

Session ID

32

Session Title

If wisdom **sits** in places, does that mean it has a body? Scalar links between mobility, embodiment, and archaeological knowledge

Start Time

Tue Dec 17 14:00:00

Room

822

While movement is fundamental to processes that archaeologists study, it also poses some of the greatest challenges: material records—in their many manifestations—rely on stasis as well as movement. Approaching movement entails engaging with scalar problems, as archaeologists “move” between isotopes, populations, artifacts, skeletal remains, infrastructures, texts, subjects and authors, and landscapes. We propose an exploration of the body and embodiment as entry-points into such interpretive challenges. Might the body be a locus at which wildly disparate scales intersect and can be made commensurate? Archaeologists are increasingly theorizing movement and mobility in their analyses of people and things. While engagements with the “new materialism” invite an exploration of the ways in which materials and substances are in flux, studies of globalization and the Anthropocene attend to global flows of people and things. The embodied subject—one that moves, perceives, dreams, does—adds another interpretive challenge in archaeological knowledge-making practices. Perceptions and experiences were not only situated in past bodies, but the reconstruction of those experiences is also situated in the embodied practices of archaeologists.

14:00 Alanna Warner-Smith (Doctoral Candidate), Department of Anthropology, Syracuse University; Kate Franklin, Department of History, Classics and Archaeology, Birkbeck, University of London

Introduction

14:05 Alanna Warner-Smith (Doctoral Candidate), Department of Anthropology, Syracuse University

Aching Joints, Global Frictions: Preliminary Thoughts on a Bioarchaeology of Pain and Labor

This paper is about movement at many scales and tempos: the bending of a joint; the rubbing of bone on bone; the wandering of a body across an urban landscape; the movement of bodies through mass immigration; the circulation of goods, services, and labor in a nineteenth-century market; and the collection and transfer of human remains following death. It is also about the literally embodied experiences of these movements in a particular individual.

This individual, whom I call Bridget*, was born in Ireland and died at the New York City Almshouse Hospital on Blackwell's Island in 1900 at the age of 70 years. After her death, she became part of an anatomical collection (1893-1921) curated by a New York City doctor.

I start from Bridget's knees to explore how the lived experiences of an individual are entangled in wider social and material movements. To do so, I consider pain. While it is true that bioarchaeologists primarily study the material remains of bodies—and thus tend to focus on health, activity, and trauma—the experience of pain itself is less visible in interpretations. Recognizing pain in archaeological bodies perhaps relies upon the archaeologists' own embodied knowledge and corporeal history of pain, making it a difficult phenomenon to quantify and to index. I consider the theoretical, methodological, and ethical contours of this absence and probe the possibilities for its inclusion in studies of labor, industrialization, and immigration.

*Pseudonym.

14:15	Rachael Kiddey PhD, British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship Researcher, School of Archaeology, Oxford University	"It can go to Oxford, even if I can't!": the material culture of contemporary forced displacement in Europe	<p>From Mesolithic footprint-tracks identified in the ancient mud of the Severn estuary to clothing snagged on barbed wire fences that surround the port of Calais, archaeology has always been about the study of movement as much as material culture. Unlike more deskbound social science colleagues - economists, sociologists, historians - archaeologists are required to go out and see what is there. As archaeologists, we move to and within field-sites and collections, we study how artefacts and assemblages are spatialised across multi-scalar distances (temporal and geographic). The study of relationships between objects, people, and places requires us to consider not just how things were made, but the movements involved in their making - how materials were transported, exchanged, adapted, discarded - and the mobility of the people/s involved.</p> <p>My current research into the material culture of forced displacement in Europe is dominated by a cruel dichotomy - migrants (people socially and politically characterised by mobility) often make arduous journeys only to find themselves 'stuck' in states of permanent stasis, while objects which co-constitute their experiences - things, photos, images, narratives - easily cross the borders that restrain them. Expected to exist on the street, in squats, in camps, in the borderlands - many migrants to Europe must increasingly occupy what philosopher John Holloway calls 'capitalism's cracks.' The tension between movement and stability is precisely the migrant experience and to study it archaeologically requires that we develop new, collaborative methods for studying objects in migration.</p>
14:25	Alexander Aston, School of Archaeology, University of Oxford	Scale and Scalability: A Novel Perspective on the Emergence of Cycladic Bodies	<p>Contemporary human societies are transforming thermodynamic and ecological relationships across the planet. Questions of sustainability and resilience are fundamentally questions about the organisation of bodies and their environment. Through the application of Material Engagement Theory (MET) this paper explores how bodily perception, social interaction and skill generate self-organising relationships which are mediated through material culture. Specifically, this presentation examines the relationships between Cycladic figurines and ritual behaviours on the island of Keros to understand the emergence of regional social organisation during the early Aegean Bronze Age. Scientific evidence on the perception of bodies and faces indicates that Cycladic figurines were an effective technology for capturing joint and collective attention. By considering the development of intersubjectivity in relation to Cycladic marble sculpting, it is possible to demonstrate how social interaction is coordinated through the creation and circulation of materials. From this perspective, value can be understood as attentional structures which mediate activity in ways that ground narrative practices and generate meaning. A relational conception of value suggests that ritual can be understood as the organisation of bodies in ways that substantiate collective belief and intentions through performative actions. In this way, it is possible to understand how Cycladic figurines patterned cognitive development as form of kinshipping technology; a durable and distributed resource through which relational identities were conceptualised, enacted and sustained through value forms. By examining the relationship between materials, skill and the development of intersubjectivity, this paper demonstrates how social interactions are coordinated to organise human bodies at emergent scales.</p>
14:35	Lesley McFadyen, Department of History, Classics and Archaeology, Birkbeck	The orientation and direction of force: volatile bodies revisited	<p>Understanding architecture as practice has been key to my work on Neolithic material worlds, and this has given my enquiry a scalar reach from material culture as architecture to architecture as landscape. I have written about practice in terms of the experience and participation in acts of building, its timing as quick and slow, and more recently about practice in time. I may never have explicitly said it, but the driving force to this work has been Elizabeth Grosz' (1994) corporeal feminism and her emphasis on what bodies do, rather than what they supposedly are. But is this approach too restrictive, anchored to tightly on ontological terms? I am sure there have been mutterings. Two decades on, Grosz (2017) now asks if there is an incorporeal frame to things. Interestingly, this new work makes us consider the orientation of beings, and the direction of becomings, and in so doing articulates on stronger terms the trajectory of corporeal feminism. To me this is important, and I will argue, that in terms of the relationship between practice and form, form is more shaky and mutable than ever.</p>

