

Elisabeth T. Hurren, *Dissecting the Criminal Corpse: Staging Post-Execution Punishment in Early Modern England* (Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2016, 358 pp., €29.12 hardback)

Elisabeth T. Hurren is a professor at Leicester University. She has already published one book (*Dying for Victorian Medicine: English Anatomy and Its Trade in the Dead Poor, 1832 to 1929* (2012)) and several papers on related topics. She is probably the best English specialist on penal death and the medical uses of the corpses of the condemned.

This work relates to the management of criminal corpses over a period extending from the adoption of the Murder Act (1752) until that of the Anatomy Act (1832). It discusses how these corpses were managed by lawyers and, above all, by penal surgeons, whose role was regulated by both the Murder Act and the Anatomy Act. The Murder Act provided that in case of 'horrid crimes', the sentenced should be publicly dissected (c. 5% of those sentenced); hence it introduced post-mortem punishments involving the medical profession. The Anatomy Act broadened access to corpses in so far as it allowed the dissection of those unclaimed after death, for instance the poor who died in hospitals, workhouses or jails. Interestingly, Hurren interprets the Anatomy Act as setting up several stages of death: the social death (when the convict was sentenced to death by a court of law); the penal death (when he was hanged); the medical death (when the reality of death was checked by the surgeon). This book aims precisely at making the effects of these stages more concrete and precise, and to reposition them within the social history of medicine and surgery.

According to Hurren, the historians of crime and punishments have not been sufficiently aware of what actually happened after the convict had been cut down from the gallows, and have generally focused on London events. A history of the material fate of the criminal corpse is thus lacking.

At first, Hurren maintains that a substantial number of hanged men were not actually dead ('half-hanged') when they were cut down. Some had a strong neck, or were too light; the hangman had to choose the right length for the rope as well as the right knot. Although the law prescribed that a convict had to be left hanging for one hour, all too often they were left hanging for a far shorter time (30 or 40 minutes), either because of the season or because public order could be threatened by a riot.

Death usually came by asphyxia, after a long and cruel struggle (the jerking) which had consequences on the body shape. While this probably responded to the crowd's expectation of actually seeing a dead body, it did not match the expectations of the surgeon, who was waiting for a nearly intact body to arrive as soon as possible, especially in the summer.

The body was then anatomised. At the time when the Murder Act was enacted anatomy and medicine – especially regarding the process of dying – were changing; many physicians wondered if death came by the heart, the lung or the brain. Classical anatomy, performed in order to demonstrate the perfection of Nature, and almost exclusively performed on the chest, was challenged by a new anatomy, based on dissection and focused on pathology. The fact that a significant number of hanged men were not dead after hanging provided surgeons with opportunities to experiment, and to increase both their knowledge and their reputation as researchers. Hurren emphasises that anatomy is not dissection, although they were both carried out in public; and that a lot of historians describe them as a continuous process, although they were miles apart. Anatomising meant opening the body (autopsy) in order to prove the death and to show the inside of the chest. It was not very different from splanchnology, one of the traditional variations of anatomy. Because of the uncertainty of death, anatomy was often a mix of vivisection and euthanasia. Dissection led to the destruction of the body, which was effectively torn to pieces. The audience was not necessarily the same for the two operations, and expectations could vary depending on the audience.

One of the original features of this book is that the author takes the reader away from London and provides an overview of what happened in the rest of the country. Places for anatomy and for dissection were not always the same; a lot of cities did not have a hall of surgeons as in London, and dissections often took place in dispensaries, and later in hospitals – thereby paving the way for the Anatomy Act, inasmuch as they already hosted the poor people who died there unclaimed. As a result of extensive archival research, Hurren is able to show that it was much easier to access bodies in the provinces than in the capital. Practising dissection outside of London was thus an advantage in the competitive world of surgery and medicine. A tight market and an economy developed around these bodies, which travelled from one city to another, according to complex power relationships.

To what extent was dissection performed? It depended on various factors: the social condition of the convict, the nature of the crime, the shape of the body and the type of research conducted by the local surgeons could all interfere. In any case, the surgeon owned a real discretionary power of punishment – which was, however, limited by the audience and its emotional unpredictability. Staging the dissection could awake a 'good' curiosity (a desire for learning, a means to legitimate the public execution), but also a bad, 'morbid', curiosity, which progressively led to the concealment of dissections.

