rebellion and the industrialisation of Norwich. As in Walter Benjamin’s The Arcades Project (discussed in B.1.a on page xviii), the concept of history implicit here has abandoned the idea of an Enlightenment telos, on which Alois Riegl had based his theories of modern conservation, but considers rather, as the Dowager Empress of China puts it in The Rings of Saturn, “…that history consists of nothing but misfortune and the troubles that afflict us, so that in all our days on earth we never know one single moment that is genuinely free of fear” (2002, 153). This view of history, both post-modern and romantic, is constant, enabling the kinds of connections through time and space that Sebald thrives on, as well as empathy for historical figures.

The Sebaldian approach has also been used by, amongst others, Philip Hoare and Christopher Woodward, who have applied it to specific themes. Hoare’s book Leviathan (2008) describes whales and the historic whaling industry, born of his childhood enthusiasm for Moby Dick. “On my own uncertain journey,” he writes, “I sought to discover why I too felt haunted by the whale, by the forlorn expression on the beluga’s face, by the orca’s impotent fin, by the insistent images in my head. Like Ishmael, I was drawn back to the sea; wary of what lay

28 Theodor Adorno 1903-1969: German sociologist.
29 Strathausen describes Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s definition of the rhizome, “directions in motion. It [the rhizome] has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (milieu) from which it grows and which it overspills”, as an “apt description of Sebald’s model” (2007, 478).
below, yet forever intrigued by it, too” (39). Although he uses the same cocktail of genres as Sebald, the tone is generally lighter and the meaning of the content less complex. As a consequence, the book veers more towards imaginative history than towards literature, aiming more at an evocative and empathetic communication of human experience than at the structural complexity of Sebald’s work. What is particularly worth noting for use in conservation is the way in which this flexible approach to writing allows the transfer of Hoare’s enthusiasm for whales to the reader, without being constrained by literary or academic form, thus facilitating a deeper engagement by the reader. This is achieved not just in the detailed portraits of historical figures, such as Hermann Melville and Thomas Beale, but through his own intimately shared experience of whales. In all these accounts the emotional aspects of experience, such as Melville’s admiration for Nathaniel Hawthorne or Hoare’s fear and wonder when swimming with sperm whales, is prioritised, giving the reader the means for an empathetic reading of the book. In the context of experiential conservation this could be interpreted as communication by the conservation team to the public of their emotional motivations behind the work, in order to stimulate a similar response from the visitor, for example.

Christopher Woodward’s *In Ruins* (2002) uses a Sebaldian approach as an alternative to academic writing. The book is a polemic, arguing for a greater appreciation of the emotional qualities of ruins in their conservation: “… a ruin has two values. It has an objective value as an assemblage of brick and stone, and it has a subjective value as an inspiration to artists… that the vegetation which grows on ruins appeals to the depths of our consciousness, for it represents the hand of Time, and the contest between the individual and the universe” (69). As an architectural historian, writing primarily for an academic audience, he could have written this book in a formal academic style, objective and well-referenced. His decision to use a less restrictive style not only gives the book more popular appeal, but, as with Hoare’s *Leviathan*, allows a direct communication of emotion to the reader, which is essential to the purpose of the book. Sebald’s writing style originally came from this struggle for expression in academic writing; his essay on Bruce Chatwin (2005), for example, contains many of the same devices as his fictions, such as long lists of places, a focus on the individual (rather than his novels) and on emotion (describing Chatwin’s childhood fascination with his grandmother’s antiques as “most important of all in Chatwin’s development” (183)), and, after a conclusion which abruptly shifts to discussing a Balzac novel, ends poetically and meditatively (“… your soul will shrink with dismay at the sight of the billions of years and
millions of nations forgotten by the short memory of mankind” (187)). In the same way experiential conservation could be understood to grow out of the academic strictures of material conservation to create a more emotional connection with historic sites.

**B.2.b Empathy & Imagination in conservation**

This interweaving of different elements can be translated to experiential conservation. It is the hypothesis of this chapter that by combining ruins, Sublime landscapes and dramatic histories inspirational effects can be achieved in conservation projects. As mentioned in the literature review on page ii, ruins have a long history of inspiring and evoking emotion. Ruins here must be understood not just as the remains of buildings, but specifically as the remains which survive well enough to “[combine] the disharmony, the eternal becoming of the soul struggling against itself, with the satisfaction of form, the firm limitedness, of the work of art” (Simmel 2011). A Sublime landscape is understood here in terms of the Picturesque tradition of the eighteenth century, resulting from “… the gradual transfer of the affective responses traditionally evoked by the idea of God to those natural phenomena which seemed most to partake of and to reflect the attributes of God” (Duffy and Howell 2011, 15), namely a landscape which evokes fear, wonder or contemplation. A dramatic history, particularly when viewed through the experience of a named individual, can trigger emotion through empathy, as seen in Sebald’s work. These three emotional stimuli have been used in a number of conservation projects to evoke an inspirational approach to the site and its history.