14:45	Kate Franklin, Department of History, Classics and Archaeology, Birkbeck, University of London	Silk Road synesthesia: embodied imaginaries and scalar transforms	I will begin by framing the Silk Road as a scalar problem, and a provocation to archaeologies of movement. Imaginaries situated within bodies (plural) are the conditions of possibility for mobility/immobility, for consummations of distance and difference. Mobility is overdetermined in archaeological/historical formulations of the Silk Road at various scales, whether of raw materials like silk, artifacts, populations, genes. Furthermore, mobility is unevenly distributed amongst Silk Road subjects; embodiment challenges us to situate mobility/immobility on the ground. What, then, is a 'landscape of mobility' in the Silk Road context, if such a 'signature landscape' exists? How do our dreams of the Silk Road presume certain embodied ways of moving, being, desiring, and exclude others? Building from feminist problematizations of the 'nomad' as a universalizing subject position and FTS/FSS emphases on situated, embodied knowledge making, I question how our ways of imagining, seeing, detecting phenomena like medieval politics or Silk Road economies are already embodied, gendered. I will present examples from medieval Aragatsotn and Vayots Dzor, Armenia: dreamed landscapes that were written as well as dwelt within, and sites of embodied technologies of world building, of silk road politics. As a point of departure, I posit embodiment as the scale of dwelling the Silk Road, as complicit within scalar makings of mobile worlds.
14:55	Colleen Morgan PhD, Lecturer in Digital Archaeology and Heritage, Department of Archaeology, The University of York	What and where is the digital body in archaeology?	<p>With a few notable exceptions (Eve 2017, 2018; Morgan 2019), digital knowledge production in archaeology has neglected embodied interpretation. I have previously argued for the importance of avatars in grounding this interpretation, but have since come to understand the digital archaeological body as part of an interstitial space, a place of movement, where changes in scale and bioarchaeological and digital exchanges can occur between past and present. I draw from transhuman and feminist posthumanism to understand the creation of archaeological knowledge through media and digital surrogates and the immersive qualities of worlding that create a cyborg archaeology. In this presentation I will describe my ongoing research (and adventures!) in interstitial space through avatars, digital drawing and other perilous embodied encounters with archaeology.</p> <p>Eve, S. (2017). The Embodied GIS. Using Mixed Reality to explore multi-sensory archaeological landscapes. <i>Internet Archaeology</i>, 44. Eve, S. (2018). Losing our Senses, an Exploration of 3D Object Scanning. <i>Open Archaeology</i>, 4(1), 114–122. Morgan, C. (2019). Avatars, Monsters, and Machines: A Cyborg Archaeology. <i>European Journal of Archaeology</i>, 22(3), 324–337.</p>
15:05	BREAK	BREAK	BREAK
15:35	Session organisers	Panel discussion	
17:30	END	END	END