The relations between archaeology and anthropology have been debated from time to time over the years (e.g., Burnham and Kingsbury 1979; Garrow and Yarrow 2010; Gosden 1999; Gramsch 2000; Orme 1981). There has been both antagonism and repeated calls for collaboration and theoretical exchange between the two brothers in arms. From an outside point of view, the sometimes heated debate might seem curious since both fields share a similar goal: to understand human diversity and the ways in which people live and interact in different worlds. Yarrow (2010) and Lucas (2010) have recently argued that the perception of fields of anthropology and archaeology has always centered on a lack in archaeology—the absent subject—which has created an asymmetry that is difficult to bridge. Indeed, working only with things and traces of action (archaeology) is not the same as working with things and people (anthropology). However, this distinction is based upon an ontology in which people and the material world are perceived as belonging to separate spheres (culture and nature). In recent years, we have witnessed the emergence of neomaterialism in the humanist and social sciences, which suggests a redistribution of action from the realm of the human to the material world. It is, however, not simply a question of associating agency with things and objects, but also a displacement of the human as a logical point of departure (anthropocentrism) to perceive the human and the nonhuman as ontologically inseparable (Webmoor 2007; Witmore 2007:546). A question that arises is whether such a nonanthropocentric perspective that focuses more on the material world might
marginalize the importance of interviews and observing social practice typical of traditional anthropological fieldwork. Archaeology is also affected by such a turn of perspective because it includes a different view of the material as not only a product of culture but rather as a co-creator of culture. Indeed, such a displacement of the human as a natural and given point of departure certainly has ramifications for both anthropology and archaeology. The question is, how far-reaching will the consequences of such a shift be? Will it bring anthropology and archaeology closer together, perhaps even conflating them, or will the two disciplines diverge even further? In either case, it will affect the way we study human societies, whether they are contemporary or in the past. It this chapter I explore this varied and heterogeneous body of material-oriented research and point out certain areas where the relations between archaeology and anthropology may be affected.

ARCHAEOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY: A HISTORY OF ENTANGLED RELATIONS

In a broad sense the “absent subject” has always made the relation between archaeology and anthropology an uneven affair. It has commonly been argued that the lack of informants and the ability to observe a process firsthand render archaeology mere guesswork or simply a reflection of contemporary ideas (e.g., Martin 2013:1; Piccini and Holtorf 2009). This conceptual difference in the nature and quality of data is one reason for creating a divide between anthropology and archaeology. It has resulted in a theoretical trade deficit between the two disciplines, since the main flux of ideas has traditionally been unidirectional (Garrow and Yarrow 2010:1). In addition, the typical theoretical time-lag between the two has hindered archaeology, since models, terminology, research areas, and theory have often been reified and developed within anthropology according to its aims and object of study (people) before finding their way into archaeology. This uneven relationship has resulted in debates and discussions that have been less than fruitful or constructive.

One especially infected issue is the debate concerning the (mis)use of analogic inference in archaeology (Fahlander 2004, 2008). The basic idea of analogies is that if two objects are similar in some respects they may be similar in other areas too. Thus, can properties of a well-known object be assumed to be present in a similar but lesser-known object? Analogical inference is often unproblematic in, for example, physics, but works less well when it is applied to cultural products. A lot of effort has been put down over the years by archaeologists to defend the use of anthropological analogies and ethnoarchaeological studies. Some have tried to distinguish “bad” from “good” analogies (Hodder 1982; Orme 1981), or tried to enhance their scientific value (e.g., David and Cramer 2001:45; Roux 2007), while
others simply argue that analogies are inevitable whether we like it or not (Kaliff and Østigård 2004:82–84). Cross-cultural generalizations over time and space may work in strict evolutionary frameworks, but are less well-suited to the contextual approaches advocated by interpretative archaeologies. Social practice and ways of life seldom fit simple models and can seldom be regarded as comparable objects. Social life is far too complex and normally in continuous state of hybridity which makes it unfit to be submitted to the same laws as physical objects (Fahlander 2007). To make a simple piecemeal analogy concerning the use and purpose of a stone axe is not the same as making analogies about cosmology or ideology. Although we may indulge simple analogies, the higher we climb on Hawke’s ladder of inference, the more meaningless or misleading analogical inferences tend to be.