The National Trust’s conservation of Orford Ness, a former military testing facility on a large shingle bank on the Suffolk coast, is an example of how history, ruins and landscape combined can inspire emotional responses to the site. Dramatic history here is found in the site’s use for testing triggers for atomic weapons; many of the Atomic Weapon Research Establishment buildings survive, including the distinctive ‘pagodas’ which housed the test detonations; and the flat, bleak setting of the shingle bank is an otherworldly, alien environment. The evocative character of the site was established prior to conservation work.

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30 The description of Orford Ness is compiled from the National Trust website for Orford Ness, Woodward (2002, 221-6), and a telephone conversation between the author and Duncan Kent, Orford Ness’ Site Warden on 9th August 2012.
Figure 14 – W.G. Sebald’s interpretation of Orford Ness. Reproduced from Sebald (2002).

Figure 15 - W.G. Sebald’s interpretation of Orford Ness. Reproduced from Sebald (2002).
taking place, not least by JMW Turner’s watercolours of the site (National Trust, Orford Ness National Nature Reserve Statement of Significance), so the Trust’s priorities were to preserve the experience rather than to add to it. The Trust’s strategy to achieve this is one of “continued ruination”: apart from a few buildings restored to house the Trust’s volunteers and facilities, nature is allowed to take its course, with structures only being repaired if they pose a risk to visitors. For example, the walls of the old Police Station have been allowed to collapse, leaving the roof structure on the ground amidst a pile of debris. This policy is intended to allow an open interpretation of the military complex, treating the Cold War as a distinct historical period whose physical legacy can be seen on the Ness (National Trust, Orford Ness National Nature Reserve Statement of Significance). The policy of ruination also prevents any conflict with the conservation of the site’s natural assets (the site is a National Nature Reserve), even to the extent of the inevitable loss of the buildings to coastal erosion (National Trust & Natural England, Orford Ness National Nature Reserve Management Plan 2011-2016). As an experiment in experiential conservation it appears to have been a success, judging by the number of high-profile writers and artists who have made work based on Orford Ness. Sebald imagined it as “the remains of our own civilisation after its extinction in some future catastrophe” (2002, 237), whilst the Trust has invited Artists in Residence, including Turner Prize nominees Jane and Louise Wilson, to work on the site since 2005 (National Trust Website).

The Kilmahew/St. Peter’s Project in Cardross, Argyll and Bute, run by the arts group NVA and currently at the design stage, has a different strategy: it consciously seeks to develop and enhance the latent imaginative qualities of the site. The site is centred on the modernist ruins of St. Peter’s seminary, which are set within the jungle-like overgrowth of the Victorian landscape garden designed for the now-demolished Kilmahew House. Since the site’s abandonment it has become well-known amongst artists and architects as an inspirational ruin; NVA seeks to enhance that reputation. As a former seminary, the site lacks a dramatic or violent past; the destruction of the site is rather due to decay and vandalism, which becomes poignant mainly because the buildings only date from the 1960s, and were designed in an expressive Brutalist style. NVA aims through its work to develop the innate sensory perception of the site into a formal experiential strategy. This is two-fold, focused on the remains of the buildings and the development of an emotional engagement with the landscape. The planned preservation of the ruined seminary complex, which aims to prevent

31 Site description compiled from van Noord (2011) and ERZ (2011). See also Hunter (2012).
Figure 16 – St. Peter’s Seminary, Cardross. The staircase in the main building block, September 2009. Reproduced from van Noord (2011).

Figure 17 - St. Peter’s Seminary, Cardross. The altar in the chapel of the former building. Reproduced from van Noord (2011).
further decay and bring the main space back into use, whilst maintaining as far as possible the experience of ruin, reflects the relatively small scale of this site (compared to Orford Ness) and consequently higher importance of preserving the buildings. In order to maintain the Piranesian effect of its decayed state, the seminary complex needs to remain structurally sound yet visibly decayed materially, a balance which NVA hope to achieve through “an incremental process of change that accepts the state of each stage of its resuscitation as complete in itself” (van Noord 2011, 22), preserving and restoring the complex in phases to allow the project team to gradually develop their strategic and technical approaches. Previous attempts to redevelop the site have focused more or less exclusively on the seminary buildings, but, ‘neo-romantically’, NVA seeks to develop the importance of the surrounding landscape into an immersive experience of the whole site; hence the concept of treating the landscape as a single narrative, from geological features to artificial landscapes to modernist architecture, described as “an archaeology of ideas” (van Noord 2011, 22). NVA addresses the subjectivity of this approach through what it terms a “generative” approach (van Noord 2011, 27): each visitor is to decide for themselves how to interpret the site, including NVA’s work. Central to this policy is the ‘community consultation’: the regular dialogue with a wide range of potential users, from local residents of the settlements nearby to architects at the Venice Biennale 2010. As a precedent this ‘generative’ approach provides a practical method of negotiating the issue of subjective meaning in a way that enhances the project.

