Im umfangreichsten Beitrag führt George Nash die Leserschaft weiter Richtung Gegenwart und stellt Ergebnisse zum englischen Ort Rothwell vor, in dem nach- / mittelalterliche Bebauung archäologisch dokumentiert wurde, bevor sie aus Gründen der Stadtentwicklung abgerissen wurde. Dass vielfach etwa „Backstein, Stein und Bauholz" wiederverwendet wurden, mag vielleicht banal erscheinen, doch ist die Studie mit ihrer Systematik und ihren Detailbeobachtungen definitiv von großem Wert.

Insgesamt handelt es sich bei dem besprochenen Werk um eine trotz der Anmerkungen des Rez. gelungene und ansprechend gestaltete Arbeit. Ein generelles Fazit zu ziehen fällt angesichts der Unterschiedlichkeit der vorgestellten Befunde und gewählten Perspektiven schwer. Der besondere Wert der Arbeit liegt aber eben darin, räumlich wie zeitlich ein breites Spektrum an Beispielen abzudecken und unterschiedlichste Interpretationsansätze aufzuzeigen, was neuartig und ausgesprochen anregend für weitere Forschungen ist.

Für wertvolle Hinweise danke ich Annemarie Catania.

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Philipp W. Stockhammer / Hans Peter Hahn (eds), Lost in Things. Fragen an die Welt des Materiellen. Tübinger Archäologische Taschenbücher volume 12. Waxmann Verlag GmbH, Münster 2015. € 27.90. ISBN 978-3-8309-3175-1. 212 pages, 11 figures.

The series "Tübinger Archäologische Taschenbücher" is one of the most interesting German-language publication series for the debate of archaeological theory. With the twelfth volume, Philipp Stockhammer and Hans Peter Hahn have released an anthology that focuses on material culture – a core theme of the archaeological disciplines. Knowing this, Hahn's first sentence in his thematic introduction (p. 9) comes as a surprise: "In many concepts, Material Culture is overestimated". With this statement, he appears to be fundamentally opposed to the generally accepted archaeological credo and endeavour to extract all sorts of comprehensible meaning from the material record.

The conference (Frankfurt University 2013) and the resulting anthology were aimed at integrating current and innovative approaches from archaeology and cultural anthropology with the analysis of material culture and human-thing relationships. The eleven articles show a very broad thematical range, but only three can be described as archaeological in the narrower sense (those by Stockhammer, Keßeler, and Bagley – see below). The book brings together some of the current pacemakers in the discourse on materiality in archaeology and beyond, including the two editors and authors such as Bjørnar Olsen and Martin Holbraad. With this foreshadowing, it promises a challenging read.

In his introduction, Hans Peter Hahn attempts to re-adjust our perspective on material culture. He follows up with the reason why, in his opinion, material culture is overestimated in current scholarly debate. As his arguments are only touched upon, it is advisable to read his introduction to another anthology (H. P. Hahn, Der Eigensinn der Dinge – Einleitung. In: Id. [ed.], Vom Eigensinn der Dinge. Für eine neue Perspektive auf die Welt des Materiellen [Berlin 2015] 9–56). In Hahn's view, the overestimation of material culture results from differences in the scientific and everyday practical view on things. While the scientific approach is rooted in the assumption of the

importance of things for their users, things usually do not have the same significance for us in everyday life. In our daily routines, we are surrounded by things and they are present, usually without really being perceived. Only when they fail in their service or their disappearance is noted or perceived, they intrude into our consciousness. Things have their obstinacy *(Eigensinn)* – a concept that Hahn introduced earlier (H. P. Hahn, Vom Eigensinn der Dinge. Bayer. Jahrb. Volkskde. 2013, 13–22) – and can elude their intended use. The prevalent concepts for the approach of material culture are based on the assumption of the stability of things. Hahn challenges this axiom of stability by highlighting the multiple changes that come with using things: not only do they break, but they can change their meaning and properties depending on the context – things are in limbo, sometimes they are close to us, and sometimes they are far away. Hahn sees the challenge for cultural studies in considering these changes of status. Archaeology is confronted with a more constricted challenge when considering the aspect of limbo and change, as the archaeological record presents a sort of freeze-frame. The fluid materiality demands a differentiated contextual perspective. It will be interesting to see in future discussions to what extent the focus of scientific consideration, which seeks for significance, can also perceive the potential insignificance of objects.