One example of such a misplaced analogy is Ian Hodder’s recent book on Çatal Hüyük, The Leopard’s Tale (2006). He opens by arguing for the need of anthropological analogies in order to “make sense of the strangeness and ‘otherness’ of our deep-time destination” (Hodder 2006:32). As a comparison he departs from Raymond Firth’s (1936) study of the small and remote island of Tikopia as a main illustration of a “similar type of small-scale society.” From this base assumption Hodder reasons that the social structure in Çatal Hüyük was centered around kinship and descent, a general anthropological cliché with little support in the excavated data. On this basis, he then concludes that: “People were probably closely allied to family, lineage and to the materiality of the house. Their lifecycles and those of the houses were closely tied. Identity was closely tied to ancestors and to social memory” (Hodder 2006:108, 228). The latter could probably be said of any small-scale society living in houses.

It must be tiresome for a modern anthropologist to read archaeological texts that neglect the latest 50 or 60 years of research and refer only to colonial ethnographies. In this particular case, Firth has retracted many of his early theses about Tikopia in a later book and the island has also been subject to a wide range of discussion over the years (Firth 1959). The temptation to seek support in ethnographical accounts is perhaps understandable since many of the early texts are structured as narratives that paint a vivid image of the culture in question. Contemporary anthropology is much more complex and does not offer such simple narratives, which consequently make them difficult to use as a basis for analogies in archaeological research. Fortunately blunt analogies are becoming less frequent in archaeology. This is probably due to a greater recognition of the complexity of culture, but also because the gap between us and them, as well as that between the modern and the premodern, is no longer considered as a simple dichotomy. Anthropology today is less about doing fieldwork in a remote corner of the world and more about understanding the human social and ethnic relations that are less attached to evolutionary or strict cultural boundaries (e.g., Goslinga 2012; Hastrup 2013; MacClancy 2002).
A similar trend is also apparent in archaeology. Instead of turning solely to studies of “the Other,” the inspiration for interpretations in archaeology now comes from a wider range of sources, such as philosophy, sociology, cultural studies, and even popular culture (Garrow and Shove 2007, Gosden 2010:110, Martin 2013:1). This trend is especially notable in the growing interest in the historical and contemporary past, which blurs the borders between archaeology, anthropology, and ethnology (e.g., González-Ruibal 2008; Olsen 2013). Superficially, the increased use of a wider range of social theory may be perceived as simply a different type of analogy, but that is only true to some extent. For example, Anthony Giddens’s (1986) structuration theory or the actor-network theory of Bruno Latour (2005) concern general epistemological aspects of social practice, providing a broad model of how we can understand social life. Of course, one should recall that these theories were developed with industrialized societies in mind, and such frameworks may not be directly applicable when analyzing small-scale societies of the past (Fahlander 2001:20; Hicks 2010:96). However, as already hinted, this uneven relationship between anthropology and archaeology—wherein theories based on participant observation and informants (people and things) are regarded better than studies based on only things—may be altered when applying a nonanthropocentric perspective. In such an ontology, the question of the absent subject in archaeology may become redundant and so also the need for stereotyped analogies and cross-cultural generalizations. It is thus worth taking a deeper look into the epistemology and ontology of neomaterialist thought to evaluate its implications for how to work with a conflated notion of human and nonhuman in the past as well as in the present. Further on I discuss how these perspectives have been appropriated and understood in archaeology and anthropology, respectively.