The recent redevelopment of the Culloden battlefield (from 2003-8) by the National Trust for Scotland (NTS) establishes a precedent for experiential conservation on sites which lack any historic remains yet retain an imaginative potential. One of the main aims of the redevelopment was to ensure the “battlefield provides a tangible focus and setting for imaginative connection” with its history (National Trust for Scotland 2003). As the site shows no visible trace of the battle, the inspirational elements of the redevelopment strategy were focused on clearing the landscape to restore it to its appearance in 1746, and on creating a new strategy for communicating the site’s history. The strategy for the communication of the site’s history was formed by first establishing an “interpretive theme”, a basic narrative which would form the framework for all interpretive elements. The main aim of the interpretive theme was to enable a personal response to the site, for each visitor “to become a player in a true life drama” (National Trust for Scotland 2003, 5). The main means of achieving this is through electronic “Battlefield Guides”, electronic devices which use video, sound, illustrations and text to inform the visitor of the site’s history. By using GPS
technology to trigger information at various points, the need for on-site signage is removed, a move intended to preserve both the visual appearance of the site and the “sanctity of the Moor as a war grave” (Zolk C Limited, Culloden Case Study). The content includes accounts of the battle by those who fought in it, voiced by actors, in order to “… create and immersive and emotive tour of the site. The experience of hearing their accounts as you stand where they stood is truly memorable, and often poignant” (Zolk C Limited, Culloden Case Study).

This is a direct application of the narrative device used by Sebald to experiential conservation, which is intended to enable an open interpretation of the site’s history: here too community consultations were used to address the issue of subjectivity, though not on the scale of NVA (National Trust for Scotland 2003, 10). Restoring the site to its former state is important for the historically accurate presentation of the site, but also enhances the imaginative appeal of the open, barren moorland. The focus of the landscape aspects of the site’s redevelopment was maintaining “the spirit of the place”, around which practical concerns of car parking etc. had to be organised (National Trust for Scotland 2003, 4). The NTS is however limited in how far this can be achieved: whilst progress has been made (such as removing signage and reconfiguring the site layout), a number of private houses and two public roads can be seen from the Moor, which lie outwith NTS land. This strategy is therefore not complete, but it does show, along with Orford Ness and Kilmahew/St. Peter’s, the importance of landscape to this inspirational approach.

It is worth considering, then, an example which suggests how imaginative approaches to conservation might be achieved in an urban setting. The Neues Museum in Berlin, originally completed in 1847, and restored by David Chipperfield Architects from 2003-9, is in many ways a model of best practice in material conservation, with the Picturesque qualities of the bomb-damaged ruin acknowledged only in passing (Harrap 2009, 60-1). However, the layers of ruin in the finished building offer a complex emotional experience. The juxtaposition between the fragments of ancient artefacts exhibited and the restored ruins of the neoclassical museum presenting them encourages the visitor to connect the falls of imperial and fascist Germany with those of the civilisations on display. The Neues Museum thereby fits into the long tradition of viewing ruins as symbols of vanitas, passing comment on the transient glories of even the most powerful civilisations. The original Neues Museum could therefore be seen as having been a forerunner to Hitler and Speer’s designs for Germania, a megalomaniac vision of neoclassical Berlin, that brings to mind one of Sebald’s most frequently quoted phrases: “…somehow we know by instinct that outsize buildings cast the
Figure 18 – Using the interactive guide at Culloden. *Video still from Zolk C promotional video.*

Figure 19 – The refurbished Neues Museum. Römischer Saal (space 2.02) in June 2008. *Reproduced from Ziesemer and Newton (2009).*
shadow of their own destruction before them, and are designed from the first with an eye to their later existence as ruins” (Sebald 2002, 23-4). The Neues Museum and its exhibits can be seen in a similar way, critical of the self-monumentalising ambitions of their subjects. A thought-provoking complexity is therefore achieved through the specific alignment of the building and its use; this might be a transferable model for the experiential conservation of other buildings in urban environments. It also suggests that without a Sublime landscape a romantic vision can still be achieved, in this case through dramatic ruin.

B.2.c Application of hypotheses to whaling stations

Ruined whaling stations would be strong candidates for a Sebald-inspired approach to conservation, not least because they offer a chance to reflect on the moral ambiguities of humanity’s relationship with nature, a topic at the forefront of the twenty-first century consciousness. The fact that many whaling stations were built in remote mountainous fjords makes them all the more suitable for a neo-romantic approach.

With substantial remains, and set in a remote, tranquil fjord hemmed in by snow-capped hills, the whaling station at Stekkeyri in the Hesteyrarfjörður in north-west Iceland (I.9, Error! Bookmark not defined.) has great potential for experiential conservation. The fact that remains survive from virtually all aspects of the site’s operation, from the flensing plan and boilers to ancillary structures and wells, allows an imaginative understanding the whole operation of the site. The remote setting, on a peninsula with no full-time residents, creates a meditative atmosphere. The major problem facing any conservation work at the site is its advanced state of decay: whilst the baroque forms this creates have a striking beauty, they are a serious hazard to visitors. On a strategic level, repairs would need to prevent structural collapse as discreetly as possible, whilst taking account of the extreme climate and difficulty of site access, in order to maintain the emotional impact of the site’s ruinous qualities.