*Dissecting the Criminal Corpse* is a fascinating, amazing trip through the post-mortem fate of this outcast kind of dead. The author stresses the renewal that she hopes to bring to the history of crime and justice. Since the early 2000s (and especially in France) the history of death has also undergone a form of regeneration via a

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material approach, through the corpse itself, its status and its treatment. Away from a simplistic and general synthesis, solidly grounded in sources and archives, this book is a plentiful source food for thought.

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Dorothee Delacroix, *De pierres et de larmes. Mémorisation et discours victimaire dans le Pérou d'après-guerre* (Institut universitaire Varenne – Collection des thèses, Paris, 2016, 369 pp., €42 paperback)

Under the evocative title 'Of stones and tears: The construction of memory and discourse of victimhood in post-war Peru', anthropologist Dorothee Delacroix has produced a masterful study on memory and discourse in connection with victims of the internal armed conflict that gripped Peru during the 1980s. Delacroix begins by exploring the process leading up to the construction of a monument to remember the victims of the violence, installed in the very urban setting of the country's capital, Lima, in 2005. At the centre of the monument stands a rock, known as *El ojo que llora*, 'The Weeping Eye'. A few years later, a replica of the Weeping Eye was created in a rural community in the province of Aymaraes, again with the intention of commemorating victims – this time from the village of Llinque.

By comparing the processes through which each monument came into being, the author seeks to understand how Peruvian society has progressively formulated both its own memory of the conflict and the criteria for determining who can be claimed as a victim. To this end, she draws on what today we might call a post-conflict anthropology, an extremely valuable approach for understanding today's world, where more and more countries are grappling with internal turmoil – in contrast to other times in history when most conflicts arose between countries. There is a growing and pressing need to acknowledge the memories of the various collective actors involved and the affected population's struggle for identification and identity. This requires social science disciplines, such as anthropology, to contribute to an understanding of how societies construct their memory or memories, so that this work, in turn, might inform national and international policy making in relation to intra-state armed conflicts.

Delacroix develops an anthropological study that draws on one of the discipline's classic tools: ethnographic analysis. Hers is not, however, an ethnography focused on one single group. Rather, Delacroix sets out a comparison of neighbouring societies before contrasting them with a proxy for 'national' society in the form of the country's capital, Lima. This approach allows the author to combine two different dimensions of Peruvian society as a whole: rural communities and the country's quintessential urban space, the capital city. This ethnographic model, which we might call multidimensional, also incorporates the central power apparatus itself – the state – and various groups that interact with it, functioning sometimes as intermediaries and sometimes as allies. The author also takes account of non-governmental organisations (humanitarian NGOs) and institutions such as

local authorities and central government agents. What, then, is the benefit of the multidimensional ethnographic approach that Delacroix adopts?

First, it allows her to show us how a post-conflict society develops not one shared memory but multiple, variously constituted memories. A multidimensional approach allows us to identify how different ways of remembering the period of violence coincide, diverge or even contradict one another. The subtlety of Delacroix's ethnographic enquiry allows her to demonstrate how efforts to construct a single national memory tend to end in failure. Internal conflicts generate a multiplicity of memories, and their study contributes to understanding how memorial unification efforts fail in the face of diversity. That said, Delacroix is careful to resist the temptation of slipping into an atomistic approach to memory, and insists on the collective and social nature of these diverse memories. Thus, in the pursuit of her ethnographic enquiry, the author displays her skill in compiling ethnographic data, moving from collective memory to individual memory based on numerous interviews that are duly compared and contrasted, first within each group and subsequently between groups.

Second, as part of this multidimensional ethnography, Delacroix illustrates how the interplay of memories ultimately provides us with an insight into the architecture of power in Peru. The centre (Lima, the capital city) imposes its hegemony over the country's interior, and its reach extends to inland rural communities. In this struggle for 'hegemony over the memory of armed conflict', the state seeks to exert its hegemonic control from the centre to the periphery, from the geographical lowlands and valleys to the highlands and uplands, and from privileged groups (in most cases family members) to those living in rural villages and communities. The author sets out a highly detailed argument showing that this hegemony is not the exclusive work of the state but involves intermediary organisations too. That includes NGOs dedicated to defending human rights – operating, of course, from Lima, and with representatives in inland cities and, in some cases, villages. Education, manipulation of cultural codes and cultural intermediation all play a part in this dialectic and in the hegemonic construction of memory. Here, we must acknowledge another important feature of Delacroix's approach: the way she exposes asymmetrical relationships that tend to remain hidden, silenced or, at best, completely ignored by those central actors who cast the periphery as a culturally subaltern space. Her work alerts us to something that is rarely discussed in memory studies – the fact that memory has a spatial/territorial dimension as well as a social dimension. We see this more clearly in her comparative study of two rural communities (Llinque and Toraya), where she demonstrates how differences between the two groups and their disparate trajectories gave rise to equally divergent memories, despite their shared rurality and geographical contiguity.