BETWEEN ANTHROPOCENTRISM AND POSTHUMANISM
After a period characterized by social constructionist and various kinds of poststructural-influenced themes that focus on discourse, there seems to be a saturation of studies emphasizing never-ending plurality and floating meanings in the social sciences. The recent interest in the material with its focus on solid matters seems perfectly suited to fill the need for theoretical revival (e.g. Carlile et al. 2013; Hekman 2010). It is, however, not a homogeneous field of research, which is apparent from the varied terminology (e.g., symmetrical perspectives, material turn, ontological turn, neomaterialism, object-oriented ontology, or posthumanism). Materiality-oriented studies rather consist of more or less radical standpoints ranging from a “sociology of things” that still promotes a humanist outlook on the social, via symmetrical perspectives, to nonanthropocentric and posthumanist standpoints (figure 3.1). They
all share an interest in the material but are at certain points incompatible in terms of epistemology and ontology. The critical point is how much they diverge from an anthropocentric standpoint toward a nonanthropocentric stance.

The field of consumption and material culture studies, for instance, is generally anthropocentric. Here the material (generally things and objects) is discussed mainly as a reflection of social structures and of ideologies (see, e.g., Hicks 2010 with references). Although things and materials are emphasized, studied, and promoted in these approaches, material culture studies are still mainly concerned with the discourse about things from a human point of view (Fahlander 2008).

Recently, however, this interest in the socialness of things has developed into a more radical opposition to anthropocentric views of the world. Such neomaterialist, or posthumanist, approaches share a similar interest in materialities, but also involve a critique against the hegemony of discourse in social constructionism. The main source of inspiration for such nonanthropocentric approaches is found in actor-network theory (ANT), which has gradually gained increasing acceptance in the social sciences in recent decades (e.g., Callon and Law 1995; Latour 1990, 2005). ANT is not a program or method with distinct guidelines, but more of a loosely defined set of tools for understanding how the socialness of things works. It shares some of the concerns of consumption and material culture studies but is a more ambitious framework. Latour performs a classic deconstruction of our theories and concepts about society and social life and then reassembles the pieces in the form of actor networks. Latour’s deconstruction is basically a conflating and flattening of dichotomies such as nature-culture, micro-macro, and human-material. He is able to do this by displacing the focus from “social forces” on the one hand, and social actors on the other, by instead focusing on their relations as actor networks. ANT is thus a radical reconceptualization of the world as consisting of networks of human and material relations.

People and things, Latour (2005:76) argues, are not two different categories that can be epistemologically separated. Things and objects are not simply silent bystanders but are actants—integrated parts in social process. Latour points at a range of situations in which things replaces people—acting in their place, so to speak. For instance, barbed wire can replace a shepherd and a dog, speed bumps
make drivers slow down their cars, and so on (Latour 1990; 2005:77). This recognition of a certain socialness of things (material agency) has led to a somewhat tedious debate in the social sciences on whether the concept of agency is also applicable to nonhuman objects. For instance, in the examples above, the things are designed to work in particular ways and they can hardly be argued to act by themselves. Agency is, however, a complex concept that does not necessarily need to involve the kind of intentionality we generally ascribe to people. The idea of agential power of materialities in ANT should not be understood in terms of intentionality as in the phenomenological tradition, but in terms of relations (Callon and Law 1995:485; cf. Barad 2003:817). Things do not have intrinsic properties or a priori identities: neither are they social in themselves (Latour 2005:159). Instead it is their mutual relations to other actors (human and nonhuman) that define them.

In a similar sense as Michel Foucault’s (1977) argument that power is not a thing that is possessed, but something that is exercised, agency is considered an imminent, relational aspect, rather than a quality of individuals and certain objects. For example, in the case when a driver slows down the car when facing a speed bump, Latour argues that the action is instigated because the driver, the car, and the speed bump form a temporary relation of which all are directly involved in the action taken by the driver. That people engage with things is far from a novel insight, but the nonanthropocentric element in ANT makes it something quite different from the way it is employed in anthropology and archaeology. As Watts (2013:13) recently has summarized the difference: “Now, quite apart from a world populated by knowing subjects (humans) and objects to be known (everything else), we have worlds filled with humans and/or non-humans and defined by the emergence and intersection of particular relationships.”