In the Veiðeleysufjörður, the next fjord east of the Hesteyrarfjörður, a similarly sublime landscape surrounds the site of the former whaling station at Meleyri (I.11, Error! Bookmark not defined.). Here, however, only a few traces of human activity remain, as the

32 “The Ozymandias Complex” as Woodward terms it, after the poem by Percy Shelley (Woodward 2002, 177).

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site was cleared in 1905, within two years of the end of operations. The site could therefore be interpreted as a monument to

Figure 20 – ‘Baroque ruin’ at Stekkeyri, Hesteyrarfjörður (I.9).

Figure 21 – The empty site in the landscape at Meleyri, Veiðileysufjörður (I.11).
the abandonment of the Hornstrandir peninsula as a whole. Although this was not completed until the 1950s, the departure of the whaling industry represented a major step towards the end of economically viable settlement. With negligible remains to conserve, the main issue in realising an experiential approach would be the presentation of the site’s history. As the site is extremely remote and seldom visited permanent, discreet, hard-wearing signage would be the most logical approach. On a theoretical level the main issue to consider would be the nature of any text used in onsite interpretation. As the intention would be to emphasise the loss and abandonment of the site, lengthy historical descriptions may be inappropriate; given Iceland’s strong literary tradition a short poem or piece of prose may be more suitable for the purpose of inspiration.

A more active form of creative interpretation is suggested by the site at Bunaveneader on the Isle of Harris (S.5, Error! Bookmark not defined.). There the modern housing surrounding the site hampers a Sublime response to the landscape; the focus is on the extensive physical remains, and on the history of the site. The remains of the Bunaveneader station are less complete than those at Stekkeyri, but still include several significant structures, including one of the brick chimneys and a largely intact concrete flensing plan. There is however insufficient for an uninformed understanding of all aspects of the site as the lightweight structures no longer remain. This can be addressed chiefly either through some form of reconstruction or through guided tours. Reconstruction in this instance would aim to enable an imaginative, rather than historical, understanding of the operation of the whaling station, and would therefore not necessarily need to be a replica, but could, for example, restore the basic form of the factory sheds to give a sense of scale. This would need to include an indication of key equipment, and the connections between the various aspects of the site. Guided tours could draw on the body of first-hand experience of the early to mid-twentieth century whaling industry on South Georgia, in which men from the Western Isles played a significant part. Surviving ex-whalers would be ideal, as they could relate first-hand the experience of whaling. If first-hand guides prove unavailable, drawing on whalers’ memoirs to inform creative guides would be a suitable substitute.33 Again, the strong local literary tradition (specifically of Gaelic poetry) could play a role.

33 See (Fraser 2001; Gordon 2004)
Figure 22 – The ruined whaling station at Bunaveneader, Isle of Harris (S.5).

Figure 23 – The Norrøna site at Ronas Voe, Shetland (S.1), seen from the neighbouring site (S.2) across the water.
The limits of an inspirational strategy of this type are shown by the two sites at Ronas Voe in Shetland (S.1, Error! Bookmark not defined.; S.2, Error! Bookmark not defined.). Although they are situated at the head of a long fjord, nestled inbetween low hills, the long tradition of industry along the coasts of the fjord, from nineteenth-century herring stations\textsuperscript{34} to modern-day salmon farms, combined with the domestic and agricultural development in the immediate vicinity of the sites, prevents any strong emotional response to the landscape. Likewise, the dearth of remains and lack of much visible suggestion of the sites’ histories (apart, perhaps, from some rusting harpoons) mean that responses to the site are conscious rather than emotional, with curiosity and interest taking precedence over awe and moral reflection. This does not mean that an experiential approach to these sites would not be possible, but rather that a different type of approach would be required, one that made a virtue of the sites’ fragmentary natures. This is explored in the next chapter.

\textsuperscript{34} When whaling started in Ronas Voe in 1903 there were 11 herring stations along the fjord, employing 1200-1300 people (O’Dell 1939, 141)
B.3 Details and Fragments

B.3.a General Textual Context

Integrity, defined as wholeness or the lack of it, is one of the most important concepts in material conservation. This chapter investigates how concepts of completeness and incompleteness could also be used as part of experiential conservation approaches.

Experiences of integrity can be conceptually distinguished by the level of understanding of their context: the distinction being the presence (or otherwise) of what could be termed a ‘framework of understanding’, such as the design of a building, which acts as the rationale for the ordering of information or object: if such a framework can be readily perceived, additional objects or information form ‘details’ adding to understanding; without one isolated pieces, such as lines of text or parts of buildings, form ‘fragments’. In this chapter the following approaches will be discussed: the use of details for ‘exformative’ strategies; and the use of fragments in ‘montage’ and ‘collage’.

