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Cover illustrations from Leander Touati *et al.* in this volume, p. 191

Here the book's thematic division breaks down as chapter 14 (pp. 229–247) moves away from dangers as Ulrich Müller investigates harbours in medieval Haithabu, Schleswig, and Lübeck. The chapter begins with a brief discussion of -scapes as a concept. This is important as the article brings up a number of such terms, including mediascapes, financescapes, and technoscapes. This is followed by a description of the cities' harbours, laying the ground for an analysis of harbours and harbours as physical and imagined worlds, emphasizing how these places enabled "social, cultural and political processes of transformation". The penultimate chapter (Ch. 15, pp. 249–264) turns again to dangers by considering the human impact on hydrology in southern medieval Germany. Here Rainer Schreg focuses on the modifications of water courses, and the consequences of this. Other factors affecting the local hydrology, e.g. agricultural patterns are also discussed, as well as how this contributed to the spread of the Black Death. Finally, a brief article (Ch. 16, pp. 265–270) by Gabriel Zeilinger highlights a number of effects of water on medieval towns in the Rhine valley, ranging from the transportation of goods and construction of mills to the destructive forces of flooding.

As a whole, this volume compiles a wide range of well-written studies concerning water in or in relation to urban phenomena. The wide scope in terms of the cultures studied, materials used, as well as chronological and geographical scope can definitely be viewed as a strength as it allows readers to tap into a range of perspectives and discover new ways to approach the material. Furthermore, the open-access format amplifies the effect of this as it is easily accessible. However, due to its diversity the book does not target any specific audience—the step from water usage in Greek sanctuaries to the descriptions of water in medieval novels seems too big to make both areas of interest for most readers. It may therefore have been better to frame the book as comparative, focusing on urban water in antiquity and the medieval period, rather than an overarching volume on water in urban contexts.

Beside this the volume is well edited. One thing that could perhaps have been improved is the disposition; while the organization of the chapters is being framed as thematic, in practice they appear largely in chronological order. In fact, only the three articles on the ritual usage of water form a truly coherent block in terms of theme. The volume would also have benefited from colour images in many cases and I find it difficult to see why this was not included, at least in the digital version.

In the end this volume is useful for scholars studying water in the ancient or medieval period, although most will probably be interested in specific chapters rather than the book as a whole. Despite this the editors are to be congratulated on a

well-edited and easily accessible volume, ensuring that it will be used by scholars in coming years.

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I. Selsvold & L. Webb, eds., *Beyond the Romans. Posthuman perspectives in Roman archaeology* (TRAC Themes in Roman Archaeology, 3), Oxford & Philadelphia: Oxbow books 2019. 130 pp., 25 figs. ISBN: 978-1-78925-136-4.

<https://doi.org/10.30549/opathrom-14-25>

Beyond the Romans originates from a session at the Theoretical Roman Archaeology Congress in 2016. It has been edited by two young scholars and contains eight case studies from the Roman world influenced by posthuman theory. It also includes an introduction by the editors, a foreword, and a commentary.

Beyond the Romans opens with 'Foreword. A posthuman call to scholars', authored by Francesca Ferrando. This commissioned foreword consists of two parts. First, a manifesto in which posthumanism is presented as scholarship which takes on contemporary social and political issues. Posthumanism is "brave" enough to be "an agent of change" and tackle pressing issues. In the second part, Ferrando praises *Beyond the Romans* because it introduces brave posthumanism into archaeology, thereby being "at the forefront of academia". Ferrando raises the expectations when she emphasizes the critical tenet of posthumanism. Her call is however left unanswered in the case studies.

In the 'Introduction. Posthuman perspective in Roman archaeology', Lewis Webb and Irene Selsvold introduce posthuman theory and the following case studies. Crucially they also state that the aim of *Beyond the Romans* is to explore the potential of posthuman theory for Roman archaeology.

Filippo Carlà-Uhink's 'Posthuman ambitions in the Roman Principate. The cases of Caligula and Nero' deals with cases when these two emperors transgressed Roman conceptual limits of the human. This account is detailed, and the author shows that transgressions were a double-edged sword since they could enforce the image of the emperor both as a divine superhuman and a subhuman beast.

Next, Vladimir D. Mihajlović in 'Roman epigraphic markers, ontological transition, and relational work-nets' turns to Roman epigraphic markers in Serbia and North Macedonia. He adopts a posthuman perspective which stresses the entanglement between humans and non-humans. In other words, he

undermines the clear-cut essential categorizations that we find in normative archaeology through the elaboration of how epigraphic markers influence the conceptualizations of the dead.

