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Reply: Citational Politics and the Future of Posthumanist Archaeologies

Matthew C. Greer 

I want to begin by thanking Craig Cipolla, Lindsay Montgomery, Susan Pollock, Kathleen Sterling and Christopher Witmore for their responses. I am honoured to be in conversation with such thoughtful and insightful scholars. In my reading, two main themes emerged from their comments—citational politics and what the future of posthumanist archaeologies might look like. To conclude our discussion of archaeology, Black studies and posthumanism, I will address each in turn.

Citational politics is a recurring theme in Montgomery's, Pollock's and Sterling's comments. As Montgomery states, the question of 'which social theorists ... archaeologists [are] referencing in their efforts to craft relational approaches to humans, things, animals, and plants' lies 'at the core of' my 'argument'. Montgomery and Sterling address citational politics in posthumanism and posthumanist archaeologies, and both ask why archaeologists have not chosen to engage with Black studies while noting that I failed to address this topic in the article. As Sterling states, assessing these 'motives [is] an important part of the critique' of posthumanism, and, ultimately, she 'conclude[s] that systemic racism

is a key factor in the lack of awareness, interest, or engagement with Black studies' (also see Rosiek *et al.* 2020). Montgomery argues that this lack of engagement is due to the fact that 'archaeology remains a "white public space"' and the existence of 'an artificial division between analysis and activism', between works that are ostensibly colour-blind and those that address the fundamental ways racism and colonialism have shaped the world (also see Ravenscroft 2018; Watkins 2020). I thank Sterling and Montgomery for noting this glaring omission in my work and for their insightful diagnoses, which I wholeheartedly agree with. Reckoning with and dismantling the citational politics that maintain whiteness and colonialism in (posthumanist) archaeology is an important task (also see Craven 2021; Davis & Mulla 2023; Smith *et al.* 2021)—one that must be undertaken in tandem with the discipline's increased collaborations with Black studies. Pollock, alternatively, notes that my article did not draw on 1) the works of scholars from western Asia and north Africa and 2) intersectionality and Indigenous studies. The former was out of ignorance, and I thank Pollock for pointing me towards these works.

The latter was intentional, as omitting these better-known bodies of literature allowed me to highlight the work of counter-humanist scholars. However, I agree with Pollock that ‘work originating from critical, non-Western-centric traditions’ is also crucial for addressing issues with posthumanist archaeologies, and I have cited several critiques of posthumanism from Indigenous studies in this reply to show readers some possible connections I see between these scholars and counter-humanism (also see Cipolla 2021).

Turning to the second theme, my article was an attempted intervention that would lead to posthumanist archaeologists engaging with and incorporating the critiques of (post)humanism levelled by counter-humanist scholars. The commentators were divided over how successfully I made my case for the necessity and scope of this intervention, with some (Montgomery, Pollock and Sterling) largely agreeing with me and others raising issues with my critiques of symmetrical archaeology (Witmore) and posthuman feminism (Cipolla). Yet, despite these disagreements, I feel that the article was largely successful. Witmore, who was the most critical of my work, used Sylvia Wynter to argue against me. Cipolla saw connections between ‘Non-anthropocentric, relational archaeologies’ and my ‘discussion of Sylvia Wynter’s ideas’ and noted that ‘There is clearly scope for further discussion between posthuman feminism and Black Studies’. These, ultimately, are the types of connections I intended to foster. I sincerely hope that other archaeologists will continue our discussions by reading, citing and addressing Black studies scholars’ critiques of (post)humanism.

This, however, raises the question of what a future where posthumanist archaeologists engage with Black studies—and increasingly engage with Indigenous studies and other works arising from marginalized and/or non-Western traditions—might look like. Witmore’s discussion of readerly responsibilities serves as an excellent framing device for considering this future by outlining two possible ways such an undertaking could play out. On the one hand, archaeologists could perform their readerly duties, thinking critically about the ways scholars of colour critique (post)humanism while advocating for radically different ontologies that address their needs, concerns and desires, and carefully considering how these theories and commitments intersect with archaeological research. The results of these engagements would look different for the various schools of posthumanist thought, but on the whole, would entail the creation

of a series of posthumanist archaeologies that are vastly different from the current state of the field. Archaeologies that retain their non-anthropocentrism while asking different types of questions driven by, as Montgomery puts it, ‘anti-colonial, anti-racist, and liberatory politics’. Archaeologies where these commitments are not only mentioned in theoretical essays or footnotes, but feature prominently in case studies. This future could result in an expansion of the types of socially aware and non-anthropocentric archaeologies Cipolla calls for.

On the other hand, archaeologists could neglect their readerly duties, as posthumanist scholars often do when engaging with Indigenous ontologies (Marín-Aguilera 2021; Todd 2016; Watts 2013). Passages from counter-humanist works could be (mis)cited as support for posthumanism while sidestepping these scholars’ larger arguments. Aspects of counter-humanism could also be severed from their revolutionary politics and incorporated into posthumanism without addressing Black studies scholars’ actual critiques of (post)humanism. Reading and citing counter-humanist texts in this way would result in posthumanist archaeologies that look much the same as they do today. New works would be cited, but they would be used in service of posthumanism’s existing paradigms. The field would remain largely dominated by the theoretical insights of white scholars (also see Lasco 2023) and the larger academic structures of whiteness and colonialism would continue to shape posthumanist theories. As Montgomery notes, engaging with Black studies in this way would ‘undermine the power of the counter-humanist critique’, ‘only serv[ing] as an intellectual band-aid to broader structural imbalances within’ posthumanist archaeologies. Jerry Rosiek and Mary Adkins-Cartee (2023) further argue that a situation like this can be as problematic as outright ignoring the intellectual traditions of Black, Indigenous and other non-Western scholars. I mention this not to imply that all archaeologists should read the same counter-humanist works, interpret them in the same ways and come to the same conclusions that I have. It is up to each archaeologist working with posthumanist theories to engage with Black studies—and, ideally, with Indigenous studies, and scholars writing from other non-Western traditions as well—in their own way and to assess how these theories intersect with their research. If archaeologists attend to their readerly duties when doing so, I am eager to see what the future holds for posthumanist archaeologies.

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