The concept of ‘exformation’ is laid out by the designer Kenya Hara in his book *Designing Design* (2008), which describes it as a process of “making things unknown” (376-7), of overturning preconceptions through the addition of information. A good example from literature is Italo Calvino’s 1983 novel *Mr Palomar* (1999), which consists of forensically detailed descriptions of a series of situations, which force the reader to reappraise their perception of the world. In the opening chapter, for instance, the protagonist Mr Palomar (named after the Californian telescope, but also after the Italian word for ‘deep-sea diver’ (McLaughlin 1998, 135)) tries to describe a single wave:

> The hump of the advancing wave rises more at one point than at any other and it is here that it becomes hemmed in white. If this occurs at some distance from the shore, there is time for the foam to fold over upon itself and vanish again, as if swallowed, and at the same moment invade the whole, but this time emerging again from below, like a white carpet rising from the bank to welcome the wave that is arriving. (4)

Heaney describes Mr Palomar’s descriptions as “constantly accurate and constantly inadequate” (2001, 78); Calvino makes the reader understand the complexity of a wave, and

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36 Italo Calvino 1923-1985: Italian author and journalist.
in so doing to discard their previous concept of a wave in favour of a new, detailed one. An alternative method of exformation is that used by James Joyce\textsuperscript{37} in his 1922 novel \textit{Ulysses} (2010): grafted onto the main plot are a series of ‘extra’ narratives, which add an alternative commentary on the text. One of the most obvious examples of this is in the ‘Cyclops’ passage (263-312), in which the main narrative is intercut with long-winded digressions which add nothing to the simple understanding of the plot, but frame the narrative in terms of overblown pomposity, Irish nationalism and anti-Semitism, which emphasises the occurrence of those themes in the narrative. At the scale of the whole book, it is this “fourth-estate narration” (Seidel 2002, 88-9) which brings the symbolism of the \textit{Odyssey} to the narrative: through it we realise that \textit{Ulysses} is not just the tale of a few characters on one day in Dublin, but rather an examination of the human condition, in which light the reader reconsiders every aspect of the narrative afresh. Exformation here, as in \textit{Mr Palomar}, is central to the operation of the text; by creating a more complex experience it provokes a deeper emotional investment by the reader.

‘Montage’ is an artistic technique closely associated with early cinema, although it can equally be applied to almost any art form. It consists of the rapid juxtaposition of pieces of information presented without commentary, so that new meanings can be generated through their association. Good textual examples of montage are T.S. Eliot’s\textsuperscript{38} 1922 poem \textit{The Waste Land} (1999) and Walter Benjamin’s \textit{The Arcades Project} (1999). In \textit{The Waste Land} Eliot juxtaposes a whole kaleidoscope of different voices, languages, times, styles and settings within one poem to create a sensation of ruin and despair, as seen in this extract from the first section:

\begin{quote}
And I will show you something different from either
Your shadow in the morning striding behind you
Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;
I will show you fear in a handful of dust.
\textit{Frisch weht der Wind}
\textit{Der Heimat zu.}
\textit{Mein Irisch Kind,}
\textit{Wo weilest du?}
‘You gave me hyacinths first a year ago;
‘They called me the hyacinth girl.’
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{37}James Joyce 1882-1941: Irish novelist and poet
\textsuperscript{38}Thomas Stearns Eliot 1888-1965: American poet and playwright, emigrated to Britain in 1914.
Yet when we came back, late, from the hyacinth garden.
Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not
Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,
Looking into the heart of light, the silence.
_Oed’ und leer das Meer._ (lines 27-42)

Although the connections between them are not apparent, the fragments Eliot uses have not been randomly chosen or arranged. As Helen Williams (1968) writes, “They have been cast by a directing hand, to form a shape” (17). Considering montage as an artistic technique, it is a means to an end, a method of achieving a desired effect, rather than just a haphazard assortment of information. Like _Ulysses, The Waste Land_ uses myth to structure the text, a technique similar to the ‘archive’ of Derrida’s reinscription. However, the Grail Myth used by Eliot was not, as _Ulysses_ had been, “a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity” (Eliot 1923), but a way to “place the particular experience of his own generation in a context beyond time” (Williams 1968, 8). The myth is used abstractly, its allegorical qualities emphasised by the use of montage, its “recurrent, cyclical pattern” used to “breakdown … the tyranny of linear historical time and the logic of cause and effect” and to achieve a “transcendence of the temporary” (Williams 1968, 20, 8). It therefore does not act within a framework of understanding, as references to the _Odyssey_ do in _Ulysses_, but instead works with the montage technique to increase the poem’s significance.

Walter Benjamin’s _The Arcades Project_ (1999) uses montage to create a new, material, historiography (see section B.1.a on page xviii). Benjamin uses a montage of fragments from a wide variety of sources, not just to convey the “disrupted sense of time” (Leslie 2006, 107) which he portrays emerging between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but also to “conjoin a heightened graphicness (Anschaulichkeit) to the realisation of the Marxist method” (Benjamin 1999, 461): without a framework of understanding provided by a linear narrative the fragments presented are perceived more vividly, as microcosms of the situation (“in the analysis of the small individual moment the crystal of the total event” (461). In both _The Waste Land_ and _The Arcades Project_ the experiential qualities of montage are crucial for the text; these could suggest a new approach to the presentation of fragments in conservation.
B.3.b Details and Fragments in Conservation

The applications of exformation and montage to conservation will be considered through a number of case studies: Newhailes House will be used to assess the use of exformation; montage will be considered with reference to open-air museums and the collections at Sir John Soane’s Museum and the Burrell Collection.