There is, however, another aspect to 'Of stones and tears' that constitutes a valuable and stimulating contribution to the field of ethnography: the notion of victimhood and the construction of discourse relating to it. A pervasive presence in the study of memory, the social, cultural and even economic construction of this concept has marked the post-conflict period. With great precision, Delacroix describes how this notion is subject not only to political tension and discord but

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also to negotiation between groups. She explores how this process unfolded in Lima, where political interests, 'social pressures' (i.e., fear and rejection) and divergent memories came into play not only in the construction of this discourse but also in policies governing the acknowledgement of victimhood and in the allocation of symbolic and, especially, financial reparations.

Delacroix goes on to examine this process of delineating 'victim' status in another context: the rural communities where she carried out her ethnographic research. She shows us how the concepts of 'victim' and 'victimiser' are separated by a fine membrane that often breaks down in the case of those who were witnesses to violence or were directly affected by it. Participant observation and a judicious command of her data have allowed the author to unmask a complex world of silences, wilful obfuscation and blame shifting with regard to the victim–victimiser relationship. As Delacroix illustrates, internal armed conflict is not only a product of political–ideological tensions within villages and rural communities but can also be linked to the interplay of family and collective power and to discord and strife at the local level. Indeed, much of the work's success in developing an ethnography of local conflict can be attributed to the author's interpretation of gestures, words and other elements of meaning and her efforts to analyse these elements. What is missing, perhaps, is an examination of other ways of participating in the local dynamics of conflict, namely, what we might call the case of the silent actor: the official working in the health or education system, or the cleric, who cannot necessarily be categorised as victims or victimisers, but who took on a silent role in relations between rebel movements, counter-insurgency forces and the local population.

Overall, Delacroix's work undoubtedly ranks among the best studies aimed at understanding the construction of memories and discourses of victimhood in societies recovering from internal armed conflicts, such as in Peru, and, of course, constitutes a model of post-conflict anthropology.

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## Notes

Translated by Cadenza Academic Translations.

Krista E. Latham and Alyson J. O'Daniel (eds), *Sociopolitics of Migrant Death and Repatriation. Perspectives from Forensic Science* (Springer International Publishing, Cham, 2018, 177 pp., £89.99 hardback).

In times of open hostility – with a US president manufacturing a border emergency and insisting that a physical barrier is necessary to stop border-crossers, thus intensifying the criminalisation of migrants from Mexico and Central America – *Sociopolitics of Migrant Death and Repatriation* is a welcome invitation to take a closer look at forms of resistance to the oblivion and anonymity of the men, women and children who have died trying to reach the United States.

This edited volume tackles dominant discourses on migration through analysis of how border policies determine who lives and who dies. Bringing together articles by contributors from both sides of the border who share a common concern for action, a major strength of the book is its broad perspective on identification that includes all the actors involved in the process of returning the deceased to his or her family. That is to say, not only forensic scientists but also human rights activists, the relatives of the dead and disappeared, and migrants themselves. All the contributors are in fact part of the very same constellation of people involved on a practical level in these efforts of identification and repatriation.

A first set of chapters in Part I, entitled 'Beyond Local Jurisdictions: Science in a Global Web of Relations', focuses on the complexities of border deaths and the attempts to return the bodies to their families, connecting what is happening at local levels and in specific places along the border with the broader context of global politics and history. Many contributions highlight the impact of neoliberal policies in countries across Latin America and the effects on labour markets, social resources, conditions of everyday life and migration decisions. They go further still, placing neoliberal dynamics within the context of a much longer stream of violence that stretches back to Spanish colonisation and runs through the very contemporary war on drugs. As Wendy A. Vogt suggests, the everyday violence and death experienced by Mexicans and Central Americans are to be understood as part of the same trajectory of violence and death along the Central America–Mexico–US corridor.<sup>1</sup> This long-term perspective taken on violence that is both polymorphous and protean thus helps us to understand migration in a context where crossing the border comes with the risk of dying.