A relational, material-oriented perspective is by no means unique to ANT; there are a number of associated strands of thought that in different ways have sought to include “the material” in various epistemological frameworks. Most notable are the material-semiotic of Donna Haraway (1991, 2008), the agential realism of Karen Barad (2003, 2007), the praxography of Annemarie Mol (2002), and the object-oriented ontology (OOO) perpetuated by Graham Harman (2002, 2009) and Levi Bryant (2011). There is no room here to go into depth in the details of these rather complex strands of thought, but suffice it to say that they all are occupied with epistemological and ontological questions similar to those addressed by ANT. This emphasis on the nonhuman, the rejection of social constructionism in favor of a nonanthropocentric ontology, is sometimes termed posthumanist. Indeed, in contrast to material culture studies a nonanthropocentric perspective not simply a matter of “add materialities and stir” but implies a radically different view of the social. It is not only a material turn, but also an ontological one. As Levi Bryant puts
it: “Humans are *among* beings and are beings among being, they aren’t at the center of being, nor are they the necessary condition for being” (Bryant 2011:130). If we take the posthumanist arguments seriously, it may radically redefine the relations between anthropology and archaeology and the way we understand the world.

**AMONG THINGS AND PEOPLE: NEOMATERIALISM IN ARCHAEOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY**

Although it is problematic to make a clear distinction between archaeology and anthropology, it can roughly be boiled down to a simple difference: anthropology primarily studies people and secondarily their material culture in order to understand a particular culture, while archaeologists study primarily material culture in order to understand people and their cultures. Gavin Lucas (2010:31) has illustrated this schematically in a simple formula (bracketed terms denote empirical absence):

- **Ethnographer:**
  - People—Things → (Culture/Society)

- **Archaeologist:**
  - Things—(People) → (Culture/Society)

From a neomaterialist perspective, however, these differences are altered. Research will not necessarily start with—or end with—people, but with a mixture of available information regardless if it is human or nonhuman. This is not to say that that neomaterialist archaeology and anthropology become the same; people will certainly still be an important factor, save that the point of perspective can be more or less symmetrical/anthropocentric. In theory, however, a neomaterialist anthropology/archaeology may schematically be illustrated like this:

- **Neomaterialist anthropology/archaeology:**
  - Actants → (Relations/networks)

Defining the goals of archaeology and anthropology to understand human engagement with material things also makes apparent the fact that these fields share this goal with other disciplines such as history, cultural studies, ethnology, geography, sociology, music, and philosophy (Gosden 2010:110; cf. Hicks 2010). Such a common interest in the material certainly would encourage broader discussion and cross-disciplinary exchange. However, the neomaterial turn is not only about emphasizing things but also involves a conceptual, ontological shift from an anthropocentric to a posthumanist perspective. The heterogeneity of neomaterial theories and the confusion about the meaning of terminology (materiality, agency, relations, etc.), makes it a difficult subject to evaluate. In the following I briefly discuss how
neomaterialist perspectives have been understood and employed in archaeology and anthropology, respectively. In doing so, I do not pretend to provide a comprehensive overview but rather a somewhat archaeologically biased reflection about how neomaterialism has been received and appropriated in analyses of the past and the present.

NEOMATERIALIST ARCHAEOLOGIES

There are few if any conventional ANT studies in archaeology—at least not that explicitly concern past worlds (but see e.g., Knappett 2008). That is hardly surprising since ANT in principle is an ethnography—albeit of modern society (e.g., Latour 1993:101; 2013). The main aim is to study a process and charter the ways in which people and things interact by conducting interviews, passing out questionnaires, taking notes and pictures, shooting films, and so on. The result is a “mere description” of what happens, which later can be studied and interpreted (Latour 2005:123, 128, 137). ANT is thus somewhat difficult to apply from an archaeological point of view since there is no immediate interaction to study and describe. However, as pointed out earlier, a neomaterialist perspective is not necessarily about ANT. The main issue is rather the shifting view on the role of people and things in social processes from a relational perspective.

