



The Names of the Dead: Identity, Privacy and the Ethics of Anonymity in Exhibiting the Dead Body

Sarah Tarlow

To cite this article: Sarah Tarlow (2023) The Names of the Dead: Identity, Privacy and the Ethics of Anonymity in Exhibiting the Dead Body, Public Archaeology, 22:1, 1-20, DOI: [10.1080/14655187.2023.2268384](https://doi.org/10.1080/14655187.2023.2268384)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14655187.2023.2268384>



© 2024 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 08 Jan 2024.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 5526



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Citing articles: 8 View citing articles [↗](#)

The Names of the Dead: Identity, Privacy and the Ethics of Anonymity in Exhibiting the Dead Body

SARAH TARLOW

*School of Archaeology and Ancient History, University of Leicester,
Leicester, UK*

One of the foundational principles of modern medical ethics is the maintenance of anonymity in the case of researching human material and in disseminating that research. This principle safeguards the privacy of living human subjects, and minimizes the prejudicial effect that personal knowledge might have on the researcher. Does this principle transfer to human material in museum contexts, especially when human remains are on public display? Many of the human remains displayed in museum or other institutional settings are necessarily anonymous. However, some institutions display the remains of historically identified individuals, often famous (royalty, senior clerics, saints, and celebrities) or infamous people (criminals). What are the ethical implications of exhibiting the remains of known individuals? This paper argues that human remains are situated on a continuum between person and thing. Anonymity is one of the strategies used to move the remains further towards the universal body as an object of enquiry (thing) and away from a biographied and personalized self (person). By decentring the post-colonial context in which much of the debate about the archaeological and museological treatment of human remains has taken place, I hope to tease apart some of the broader ethical issues around the power relations between the living and the dead.

KEYWORDS ethics, human remains, museums, exhibition, anonymity, bio-ethics, osteobiography

Introduction

Can the maintenance of anonymity safeguard the interest and dignity of the dead sufficiently well to mitigate the harms of displaying human remains in museums? This reflective essay considers the ethical case for concealing the names of the dead, and asks what difference anonymity makes, and whether and when one can make a case for naming the bodies of the dead.

This is not a general review of the practice of studying human remains, the ethics of which has a mature literature of its own (e.g., Sayer, 2017; Licata, et al., 2020; Roberts, 2020; Squires, et al., 2020; Biers & Clary, 2023). It concerns the issues around naming the dead: how are the ethics of display, in particular, affected when the names of dead individuals are known? Does anonymity protect the interests of the objects of research? How is the relationship between the museum professional, the visitor, and the subject of observation affected when a named person rather than anonymous human remains are in question?

Nobody who has paid attention to the discourse around ethics in archaeological and anthropological work on human remains in the last forty years can be unaware of the huge historical and ongoing injustices occasioned by Eurocentric and colonial disciplinary histories. Anthropologists have been slow to listen openly and humbly to indigenous voices. However, claims for repatriation and reburial of indigenous remains are now treated sympathetically in most countries, and the majority of researchers recognize the right of those who claim familial or cultural descent from the populations they study to have a voice in deciding their fate. These issues have been extensively discussed in archaeological ethics (see, for example, Jones & Harris, 1998; Fforde, 2004; 2013; Fforde, et al., 2004; Kariwiga, et al., 2023; Van Broekhoven, 2023). It is not the intention of this paper to revisit those debates, nor to contrast ‘Western’ with ‘Indigenous’ attitudes. Neither category is monolithic, and the focus of the present paper is narrower: the philosophical issues surrounding anonymity in the display of human remains. I am addressing here not the specifically post-colonial position of the appropriated remains of indigenous peoples, but the remains of prehistoric and historical people whose deaths and post-mortem histories occurred in Europe, with a particular bias to the UK.

An additional clarification is necessary here. The term ethics covers both, on the one hand, the philosophical and personal reflection on the nature of right action and the avoidance or minimization of harm; and, on the other hand, standardized and mostly consensual processes and protocols which are policed by professional bodies, employers, and funding organizations. There is undoubtedly a place for statements of best practice and guidance for day-to-day decision-making, but there also needs to be a space for open exploration, without expectation that academic and intellectual discussion should necessarily lead to unambiguous recommendations or policy statements. This paper is more interested in the intellectual challenges of identifying the groups to whom an ethical responsibility might be owed, the principles that inform that responsibility, and what difference it makes if the human remains are associated with a particular, named individual.