Part II, 'Producing and Situating Forensic Science Knowledge', explores the ways in which scientific work can be carried out despite bureaucratic shackles and even lack of governmental funding or support. In this sense, the contributions clearly show how socio-political conditions shape the work of forensic scientists, who, in this context of border deaths, become *volunteer* forensic scientists. In the Introduction, Krista E. Latham and Alyson J. O'Daniel make clear the intention to advocate for a politics of engagement among forensic anthropologists. The volume is in fact an invitation to 'think critically about places and practices of migrant death, identification, and repatriation as important modes of enacting or resisting administrative and hierarchical rationalities of governance'.<sup>2</sup> Many chapters point out the key role of grassroots initiatives that allow for both coordination between different actors and diverse approaches to identification. A forensic scientist, a jurisdictional authority or a relative all have different conceptions of what constitutes identification and the challenge is to make these different definitions converge.<sup>3</sup>

The contributions help non-expert readers to understand that there is not one single way to manage the dead along the US–Mexico border. For instance, mechanisms of investigation and identification in Arizona are centralised: nearly all presumed migrants found in the state are brought to Pima County. At the Pima County Office of the Medical Examiner (PCOME), the medical examiner, forensic pathologists and forensic anthropologists all work in one office. Consular officials are also present in the town and participate in weekly meetings with staff at the

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PCOME.<sup>4</sup> In addition, most migrants crossing via Arizona come from Mexico. Conversely, in South Texas, management is decentralised and most of the counties along the border do not have a medical examiner's office and operate under the Justice of the Peace system. Unlike the coroner, the Justice of the Peace has many other duties unrelated to deaths, and the resulting lack of time and resources negatively impacts on border death investigations. On the other hand, border-crossers come from many different countries and the consular offices of these governments are scattered across the state.<sup>5</sup> The difference in the landscape also exacerbates the contrast between both regions: the majority of the land in Arizona is publicly owned, whereas most of South Texas consists of private ranches with large portions that are not visited by ranch hands or hunters, reducing the possibilities of finding a deceased person, and thus nuancing and complexifying death rates. Many deaths will never be counted.

As a whole, this collection constitutes an insightful examination of processes of knowledge production and reflexivity around border deaths. Although this aspect is not explicitly mentioned, through its study of the forms of mobilisation, coordination and work of the various actors operating in handling border deaths, the book offers the possibility of thinking about new ways of dealing with anonymous dead bodies that could be useful in very different contexts such as natural disasters, which are, unfortunately, conceivable in the near future. The volume will be of particular interest to scholars working on forensic science, on migration and on border studies, as well as to academics involved in human rights more broadly. By providing ample case studies of grassroots efforts to connect different actors and diverse approaches to identification and respect for the dead, the volume will be very inspiring for colleagues interested in what is currently happening at the borders of the European Union.

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## Notes

- 1 W. A. Vogt, 'Loss, Uncertainty, and Action: Ethnographic Encounters with Families of the Missing in the Central America–Mexico–United States Corridor', in K. E. Latham and A. J. O'Daniel (eds), *Sociopolitics of Migrant Death and Repatriation. Perspectives from Forensic Science* (Cham, Springer International Publishing, 2018), p. 65.
- 2 A. J. O'Daniel and K. E. Latham, 'Introduction', in Latham and O'Daniel (eds), *Sociopolitics of Migrant Death and Repatriation*, p. 7.
- 3 See K. E. Latham and R. Strand, 'Digging, Dollars, and Drama: The Economics of Forensic Archaeology and Migrant Exhumation', in Latham and O'Daniel (eds), *Sociopolitics of Migrant Death and Repatriation*, pp. 99–13.
- 4 See C. E. Bird and J. Maiers, 'Dialog Across States and Agencies: Juggling Ethical Concerns of Forensic Anthropologists North of the US–Mexico Border', in Latham and O'Daniel (eds), *Sociopolitics of Migrant Death and Repatriation*, pp. 157–68.

- 5 See T. P. Gocha, M. K. Spradley and R. Strand, 'Bodies in Limbo: Issues in Identification and Repatriation of Migrant Remains in South Texas', in Latham and O'Daniel (eds), *Sociopolitics of Migrant Death and Repatriation*, pp. 143–56.

Firouzeh Nahavandi, *Commodification of Body Parts in the Global South: Transnational Inequalities and Development Challenges* (Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2016, 134 pp., €57.19 hardback).