Newhailes House near Musselburgh is a good example of a material conservation project with a strict definition of integrity: the aim is to present the house as closely as possible to its state when the National Trust for Scotland acquired it in 1997. This late seventeenth-century villa had been owned by the Dalrymple family from 1709 until it was transferred to the Trust, a continuity which resulted in very few changes being made to the house, including its eighteenth-century rococo interiors (McLean 2009, 2). Although the Trust were motivated by a desire to preserve the ‘mellowness’ of the building, this has also had an exformative effect: that of overturning assumptions of how stately homes are lived in. The house in its preserved state is a testament not just to the grandeur of the house’s creation, but to the decline of the landed gentry as a social class. The dilapidated state of the house, evident in the cracks in the wall, incomplete mouldings and damaged furniture, is a graphic illustration of the family’s changing fortunes. The most dramatic image of the family’s changing fortunes is the library, a double-height space occupying most of the east wing and once allegedly described by Samuel Johnson39 as “the most learned room in Europe”, which lost its books to the state in 1976 in lieu of inheritance tax (Holder 2002, 29). This is accompanied by constant reminders that Newhailes continued to be a family home in this state, including a modern plastic cat-flap (McLean 2009, 3). Through this intimately detailed portrait of contemporary upper-class life preconceptions of its wealth are challenged: the visitor is forced to confront the complexity of class politics in the twentieth century. This could be used as a model for exformative strategies for similar projects, not least because it is highly compatible with material conservation approaches.

Although montage, a linear technique, can be used in some conservation projects, such as at Dennis Severs’ House (description on page xxi) where the chronological jump between each room’s presentation on the set guided tour generates additional emotion through juxtaposition, most sites are not experienced in a linear manner. Instead it would be more

39 Samuel Johnson 1709-1784: English writer and lexicographer.
accurate to use the term ‘collage’ for conservation, the three-dimensional equivalent of montage, which Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter advocate as a technique for resolving questions of authenticity and decontextualisation in architecture (Rowe and Koetter 1978, 138-9, 144-5). The main uses of collage in an architectural context are in open-air museums (also known as skansens) and in collections of architectural fragments.

Open-air museums, such as the Árbæjarsafn in Reykjavík, are collections of relocated buildings, therefore of urban fragments. The fact that their aims are primarily educational presents the main obstacle for montage presentation: an obvious curatorial strategy inevitably acts as a framework of understanding, preventing any creative juxtapositions. For example, the Árbæjarsafn is divided into four areas, representing the Town, Village, Harbour and Country respectively (Árbæjarsafn 1998). This greatly aids a basic understanding of the buildings’ original contexts, but prevents any deeper meaning being understood, as would have been possible in the original contexts or through a montage approach to their arrangement on site. A ‘rational’ arrangement also runs the risk of, somewhat paradoxically, being historically inaccurate as a consequence, by portraying turbulent, conflicted societies as harmonious: open-air museums typically display pre-industrial or early industrial buildings, yet through their presentation an agrarian and industrial history “of ruptures, conflicts, and transformations, emerges as a process that is essentially continuous with the deeper and longer history of a countryside in which the power of the bourgeoisie has become naturalised” (Bennett 1995, 114), and ignores the fact that the rapid pace of change in the Industrial Revolution did create incongruous juxtapositions of old and new. As with montage in Benjamin’s Arcades Project, collage could experientially communicate these tensions. Unplanned juxtapositions do occur in open-air museums, but without a co-ordinated montage strategy they are more likely to be perceived as a mistake than as generating new meaning. For example, Marion Blockley criticises the Blists Hill Open Air Museum for placing the relocated Stirchley school and Sampson & David Beam Engine next to each other, questioning if they create an “appropriate juxtaposition in a convincing environmental context” (1999, 147).
Figure 24 – The front cover of the Árbæjarsafn Museum guide (Árbæjarsafn 1998).