Given the absence of people to interview and observe, material objects have always been important in archaeology. But as Olsen (2010) and others have noted, theories about the material have for some time been curiously underdeveloped in comparison to other strands of thought. Although the impact of neomaterialism in archaeology so far is still marginal, a number of scholars have nonetheless argued that the new focus on the material comprises the next big turn in archaeological theory, on a similar scale as the shift from processual to post-processual archaeology during the 1980s (Olsen 2010; Webmoor 2007). There is, however, little consensus in archaeology of what this shift is actually about, and there is no generally accepted theoretical or methodological application. Typically, the archaeological understanding of neomaterialism is a mixture of material cultural studies, ANT, and a traditional antiquarian view of artifacts as cultural products.

Many archaeologists—curiously those who once were particularly keen on emphasizing symbolism and the context of meaning (e.g., Hodder 2012; Olsen 2010; Tilley 2004)—have been quick to encompass the new turn to things. Post-processual archaeology is, however, anthropocentric in its very core and not really compatible with posthumanist perspectives. The things and objects in archaeology are mainly social from a human point of view, while posthumanist perspectives do not necessarily draw any distinctions between natural matter and that which has
been modified by humans. The term *materiality* covers most kinds of matter, including artifacts, but also less tangible “natural” matter that potentially can have social effects (Fahlander 2008:136; Franklin 2008; cf. Carlile et al. 2013:8). This confusion is apparent in a recent discussion about materiality in the journal *Archaeological Dialogues*. In his keynote text, Tim Ingold (2007a) fails to see the new in the turn to materiality simply because his archaeological counterparts also have missed the point. Ingold did not realize that the term *materiality* signifies a social dimension of matter and the archaeologists still confused the term *materialities* with *material culture* (Fahlander 2008:129–131). A similar misconception is also characteristic of debates regarding symmetry and whether things have agency or not (Hicks 2010:76; Knappett and Malafouris 2008; Latour 2005:76).

Besides a general interest and desire to appropriate and incorporate neomaterialist perspectives in the post-processual paradigm, there is also a generation of archaeologists who seek to break new ground (Alberti et al. 2013; Back Danielsson et al. 2012; Watts 2013). Pollard (2005), for example, has objected to how the material in archaeology always seems to represent something else, in which the social contents of the material have been conceived “as signs and symbols, carrying and projecting message and meaning.” Instead it is argued that the material must not primarily be viewed in terms of symbols and meaning and vehicles for human communication, but also be allowed to interfere with and be integrated elements/participants in social processes. Jones (2004:330) summarizes the difference as follows: “Artefacts are no longer just clues to be decoded, which will enable us to reconstruct past human behaviour: instead, artefacts are integral components of the past, which were shaped by, and in turn helped to shape, human behavior.”

In sum, some ideas of neomaterialism are quite well integrated in archaeology—at least in contemporary Anglo-Saxon theoretical quarters. It is noteworthy that the main sources of inspiration are generally taken from primary sources (e.g., Latour, Barad, and Deleuze). Also a number of anthropologists, notably Alfred Gell, Marilyn Strathern, and Tim Ingold, are frequently discussed and cited, but not in terms of analogies referring to particular case studies. Perhaps the neomaterialist focus on the importance of materialities actually has encouraged a greater faith in archaeological material as a source for interpretation? The more controversial and nonanthropocentric aspects of posthumanist ontology have, however, so far only rarely been applied to actual case studies. To view humans and nonhumans as relationally constituted may thus not (yet) replace contextual perspectives in archaeology, but the significant increase in the number of neomaterialist-inspired studies the recent years is indeed promising (e.g., Alberti et al. 2013; Back Danielsson et al. 2012; Martin 2013; Watts 2013).
NEOMATERIALIST ANTHROPOLOGIES