Also, Philipp Stockhammer in his programmatic contribution focuses on the dynamics of things (pp. 25–40). They are erroneously conceived as stable and static, which is why we approach the material world with inadequate concepts. In his theoretical reflection, he concentrates on two essential features of things: their effectancy and their changeability. His concept of effectancy is articulated against the concept of agency on the basis of the actor-network theory (ANT), in which things are given the ability to act. More helpful than to speak flatly of action is Max Weber's distinction between intentional action and behaviour which is not intentional. Already Weber spoke of the behaviour of the artefacts, and Stockhammer follows him up here by saying that things have the ability to move us to action and are therefore themselves not active but cause action and thus have effectancy. Gustav Roßler, the German translator of Latour's "Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory", already pointed out the meaning of effectancy in the semantic field of agency (B. Latour, Eine neue Soziologie für eine neue Gesellschaft. Einführung in die Akteur-Netzwerk-Theorie [Frankfurt a. M. 2010] 79 footnote 1). According to Stockhammer, the effectancy of things results from their three forms of "changeability": 1. Due to changes in perception, things can be ascribed with new meanings and new functions and thus trigger new actions. 2. Decomposition changes the material substance of objects and thus their properties and meaning. 3. Objects change through practical use. It remains unclear why the effectancy of things can only be understood through these forms of changeability. It is certainly acceptable to look at the dynamic nature of material, but this is a long-term perspective; users usually face the object in a specific situation as stable. Contrary to Stockhammer, the static mode of things is not a general illusion but rather a snapshot. The exclusive focus on changing objects diminishes a powerful character of human-thing relationship: the presence of things. The ANT literature is full of examples that show how the presence of things brings people to action. This is far more likely to shape the human-thing relationship than the dynamic aspects that Stockhammer argues for.

The subsequent contributions are all based on a concrete case study, though they are also programmatic. Jens Soentgen's article (pp. 41–63) deals with *Buna*, a synthetic rubber produced by IG Farben and its successors in Germany. The focus is not on the thing-aspect of materiality but on stuff: the chemical substance that became a political substance for Germany in the 20th century. Soentgen describes the ideological signification of synthetic rubber in the Third Reich and its two successor states. Rubber was a strategic material for many industries, and its synthetic production promised economic self-sufficiency. As a clean, technical solution, it was ideologised as a morally superior product to natural rubber derived from colonial exploitation and thus as civilising – despite the production of *Buna* in Auschwitz. While *Buna* was seen as a political substance in the

GDR reception, the FRG reception mantled its political significance and focused exclusively on technical performance. With his case study, Soentgen shows the importance of substance, which is usually invisible in the perspective of material culture. Substances are not just a means of production but also carriers of specific meanings themselves that shape our practice with them.

Martin Holbraad also deals with a substance (pp. 65–80): the powder of Cuban 'oracle masters' used in the Ifá cult. This powder plays a central role in ritual divination, and outside of this practice, it has no meaning and no functional capacity – it only has power as part of the cult. This is not a matter of contextual signification, but in the understanding of the 'oracle master', the powder transforms and becomes power. According to Holbraad, modern Western thinking cannot do justice to the powder. The categorial distinction of things and concepts does not allow for an understanding of this transformation and the beliefs of the 'oracle masters'. Holbraad aims at an analytical method of overcoming the concept-thing dichotomy and liberating things from any *a priori* definitions. The relationship of *concept vs. thing* becomes a *concept = thing*. Things do not represent something, they are. Meaning is no longer associated with the concept to understand the thing but is the thing itself. This approach, according to Holbraad, allows us to understand the affordance of things and their ability to generate conceptual transformations.

A similar approach is pursued by Luděk Brož (pp. 81–103). His starting point is the debris falling down over the Altai after rockets launched in Baikonur, Kazakhstan. Mainly due to their contamination with the harmful fuel, these parts are classified by the local population as dangerous. They are on the same level as lethal evil spirits, which are released by archaeological excavations and contaminate archaeological finds. The official response negates the health threat of the chemical substance and dismisses the spirit belief as erroneous. Both are seen as an expression of an anti-modern worldview. The chemical substance, like the spirits, thus does not stand for itself but represents something else. According to Brož, there is an ontological asymmetry here. In the sense of Holbraad, it is the above-described relationship of *concept vs. thing*. A symmetric, non-representational approach requires putting substance or belief at the centre of analysis. Brož shows the different ontology of both phenomena on an empirical basis without using the ontological incomparability as a starting point of the analysis.