For that reason, I do not intend to undertake a systematic review of the statements of principle, protocols, codes of ethics, and other guidance documents that have been produced to inform decisions about the care and management of

collections for education and research. Biers (2020) provides an excellent review and summary of the main international and national statements, policy documents, and codes used by museum professionals in the UK (see also Giesen, 2013). These can serve an important purpose, in guiding daily practice and obviating the need for constant, repeated, and hyperlocal decision-making, and can also shield the professional in high-profile cases around which there is a lot of media interest.¹ However, it is not sufficient to outsource all ethical decisions to a policy or an external body, and ‘ethics’ is not the same as compliance. While it may be necessary and important to obtain ethical approval for research from one’s own institution, or a local regulatory authority, for example, it is not enough. To take one recent case, although the work of Squires and Piombino-Mascali (2021) on the Capuchin catacombs of Palermo was very sensitive to visitors’ feelings, the kind of ethics in their 2021 paper was more about managing visitor experience, and did not dive deeply into questions such as whose interests are at stake, or how far heritage professionals should control the narrative.

Despite the existence of local and national guidance, there is no consensus among museum curators about how to display human remains ethically or, indeed, whether they should be displayed at all. While there are some deeply and thoughtfully designed ethical solutions to this problem in a number of institutions and exhibitions, there are also fudges built on anxiety not to offend and uncertainties about what constitutes best practice. It has been argued that codes of ethics are not usually a helpful response to the development of thoughtful and appropriate practice (Tarlow, 2001a), and Franco Nicolis recently went so far as to suggest that such codes are an abdication of professional responsibility (Nicolis, 2022), so this paper will not produce a set of rules setting out what ethical museum practice looks like, but I do want to explore some of the questions that need to be answered in order to arrive at ethical, contextual decisions. In particular, this paper will explore the question of how, and whether, knowing the names of the individuals whose remains are displayed affects or should affect those ethical decisions.

Who stands to be harmed?

The first of these questions is, to which constituencies does the museum have a responsibility? Who is at risk of harm? For all that this is a fundamental question, it often remains unaddressed or implicit, or the various stakeholders are elided. A museum’s stakeholders will vary according to context, but they will usually include researchers, the visiting public, the past people whose remains are held, descendants, and, where relevant, particular communities within the museum public, such as those with certain religious beliefs, cultural histories, or educational needs. The interests of those groups need to be balanced against the benefits to students, communities, and colleagues. The most complex and problematic of those constituencies is past people themselves. Robust arguments have been made that the dead cannot have interests in the world and thus cannot be harmed. Coming from this position, ethical responsibilities around the treatment and display of human remains need only consider the possibility of harm to living stakeholders such as descendant communities, scientists, and the public, and to future

constituencies, such as the future needs of scientists or historians. The philosophical question of whether and what we owe the dead is one that has been explored elsewhere (e.g., Bahn, 1984; Tarlow, 2001b; 2006; Scarre, 2003; 2013; Papineau, 2012; Rugg & Holland, 2017; de Tienda Palop & Currás, 2020). If we take the line that dead bodies have no inherent rights, the ethical pretzels into which we contort ourselves over this issue are easily broken, because we agree that people have rights only over their own bodies, whilst alive, and those of their close kin and community, as Swain (2013) argues. Indeed, the language of rights does not sit well in this discussion, and the ‘rights’ of bodies as material things does sound overcomplicated (Vizenor’s (1986) proposal that ‘bone courts’ should decide the proper fate of human remains does sound like a satire, although the proposal was serious at the time), but when one thinks rather of responsibilities and of past peoples, it is less easy to reject the notion that curators have an obligation to the collections in their custodianship.