In anthropology the discussions follow a similar path as in the archaeological debate. ANT is not frequently employed in anthropology either. A few scholars express optimism about an anthropological application (e.g., Oppenheim 2007; Pyyhtinen and Tamminen 2011), while others are more critical (e.g., Huen 2009). Marilyn Strathern, for instance, criticized the idea of actor networks by pointing out how these often can be cut by kinship (1996). Alfred Gell’s (1992, 1998) concept of secondary agency shares certain aspects with ANT although a connection is never directly cited. In his study of the Kula trade, he argues that the decoration on the canoes works as semiconscious mind-control, enchanting the beholder. Because powerful “artists” made the elaborate carvings on the canoes it is believed some of their power is stored in the artwork, thus prolonging their intentions and agency (Gell 1992:44). Gell’s agency of things is thus not equivalent to human intentional agency, but rather a way of understanding how people can use materialities in other more intricate ways than by function or as symbols. Gell’s exploration of the socialness of art and objects is thus more in line with material culture studies than a strict nonanthropocentric approach per se. Although he recognizes a certain material agency by focusing on what the art and materialities do rather than what they mean, it is nonetheless a representational way of thinking (Hicks 2010:76).

Relational aspects are also well integrated in many strands of anthropology, especially due to Marilyn Strathern’s (1996) seminal work in Melanesia on distributed personhood and the materiality of the gift (Henare, Holbraad, and Wastell 2007:19). Also Tim Ingold has in a series of texts promoted a symbiotic relation between the human and the nonhuman. Ingold has repeatedly criticized ANT (Ingold 2008), the idea of material agency (Ingold 2007b), and material relations (Ingold 2013). For Ingold it is the human condition that sets the frames for relational “meshworks”; the weave of interwoven lines of growth and movement we all spin in everyday life that involves different relationships with other people, animals, and the material world (Ingold 2007a:35). Even though he acknowledges a certain importance of materialities in social life, Ingold stresses “things in life” rather than “life in things.” Hence, in Ingold’s epistemology agency is not the same relational issue as in ANT; things may help and facilitate action, but to Ingold agency is a human property imparted by bodily skill, movement, and perception.

A recognition that materialities comprise a social dimension is thus well represented in anthropology (see also, e.g., Miller 2005; Hicks 2010). Recently, however, a number of cultural anthropologists have begun to explore less-anthropocentric perspectives. One example is found in the collection of texts Thinking Through
Things (Henare, Holbraad, and Wastell 2007). In the introduction (Henare, Holbraad, and Wastell 2007:1), the editors discuss the possible impact on anthropology: “What would an artefact-oriented anthropology look like if it were not about material culture? And could such a project develop, not as a new sub-genre within the discipline, but as a means of reconfiguring anthropology’s analytic methods more generally?”

For Henare et al., the new look at things does indeed emphasize their presence and importance. The main question here circles around perspectivism, how to understand the role of materialities in other ontologies (Alberti and Bray 2009; Ladwig 2012; Viveiros de Castro 2004). Thinking through things is thus not predominantly a question of how objects act back or may have agency; it is more about developing radically different ways of understanding the Other. It is argued that ethnographers need to focus more on what objects do in different contexts rather than what locals think the objects can do or what powers and meanings are ascribed to the objects (Palecek and Risjord 2013:8). It is not exactly clear how anthropologists can manage to sidestep their “present subjects” (the people), but according to Holbraad (2010:184) and others, a first challenge is to change our own views, adapting to other “foreign” ways of thinking through things. A dichotomy of us and the Other is thus still maintained and perspectivism—although recognizing that reality can be understood in multiple ways—risks resulting in a colonial type of exoticism when emphasizing animist aspects of the material in small-scale societies (Palecek and Risjord 2013; Ramos 2012:490).