Using the example of abandoned herring factories in Iceland, Þóra Pétursdóttir discusses the materiality of cultural heritage (pp. 105–127). She diagnoses a "lust for ruins" *(Ruinenlust)*, which is in contradiction to the current concepts of cultural heritage policy. While the "lust for ruins" or "ruin romanticism" is linked to decline, disappearance, and oblivion, heritage practices try to stop these processes and bring the object into a state of standstill. At the core of cultural heritage policy is not the monument in its materiality but the immaterial value that is associated with past remains. Here, we again encounter the aspect of incapacitation of the object, which does not stand for itself but represents something else. Cultural heritage policies tend to see preservation and maintenance as presuppositions of remembering and as the key to raise awareness of historical roots and identity. Pétursdóttir's counterproposal to a thing-oriented conception of cultural heritage aims to consider the materiality and inherent dynamics of the change of cultural remains. But here, it becomes vague and puzzling: she speaks of material remembrance, which is an involuntary and spontaneous remembrance; in a kind of self-excavation, decay makes it possible to expose layers of different memories. While current cultural heritage concepts aim at the level of group and society, Pétursdóttir focuses on the individual remembering which is rooted in the individual biography and personal experience. The constructive aspect of memory (cf. Maurice Halbwachs and Peter Connerton) is ignored. In this perspective, individuals integrate their perception of cultural remains into a coherent image of the self and thus create the past – ruins become signs of an individually experienced past. Pétursdóttir's thing-oriented approach does not escape

representationalism, but rather by incorporating decay, the dynamic side of history becomes tangible in personal experience.

Arnica Keßeler presents an abrupt change of subject (pp. 129–146). Things, such as grave goods, play a central role in the analysis of gender concepts in archaeology. Keßeler highlights the weaknesses of this approach and rightly emphasises that modern gender concepts are generally projected onto the society to be examined. She comes to the negative conclusion that contrary to the common practice of inferring the presence or absence of things to a particular gender, things themselves cannot refer to gender. In the first place, one would like to contradict this shortening: In social practice, things become signs, which can certainly refer to one gender. But Keßeler rightly emphasises that allocations of gender only emerge in the context of a specific practice. However, this context is mostly unknown to us, and thing-related gender concepts may change over time. Since things intrinsically have no gender, the temporal specificity of gender-specific concepts should be given more focus. She concludes that objects cannot be reduced to their primary function and that there are not just two kinds of gender; here, one will not want to disagree.

Decaying houses and changing contexts are the subjects of Alesya Krit's contribution (pp. 147–161). She deals with the houses in south-eastern Spain which were abandoned by their inhabitants due to political and economic upheavals and eke out an existence as ruin. These houses have now been bought and renovated by British immigrants, who usually want to start a new chapter in the second half of their life. For the native population, the houses have lost value, but for the new residents, it is particularly the ruinous, fragmented state of the houses that opens up new leeways. Krit refers to the materiality of the houses, which open up many opportunities for self-discovery to the new residents. At this point – and at others in the anthology – one misses the pioneering "rubbish theory" that Michael Thompson developed; one of his examples were houses in London. In the 1970s, he already referred to the dynamic aspect of things and their changes of meaning and value (M. Thompson, Rubbish Theory. The Creation and Destruction of Value [Oxford 1979]).

Sebastian Schellhaas and Mario Schmidt deal with a specific substance: the *kuon*, a mush of the East African Luo (pp. 163–179). For the Western observer, the Luo have abnormal concepts of the esculent. While money is edible, for example, pizza and candy bars are not. The materiality of the substances themselves thus does not give access to the concept of the edible. For the Luo, *kuon* is their expression of sociality. The materiality of the mush, with its internal complexity (ingredients) and external simplicity (consistency), can be seen as an analogy and symbol of the Luo society. Sociality can only be established through *kuon*; the mush is therefore more than mere food – and even the concept of the esculent transcends our idea of it. The authors show that materiality is also a cultural concept and in the end advocate against the spirit of other contributions in the volume to disregard materiality when investigating foreign cultures.

