

DEAD BODIES, TEXTS AND REVIEWS: A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A THEORETICAL ARCHAEOLOGIST AND A BODY PERSON

July 24, 2015 Alexandra Ion Archives, Explore
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I am a theoretical archaeologist -which always raises a few eyebrows if this is even a legitimate field of research in our field- and a body person (more pompously: an osteoarchaeologist with an interest in history of physical anthropology): I deal with dead bodies and follow scientists' interactions with them, throughout history and contexts. The public's perception of archaeology is usually the one associated with field research, or in the best case, laboratory analyses—and I would say this is pretty much shared inside our field as well—but the life of some of us is mostly spent in front of a computer, in archives and museums/collections. Being interested in the history of 2 intertwined disciplines, archaeology and physical anthropology, I spend most of my time deconstructing texts written by my colleagues -dead or alive- and placing them in the contexts of their creation. Why do we write/draw/measure as we do? How did we change perspectives over what a dead body stands for, how do we frame identity and human variability, and where do we want archaeology to go next? These are some of the questions that keep me tied to my laptop, when I am not browsing through musty papers and photographs from archives.

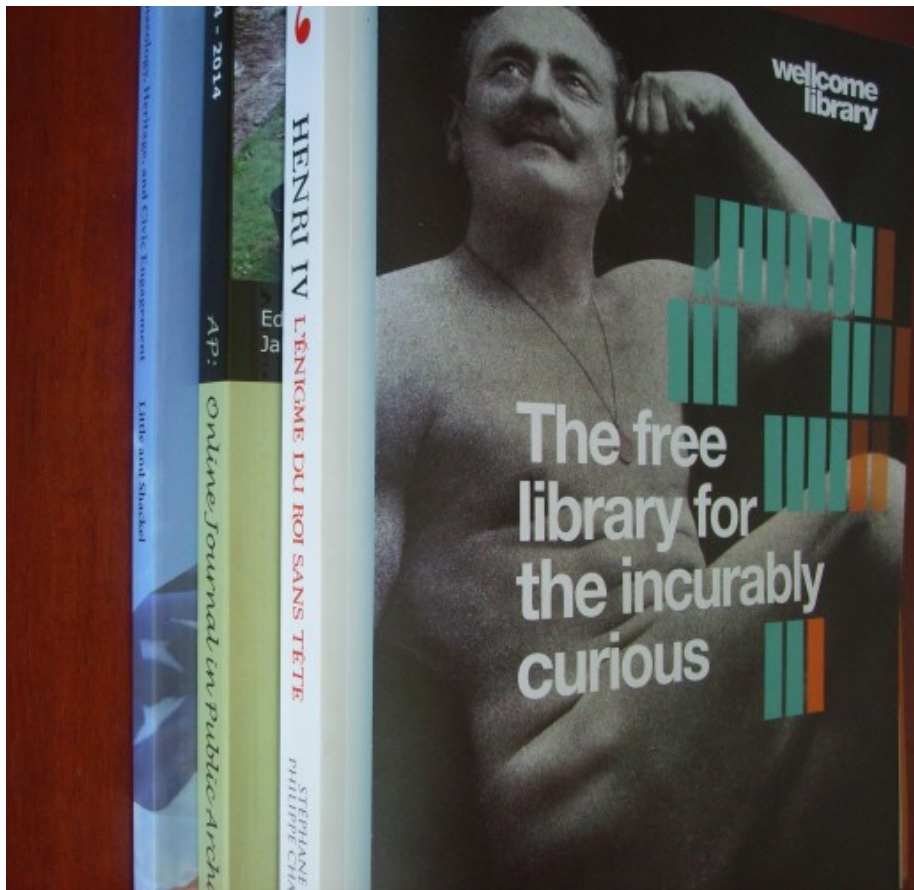
This year's day of archaeology finds me resting between 2 such projects.

One is a freshly finished text on a '*scientific ossuary*', an early 20th c. skulls and archaeological skeletons anthropological collection in Romania (the collection housed at the Institute of Anthropology 'Francisc I. Rainer' in Bucharest). Writing is a tedious effort, which nowadays presupposes a complex (to be read: source of frustration) network of mostly online communication – between you, editors, reviewers, friends who are nice enough to read and comment on your texts etc. Bottom line—typing, reading, typing, and typing again. Bearing in mind the amazing and life changing slogan 'publish or perish', and with occasional intermezzos of browsing *Academic Pain* or similar 'motivational' procrastination devices.

The other one is a study on *kings' bodies*, and archaeological narratives of identity and identification around such excavated corpses: a text on political anatomies and bodies (part of a great international and Polish-led project).

Between these 2, I also need to squizz in a book review, some applications- the life of young academics in archaeology, always in need of a job/project-, updating my blog ([Bodies and Academia](#); [@BodiesAcademia](#)) getting ready a special journal's issue on *bodies/matter*, and some procrastination, of course.

I am not sure if mine is the most glamorous way of spending The Day of Archaeology—writing, reading, copy-editing, sleeping, doing nothing, and then some more writing. But it shows another take on what an archaeologist might do.



Some of the books that frame my day, materials which wait to be consulted