In chapter 4 'Decentralising human agency. A study of the ritual function of the votive figurines from Grotta Bella, Umbria', Arianna Zapelloni Pavia focuses on the ritual function of votive figurines from Umbria and shows how posthuman theory with an emphasis on the material agency can contribute to further our understanding of archaeological materials. Unfortunately, this chapter is marred by several typographical errors, which otherwise are rare in *Beyond the Romans*.

Kristine Iara dwells on "the reciprocal relationship between the Romans and their religion-related objects" in 'The materiality of divine agency in Imperial Rome'. Iara applies posthuman theory in order to argue that the materiality of religious objects framed their meaning. Material articulations of gods were necessary means for the communication with the gods.

In chapter 6 'Chicken hybrid imagery on Late Iron Age coinage in northern Gaul and southern England during the Iron Age–Roman transition', Mike P. Feider, Ellen Hambleton, and Mark Maltby explore hybrid images on coins in the north-western regions of the Roman empire. This chapter shows how the hybrid images of man-chicken were introduced and circulated on both sides of the English Channel. It highlights hybridity which is one of the central themes in posthumanism.

Lisa Lodwick's chapter 'Weeds in the fields, weeds in the city. Posthuman approaches to plants in the Roman world', seeks to decentre humans from Roman studies with an elaboration of the often-neglected category of weeds. The emphasis on the agency of plants is also in line with posthuman theory.

'Two parts hydrogen, oxygen one? Re-evaluating the nature of Roman urban water infrastructure' is the title of Jay Ingate's contribution (Ch. 8). He gives an account of various ways that water and water infrastructure contributed to shape life in the Roman world. Like several of the other contributions this decentres the humans through the emphasis on the agency of a non-human entity. Nevertheless, I think that Ingate takes the notion of non-human agency to its extreme when he compares the notion of agency in posthumanism with animism in the world of *Yōkai*, a Japanese folklore tradition.

Irene Selsvold and Lewis Webb have also authored the final case study, titled 'The Romans and the Anthropocene. Posthuman provocations'. This chapter elaborates the notion of the Anthropocene in Roman archaeology. Selsvold and Webb stress that they do not argue that the Anthropocene began during the Roman period, but rather that we find human practices in the Roman period which have had long-term consequences on the environment. This is elaborated through three examples: Roman mining, wild animal exploitation, and agricultural expansion.

Beyond the Romans ends with the commissioned 'Commentary. Pathways to posthumanism' by Oliver J.T. Harris. This brief chapter distinguishes three general topics in the above-mentioned case studies which highlight posthumanism in archaeology: first, new materialism, second, entanglements between humans and animals, and humans and plants, and third, the ontological differences. Harris concludes that these contributions offer us "the first hints of what a posthumanist Roman archaeology might be capable of".

In general, the case studies manage to highlight posthuman topics in Roman archaeology. Most of the case studies are concerned with nature and environmental features, and how these shaped Roman society. Edited volumes are often incoherent, but I find *Beyond the Romans* to be coherent, thematically as well as theoretically. *Beyond the Romans* serves as an introduction of posthuman theory in Roman archaeology.

Nevertheless, as I already mentioned above, I find that the book, as a whole, is permeated by one recurring shortcoming. This concerns the application of posthuman theory, and pertains to the core of what posthumanism is, or strives to be. As I find this to be crucial, I will focus my criticism in this review on this multifaceted issue.

Posthuman theory is applied, explored, or used to "think with". The application of posthuman theory reduces, however, posthumanism to a set of topics and predefined heuristic tools which can be used to analyse ancient evidence. The posthuman becomes nothing more than a label. Taxonomies are of course crucial for science regardless of theoretical perspective, since it is through categories that we manage to think about our world. However, categories can be utilized in different ways. In traditional positivism the definition of clear-cut categories is an epistemological end in its own right, whereas in posthuman theory, as well as in the cultural turn, categories are regarded as unavoidable temporary heuristic constructs. Categories are only constructed in order to be questioned in posthuman theory. In other words, the notion of attaching labels on things as posthuman—applying posthumanism—is an epistemological oxymoron. This is explicit in for instance chapter 2. The transgressions of the human by Caligula and Nero may serve as examples of the boundaries that posthumanism strives to elaborate. Carlà-Uhink repeatedly claims that "this is posthuman". In this way, he labels things as posthuman, but defining categories is an analytical strategy which is at odds with posthuman theory.