Bjørnar Olsen provides a very provoking contribution to the average reader of archaeological literature. In his case study (pp. 181–192), he deals with a dump truck, which had an alien existence in his home village. Olsen refuses to analyse the truck and its entanglement in village life. He explicitly opposes the obsessive search for meaning that he makes out in our sciences. This search for meaning is an obstacle to seeing both the extraordinary and the ordinary, as it just prevents us from perceiving what things really are. But what are they? Olsen avoids an answer because it would only result in striving for meaning again. He aims at the thingness. But how to approach this? According to him, thingness is not to search beneath the surface in the deeper layers of differential levels of meaning but to look on the surface at the first encounter with the thing. Coming to the conclusion that one can use the approach of taking the archaeological material for what it is, leaves me – as possibly most of his readers – in confusion. Here, a void remains that Olsen is unable – or not yet ready – to fill. When he reckons it is time to liberate things from the burden

of interpretation, a burden that they cannot bear, he rejects conventional archaeology. The only thing that remains would be to let the archaeological things affect *us*, but that is reducing it on our personal experience.

As the last contribution, Jennifer Bagley (pp. 193–209) redirects the focus to a genuine archaeological group of objects: Neolithic stone axes. She refers to the affordance concept of Donald Norman's design theory, which goes back to the Gestalt psychology of the 1920s. Due to certain object and material properties, there are possible uses which can be perceived by the user as possibilities for action. It is astonishing that only Bagley, at the end of this book (which deals explicitly with human-thing relations), takes up this concept, since it is already introduced in the archaeological discourse as an action-generating quality of things (see, e. g. C. Knappett, The affordance of things: a post-Gibsonian perspective on the relationality of mind and matter. In: E. DeMarrais et al. [eds], Rethinking Materiality. The Engagement of Mind with the Material World [Cambridge 2004] 43–51). In a diachronic perspective, Bagley tries to show how people, from the Neolithic to the recent past, adopt stone axes in specific ways due to form and materiality. The use of these devices as tools, weapons, and cult or status objects from the Neolithic to the Bronze Age opens up both from their shape (edge) and the hardness of the material. Hence, both the weapon and tool character, or the status and cult character, (e. g. jadeite axes) can be explained by affordance. In Roman antiquity, the prehistoric stone axes were assigned with another meaning that has been preserved until recent times: as magical objects that are associated with lightning, thunder, and fire. This connection can be traced back to the Roman writer Pliny the Elder. But in contradiction to Bagley, this specific significance cannot be explained by the affordance of these objects. The magical function of 'thunderstones' to ward off damage but also to ensure fertility has been inspired by a variety of associations that do not necessarily result from the affordance of the objects. As useful as this concept is in the analysis of human-thing relations, it also finds its limitations.

The anthology as a whole offers an inspiring read and points to central flaws in anthropological theory. It is true that things are incapacitated by representationalism. Things are supposed to reflect social structure, or ideologies and cosmologies. Things in these perspectives are subordinate to *a priori* ideal categories. Therefore, the change in perspective propagated here is reasonable and necessary. Things unfold their agency not only in indirect ideal semiosis but also in direct material encounter with the user. This aspect needs to be considered more closely. But the individual case studies also show the limits of this change of perspective. Not everything can be explained with materiality and other formal aspects of the objects. Things also have more meanings that arise from culturally generated associations. By turning to materiality, semiotics is usually rejected. It is evident that through this material *turn* new facets are visible, but as with every previous turn in cultural studies, we will have to realise that the new approach takes an interesting path, which by itself, however, will not lead to enlightenment. The book discussed here is nevertheless an enrichment, but semiotics and that which is usually denounced as representationalism should not be lost sight of. There definitely are studies combining these approaches (e. g., M. Furholt, Das ägäische Neolithikum und Chalkolithikum. Transformationen sozialer Handlungsmuster in Anatolien und Griechenland zwischen 6500 und 4000 v. Chr. Universitätsforsch. prähist. Arch. 304 [Bonn 2017]).

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