Figure 25 - The back cover of the Árbæjarsafn Museum guide, showing the various areas of the site (Árbæjarsafn 1998).
Much closer to a montage strategy is the presentation used in two collections of architectural fragments: In Sir John Soane’s Museum, London, designed by Soane as his family home in 1794 then gradually converted by him to house his collection, the antique fragments and plaster casts, still displayed in Soane’s original arrangement, lack an obvious curatorial strategy of the kind employed in modern museums (Knox 2009, 21). Instead the organising principle, the framework of understanding, is the taste of the man, Soane, who collected them. The arrangement of his collection thereby forms a portrait of the collector: “The museum was created as a form of autobiography… The tensions between these two sides of his personality were expressed through the metaphor of ruin” (Woodward 2002, 160-1). This is not surprising, as “all good collections, however varied they may be, must reflect the personality of their creator” (Norwich 1984, 7). In the Burrell Collection in Glasgow, designed by Barry Gasson, this effect is caused by the breadth and scale of the collection rather than by its arrangement. The building housing the Burrell Collection was purpose-designed in 1971, a considerable time after Sir William Burrell’s death in 1958, and so is reflective of the modern designers’ and curators’ approach to the collection rather than of the man who collected it. This approach required that “the means of easily viewing a succinct portion of the Collection should be made possible while still enabling those with the inclination to spend more time to explore the remainder” (Gasson 1984, 15). The architectural fragments are integrated harmoniously into the building (with new stone found to match the embedded stone arch over the main entrance), and the object collections are divided by the culture of origin, comfortably spaced and well lit (in sharp contrast to the cramped interiors of Sir John Soane’s Museum) (Gasson 1984). Nonetheless, the diversity of the collection, which ranges from Ancient Egypt to nineteenth-century France via China, the Near East and Medieval Europe, represented by paintings, sculpture, tapestries, furniture, arms and armour and fragments of buildings, means that an element of collage at an overall scale is inevitable, a fact which was acknowledged in the design: “…the semi-open plan would create juxtapositions that are both intentional and a surprise” (Gasson 1984, 18). This is, however, little more than a shadow of a collage approach, and shows the same difficulty seen in the presentation of open-air museums: the conflict between experiential and material systems of arranging fragments is exacerbated by the high educational imperative attached to

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Figure 26 – The bust of Sir John Soane surrounded by his collection. Reproduced from (Knox 2009).

Figure 27 – The Burrell Collection, showing the integration of medieval stonework into the modern building. Reproduced from Glasgow Museums and Art Galleries (1984).
the objects concerned, which suggests that collage arrangements may be easier in the conservation of sites with less recognised historical value (such as whaling stations, perhaps).

**B.3.c Application of hypotheses to whaling stations**

As whaling stations are a very rare building type, little known amongst the general populace, exformative strategies are unlikely to work, as there are few preconceptions which could be overturned. A stress could be laid on the ancillary functions of the site, such as accommodation and recreation, to balance the emphasis on the factory functions. This could form part of a wider strategy, such as that discussed in chapter B.2.

A collage approach might instead be more appropriate, as many sites survive only as disparate fragments, and are generally not considered for their historical and educative values. For example, Hellisfjörður in Iceland (I.15, Error! Bookmark not defined.) could be considered for such an approach, given its variety of disparate remains, from a shipwrecked boat to abandoned boilers. There are two main issues which would need to be resolved were this approach to be considered for this site. Firstly, a decision would need to be made as to whether the site should be re-ordered to more closely reflect its arrangement at the time of operation. This would involve the removal of recently added picnic tables and/or the movement of equipment to its original positions. The same issues are encountered here as in restoration; given that the abandonment of the sites and the passage of time are important parts of its history and experience, a hands-off approach may well be advisable. The second issue to be considered is whether reconstructed or replica elements could be introduced to the site as part of the montage. This would be a form of reconstruction that does not seek to erase the absences on the site, which are as much a part of its history as what remains, but rather to emphasise them by highlighting the lack of a framework of understanding, an approach which borrows from exformation. This might include a selection of objects, such as harpoons, boiler equipment, or personal effects from those who worked there, or indeed buildings. Juxtaposition would be heightened if these were presented ‘as they were’, i.e. complete and new. As such it does not violate material conservation’s ban on reconstruction, as the basic nature of the site would not be altered (and, unlike traditional reconstruction, would not be trying to restore the site as functional architecture). In the interpretation of these fragments the whale assumes a similar role to the collector in the examples above: the absent fulcrum around which an understanding of all aspects of the site revolves.
Figure 28 – The juxtaposition of early twentieth century ruins and twenty-first century picnic table at Hellisfjörður (I.15).

Figure 29 – Shipwreck at Hellisfjörður (I.15).
At Ronas Voe in Shetland this approach may be a successful strategy to enable these residual sites to fulfil their imaginative potential\textsuperscript{42}. On the Norrøna site (S.1, \textbf{Error! Bookmark not defined.}) the rearrangement of fence lines to remove subdivisions would be a probable first step, which would have practical benefits without changing the site’s current usage. As these sites are smaller and less complete than at Hellisfjörður, a greater level of reconstruction would probably be required, which may involve using the water of the Voe itself. This draws into question the boundaries of the site, and is a reminder that for coastal sites such as whaling stations conservation approaches cannot be limited to the terrestrial.

\textsuperscript{42} Visit Scotland’s guide to the Shetland Islands mentions Ronas Voe’s whaling stations as one of the area’s attractions, despite the fact that they are not even signposted (Visit Scotland 2011, 3).
PART C – CONCLUSION

Although this study has covered a number of topics, including reconstruction, authenticity, integrity and significance, it has left many issues unexplored. The field survey of whaling stations highlighted two types of site in particular which are not covered by the chapters above: completely redeveloped sites, such as Collafirth in Shetland (S.4, Error! Bookmark not defined.), and buildings moved from whaling stations to other sites, such as the Suðavik church (see I.9, Error! Bookmark not defined.) or the Ráðherrabústaðurinn in Reykjavík (see I.6, Error! Bookmark not defined.). In both cases conserving the substance of the site or buildings does nothing to communicate their history or significance, so experiential (immaterial) approaches may have value. Whether these are possible, and what form they might take, would be a valuable line of enquiry. It should be reiterated here that experiential conservation is one option amongst many when dealing with historic sites, and is not intended for application in all cases. Indeed, there may be some sites for which neither restoration, material conservation nor experiential conservation would be suitable.