The posthumanist strive to decentre the human is also associated with a criticism against normative science. This criticism has in particular targeted the notions of essentialism and dualism which permeate normative science. Accordingly, the posthuman should not be reduced to an adjective or a new label that we attach to things. At the core of posthumanism is the notion that humans and non-humans are entangled in dynamic, relational, and malleable entities. It is therefore

reasonable to expect that posthuman scholarship also avoids the reification of essentialism or at least discusses the shortcomings of dualistic thinking. Both Ferrando and the editors are well aware that the questioning of the foundations of normative science constitutes an important part of posthuman theory. The critical tenet of posthumanism is mentioned in the foreword and in the introduction, but it is shirked in the case studies.

In Selsvold and Webb's, in many ways, intriguing contribution on the Anthropocene in the Roman world it is consistently the impact of human practices on the environment which are highlighted. This enforces conceptual dualism. One side, the humans, are dynamic and change the other side, the environment. Little is however said about the impact of the changed environment on the humans. The entanglement between the humans and the environment is mentioned in passing at the end, but I cannot see that this notion has influenced their analysis. Enforcing asymmetrical power relations is at odds with foundational philosophical tenets of posthuman theory. It is one thing to claim to be posthuman and another thing to practise posthumanism. It is hard to detect any significant differences between 'The Romans and the Anthropocene. Posthuman provocations' and processual archaeology, save for the posthuman terminology.

This is remarkable since the editors give a comprehensive overview of posthuman theory in the introduction of *Beyond the Romans*. This overview is rewarding reading. However, they have omitted significant posthuman studies of Greek antiquity (e.g. G. Anderson, *The realness of things past*, 2018; R. Taylor & K. Vlassopoulos, eds., *Communities and networks in the ancient Greek world*, 2015; I. Malkin, *A small Greek world*, 2011), which is surprising considering that posthuman studies from other archaeological branches are mentioned. Does this perhaps indicate that the divide between Roman and Greek archaeology is larger than we often assume? More serious is however that they have shirked the cultural turn and fail to address the significant conceptual connections between these two theoretical perspectives. This is further mirrored in several of the case studies which claim icons of the cultural turn, such as Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and others, as posthumanists. The inadequate elaboration of the cultural turn facilitates the mediation of posthumanism as yet another predefined, finished, and clear-cut toolbox at our disposal: a new theoretical turn. This stands in opposition to the fundamental posthuman notion that posthuman theory is anything but a new theoretical turn.

In sum, *Beyond the Romans* succeeds to introduce posthuman topics in Roman archaeology. The posthuman perspective is, however, all too often reduced to a practice of labelling, and attaching new labels to ancient evidence is not necessarily the same thing as introducing a new theoretical perspective. In other words, the posthumanism mediated in

Beyond the Romans is at odds with the foundations of posthuman theory. Let us hope that we can avoid mainstreaming posthuman theory in our future efforts.

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K.-J. Hölkeskamp, *Roman Republican reflections. Studies in politics, power, and pageantry*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag 2020. 274 pp. ISBN 978-3-515-12703-5.

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Karl-Joachim Hölkeskamp (henceforth H) is a leading scholar and proponent of the field that studies the political culture of the Roman Republic. Since 2004, H has published several collections of papers, translated into different languages, that concern Roman Republican political culture and its methods, theories, approaches, concepts, controversies, and results. It is in this series of collections that *Roman Republican reflections* (henceforth *RRR*) belongs.

RRR comprises eight papers: the first is new, while the following seven have been published elsewhere (and one in German, here translated into English) between 2001 and 2020. The chapters have been corrected, updated, and rewritten. The chapters share one bibliography, and there is one *index nominum* and one *index rerum*. The audience for the volume includes specialists in Roman political culture. At the same time, the convenience of having the papers collected and the quality of the two first introductory chapters makes the book attractive for students and non-specialists.

With *RRR*, H leaves the well-known debate behind whether the Republic was formally democratic: Chapters I–II provide the scholarly background and the theoretical underpinnings to the study of the political culture of the Roman Republic. In the following chapters, H engages with specific aspects of Republican political culture and interpretations of particular themes, events, and objects: Chapters III–IV discuss the politics of spectacles, performativity, and self-fashioning, while Chapters V–VIII deal with memory; how it was (re)created, furthered, used, and adapted by both the élite in general and individual *gentes*.

The volume's overarching theoretical concept is political culture, which refers to studying both the formalistic and "technical" institutional aspects of a political system, and informal institutional aspects (in a broad sense), including values, symbols, performances, communication, sentiments, and memory. The kernel of the approach is that the formal-