In his book *What Money Can't Buy*, the legal philosopher Michael J. Sandel reflects on the tendency to view everything in contemporary society as a commodity.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, he considers whether there are, or ought to be, limits to marketisation in an era when there appear to be no such limits and capitalism simply goes on incorporating objects and activities that we never dreamed might have a market value. As he states: 'we have drifted from having a market economy to being a market society.' Nahavandi's book on body parts, commodification and the global South addresses similar concerns within a broader narrative of international development. It brings to our attention a variety of ways in which the global North appears to predate on the body parts of those living in the South. Nahavandi's aim is to identify this activity as a source not so much of development as of underdevelopment. The four case studies provided are based on an international trade in human hair for cosmetic purposes, wombs (as in surrogacy), kidneys (for transplant) and brains (as in the recruitment of highly skilled migrants from developing-world countries). The intentions in undertaking this exercise are to highlight the significant inequalities and exploitation that run through transnational trade centred on body parts.

The book begins with an overview of the issue and an explanation of the methodology used to assemble what is essentially a literature review spanning several disciplines. The second chapter gives an overview of commodification in relation to body parts. The discussion here ranges across the gift–commodity debate and the ways in which body parts of the poor become commoditised as they are drawn into transactions involving wealthy purchasers from the global North. Such transactions, it is argued, dislocate persons and body parts in a way that results in the dehumanisation of the poor, with the result that social and economic development in the broader sense is impeded.

There then follow four chapters which each provide an overview of the issues arising from the traffic in hair, wombs, kidneys and brains, respectively. These are helpfully preceded by a chapter abstract and keywords and followed by an extensive bibliography (indeed, over 30 pages of the 120 pages of text are bibliography). The final chapter brings together the discussion of commodification with its implications for development. The author argues that, despite claims made that suggest that economic, health and welfare development might accrue from such transactions, the reality is quite the opposite. The trade invariably ends badly, with inequalities being ever more deeply inscribed when transactions involve body parts moving North and money moving South. The thesis is worth restating, but is not in itself particularly novel.

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While the book provides a useful overview of the intersections between the trade in body parts and the question of inequality and development, for this reviewer there are two things that don't quite hang together. The first concerns the way the classification of body parts relates to commodification. Hair, womb, kidney and brain strikes me as a rather odd list. Hair is an interesting commodity to bring into the frame, and one that is not often talked about. However, hair is a replenishable item which is produced for a niche fashion market. It is a matter of regret that some people might be reduced to selling their hair, and perhaps a matter of greater regret that some people are prepared to buy it, but the harm that is done is, arguably, not that great. Kidneys, on the other hand, are a different matter. People from the global South who end up being kidney vendors are rarely paid what they were promised, and even if they were this would not make the trade morally justified. More often than not a vendor's poverty is compounded because post-operative care is non-existent and he (as it is typically a male) loses his capacity to work. In short, the trade in kidneys is heinous. That said, it is surprising that the book does not mention steps that have been taken to address the global organ trade. For example, the Oviedo Convention of 1997 is absent from the discussion. While this convention has by no means eradicated the trade, it and its subsequent iterations have resulted in many of the primary offenders introducing national legislation to regulate procurement.

Hair and kidneys are alienable body parts. Wombs and brains are clearly body parts too, but not, I would suggest, in the way that the author incorporates them into the book's thesis. The key difference I would highlight is that the latter come into the frame as the locus of labour and not as alienable objects per se. Wombs are not taken away, nor are brains removed. When it comes to surrogacy it is the reproductive labour of women in poverty that is co-opted into the market. Likewise, when the author talks of brains, this is really a metaphor for the intellectual capital that moves from country to country. This distinction is important because, by forcing everything together under the category of 'body parts', the specificities of what exploitation means in each case become rather blurred. For example, the development implications of the siphoning-off of highly skilled people from developing countries into the labour markets of the global North are massively more consequential and far-reaching for development aspirations in the global South than is the trade in hair.

My second concern is with the use of the North/rich–South/poor binary. It is without question that the North predates on the South in the way that the author describes. However, the account presents a rather simplistic picture of what goes on in the middle. What of the brokers, middlemen, local networks that facilitate these transactions? Aren't skilled migrants typically drawn from educated elites who are taking their own rationally calculating decisions about their futures? Who runs the hospitals across Asia that facilitate the kidney trade? The author touches on these aspects, but they tend to be glossed over in favour of the bigger North-exploits-South claim.

There is in fact a third concern I have with the book, and one which is not really addressed to the author so much as to the publisher. Given some of the serious grammatical errors, spelling mistakes, odd sentences and general infelicities of language,

one has to ask what has happened to the publisher's responsibility for quality control and editorial oversight?

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## Notes

- 1 M. J. Sandel, *What Money Can't Buy – The Moral Limits of Markets* (London, Penguin Books UK, 2013).