The examinations of whaling stations themselves, when considered together, show the interconnectedness of the topics discussed. The sites’ significance discussed in B.1.c has clear relevance for the inspirational approach covered in B.2. Likewise, they show a link between exformation and collage, and suggest links between both and the approach used as Dennis Severs’ House. As regards the actual likelihood of these sites being conserved, this would appear to depend on whether the paradigm of duty (‘what should be preserved?’) could be shifted to one of opportunity (‘what could these places be?’). The latter would be a good summary of the implicit attitude of experiential conservation to sites, one shared by Dennis Severs and NVA amongst others.

The issue of subjectivity is crucial to experiential conservation, and is worth discussing further here. Two main approaches have been identified in this study: community consultation and ‘performatism’. NVA’s incorporation of theoretical discussion and dialogue into the heart of the decision-making process (see B.2.b.) is a valuable precedent for experiential conservation projects, as used appropriately it has value not only for negotiating issues of subjectivity but also as a way of providing an empirical justification for the project’s conservation strategy to external bodies such as funders. In particular, the decision to accept a long timeframe for the development of the project’s strategy allowed a wide variety of interested parties to be consulted. An alternative approach is that described by Raoul
Eshelman as ‘performatism’. This is “the wilful self-deceit to believe in – or identify with, or solve – something in spite of itself” (Vermeulen and van den Akker 2010, 6). Dennis Severs’ House is a perfect illustration of this: visitors are expected to suspend their disbelief in the manner of theatre, allowing themselves to believe the fiction presented to them while remaining conscious of the physical reality. Whilst this runs counter to the concept of authenticity as traditionally established, performatism is expressly not a pretence or fantasy, but rather a fiction which is poignant precisely because the reality is never forgotten. Such tension between past and present is central to the experience both of Dennis Severs’ House and of the collage approaches discussed in B.3.c.

One of the main questions that needs to be asked in this conclusion is whether experiential conservation is more appropriate for contemporary society than material conservation. In Western society priorities are certainly shifting away from materialism, thanks to the economic downturn and an increasing awareness of ecological sustainability. There is also an ongoing realignment of international and national identities, which has been termed by Vermeulen and van den Akker “a glocalised perception” (2010, 4). Conservation cannot be immune from this process, as this reduces the extent to which certain interpretations and meanings can be assumed in a given cultural context. An experiential approach may help to provide common ground, but it must be remembered that this too relies on certain specific cultural assumptions. This dissertation, for example, being written from a British point of view, leans heavily on Picturesque ideas of the Sublime. In Iceland, where attitudes and contexts differ, both to history and to whaling, it seems likely that these approaches would need to be reassessed before being put to use. As very few buildings from before the mid-nineteenth century survive in Iceland, and from that point pre-fabricated buildings, which can be easily moved, became widespread, there is not the same accumulation of historic buildings as found in the rest of Europe. Furthermore, as Iceland has not long completed its initial phase of industrialisation and development of modern infrastructure, a process completed in Britain over a century ago, it has not yet developed the same culture of historic and natural conservation. Nationalism remains a dominant ideological force, as can be seen through attitudes to whaling, which would greatly affect the conservation of the mostly foreign-built whaling stations. Iceland, whilst very much a European culture, therefore has much more in

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43 Discussed in (Vermeulen and van den Akker 2010).
44 For a further discussion of the roles of whaling and nationalism in Icelandic identity see Brydon (1996) and Einarsson (1996).
common in these respects with other former colonies around the world than with Britain or continental Europe. The radical difference of this cultural context to that in which material conservation was conceived, within a relatively short distance, questions the validity of international theories of conservation, and suggests that for experiential conservation, where a much greater degree of subjectivity is concerned, each context should instead generate its own approaches.

This dissertation has, then, been partially successful, in that, whilst the themes do succeed in mapping out approaches to experiential conservation, they also highlight how much remains to be done: if each context and project does require the development of new theoretical approaches then there can be no meaningful standardised responses of any kind. Instead a ‘proto-method’ would be needed, a method of creating methods, which would enable those working on conservation projects to incorporate experiential approaches into mainstream practice. Developing this proto-method would need to be a multi-disciplinary effort, drawing on psychology, the arts, and anthropology amongst others, to identify and analyse the core attributes of the emotional experience of conserved sites. This would be in contrast to the Romantic, dogmatic ideologies of early material conservation figures like William Morris and John Ruskin, and would facilitate a deeper relationship between human beings and the historic environment.
Bibliography


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