Like archaeology, anthropology also is sensible to the importance of materiality and relationality, especially concerning fractal human identities (Oppenheim 2007:485). The interest in perspectivism in certain strands of ontological anthropology indeed shares some aspects with posthumanist theories, although not exactly the same (Latour 2005:48; Mol 2002). As in the case of archaeology, an anthropocentric perspective is still apparent among those who emphasize the social dimensions of the material. The differences in how neomaterialist though has been implemented in anthropology and archaeology respectively thus still seem to center around the present subject. To abandon people in anthropology is certainly not to be expected or even called for. But several recent books (e.g., Henare, Holbraad, and Wastell 2007; Watts 2013) indicate a greater interest in the different roles that materialities may have in social structuration, and they have a potential to provide a common ground with similar research in archaeology. The volume edited by Watts (2013) is especially promising in the way in which archaeological, historical, and anthropological studies work in concert due to the common theme of relationality and materiality.
CONCLUSIONS

The neomaterialist turn in the social sciences has not gone unnoticed in archaeology or anthropology. However, since there is little agreement on what this new turn to things actually is about, it is not surprising that some aspects are understood differently. Notwithstanding, it is the relationship between people and things that is, in relative terms, the most frequently debated issue. It is a complex question that ranges from a basic recognition that things are important in social events to nonanthropocentric, posthuman standpoints proclaiming an ontologically different way to think about the human and the nonhuman. A posthuman perspective should not, however, be assumed to totally dismiss human agency. But as several archaeologists and anthropologists have shown, a slight displacement in perspective, allowing the material world greater importance, can make both the past and the present more comprehensible.

The relational ontology that is associated with posthuman and neomaterialist perspectives is also reasonably well represented in both anthropology and archaeology. So far, relational approaches are, by and large, applied on a general (cultural) level not unlike poststructural studies of ideology and discourse, but a few have also explored more particular cases in which people and things interact. However, relationality in neomaterialist thought not only conflates the distinction between people and things, but also nature and culture, and differences in scale (micro-macro, local-global). These aspects are so far less applied in archaeology and anthropology, but could potentially be quite helpful whether one works with variances over time (archaeology) or in space (anthropology).

Concerning the possible future impact for the relations between archaeology and anthropology, it is difficult to foresee what a full-fledged posthumanist archaeology or anthropology would look like. The theoretical movement is still in a formative phase. At present there seems to be a difference in how archaeology and anthropology perceive the proclaimed ontological turn. In both cases it is about overcoming Cartesian dualisms and the focus of attention in both disciplines is set on the material: the things and the objects. In archaeology, this is understood in terms of symmetry between people and things, emphasizing material agency. In anthropology, the main point seems to revolve on perspectivism—that is, understanding the perceived reality of the Other. So far, archaeologists seem more enthusiastic about embracing a nonanthropocentric standpoint than do anthropologists. It could be argued that anthropology is somewhat hampered by a present subject that obscures material relations while archaeology might actually benefit from lacking interfering subjects. However, if a posthumanist archaeology of material relations is going to be of interest for anthropologists, it probably needs to be more specific and prove its usefulness. Archaeologists need to start employing the new tools, taking the ontological turn
seriously, and showing how materialities (human and nonhuman, modified or natural) actually can contribute to interpretations without filling the gap of the absent subject with anthropological analogies. Anthropology, in turn, could perhaps, at least as an experiment, attempt to bypass the present subject and focus a little more on the relations between people and things in a more symmetrical manner. So far, neomaterialist approaches are yet marginal in both anthropology and archaeology and it is uncertain in which way and extent such research will develop. But either way, the new focus on the material, as seen in the edited volumes of Henare, Holbraad, and Wastell (2007) and Watts (2013), seems indeed to have opened up a common field of transgressing possibilities between anthropology and archaeology.

NOTE

1. Archaeology and anthropology are not really two easily distinguishable fields of research. Even though they are considered different disciplines in parts of Europe (archaeology under humanities and anthropology under social sciences), there may be more in common between different subfields such as contemporary archaeologies and ethnology, or ethnoarchaeology and cultural anthropology. A distinction is nonetheless kept here for convenience, mainly to distinguish research departing from material traces in the past and research focusing on people and things in the present.

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These “Thin Partitions”

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