The result of a failure to distinguish between past and present peoples, or between the subjects of exhibition and its visitors, is the generation of policies, protocols, and ‘best practices’ that do not really address any ethical problem, or protect the interests of any stakeholder. Who is safeguarded by placing warning notices and screening human remains from sudden view, as described by Bekvalac (2015) in the case of the Museum of London’s exhibition, ‘Doctors, Dissection and Resurrection Men’ in 2012–13? Who is protected by dimming the lights in a gallery or installing frosted glass? This is visitor management, not ethics. These measures arguably do nothing for the person whose remains are on show, but are directed instead towards protecting the visiting public, although the evidence that museum visitors require or appreciate trigger warnings and darkened rooms is negligible (Jenkins, 2011: 132). Interestingly, recent research into trigger warnings and similar advance notifications is that they do nothing to protect emotionally vulnerable viewers and probably even increase their distress (Jones, et al., 2020), but that is another discussion. It is not excessively cynical to wonder whether trigger warnings sometimes have more to do with forestalling criticism and protecting the institution than with safeguarding the emotional health of the public.

The names of the dead

Named human remains in institutional collections divide into three broad categories.

- (1) Individuals recovered from historic period cemeteries, whose names can be deduced from surviving coffin plates, or because they can be associated with a personal memorial monument. This is the kind of named burial considered by Bonney, et al. (2020: 215–17).
- (2) Exceptional people who, because of their high status, criminal deviance, interesting biography or body, or because they have in some other way a non-normative narrative, do not undertake the usual post-mortem journey of their time. This group includes bodies retained for scientific reasons, because of celebrity or criminal glamour (Tarlow, 2016), or religious power

(Walsham, 2010). Their remains are meaningful because they have a known identity.

- (3) Individuals whose real names we no longer know, but who are ascribed names by the modern people who interact with their remains. This group includes some high-profile prehistoric bodies and others who are given fictive names and sometimes partially imagined backstories to facilitate empathetic visitor engagement.

The question of what difference a name makes breaks down into, first, a consideration of how naming the past owner of human remains in contemporary collections affects the relationship between that past person and the modern viewer; and, secondly, whether anonymizing = consciously choosing to suppress the names of past people protects or damages the interests of those people. Let us take the latter question first.

Risk of harm in medical ethics

If one accepts that the subject is at risk of harm in the display of human remains, what is the nature of that harm, and what are the means by which it can be avoided or mitigated? The treatment of human remains in other contexts outside the museum is instructive in this regard. Foremost among these is research and teaching in medicine. Although the legal framework regulating the use of human remains in medicine varies from country to country, the fundamental ethical principles are widely accepted internationally. In fact, the ‘four pillars’ of medical ethics, originally proposed by Beauchamp and Childress in 1979, have now become a reified and canonical part of medical education around the world. These four pillars are:

- (1) beneficence (doing good);
- (2) non-maleficence (to do no harm);
- (3) autonomy (giving the patient the freedom to choose freely, where they are able);
- (4) justice (ensuring fairness).

These pillars are all about protecting the privacy and dignity of the subjects of practice or research (Masterton, 2010). In response to that imperative, a number of practices have become normalized in medicine and are now ubiquitous. These include assessment of the possibility of harm to the subject by disinterested review committees, gaining consent from patients and research subjects or their proxies (Giordano, 2005), and protecting their privacy through anonymity.

Risk of harm in museum ethics

In museum practice, things are less clear. To look at the pillars in turn, beneficence is not usually arguable in terms of direct health benefits, but good can be argued to arise more diffusely through the improved well-being that cultural activity is known to have on society. Practitioners may argue that they are doing good in terms of facilitating public education and broadening knowledge of and

engagement with the world. That academic research, such as that facilitated by the curation of human remains, is a good in itself is also a strong position.

Doing no harm, the second of the modern pillars, but often believed to be the primary directive of the traditional Hippocratic Oath,² is harder to ascertain. The exact nature of harm arising from the curation and display of human remains could include emotional harm (but that invites the question, when is it actually *unethical* to upset somebody's feelings?), the consequences of dehumanization, or outraging the respect normally due to other human beings. None of these things are straightforward. The nature of 'respect' is culturally variable, so that one cannot assume the universal moral implication of practices like reburial or removal from display. Nor is the exact working of putative harms necessarily specified, and it is hard to generalize about something as subjective as emotional harm. In other areas of life, we accept that it is sometimes appropriate to hurt the feelings of some person or people, in order to achieve a greater political or social good, or to question problematic orthodoxies. Usually, therefore, determination of when it is ethically appropriate to upset feelings is a question of balancing offence against possible value.

Autonomy is the principle behind attributing significance to obtaining informed consent, a right to withdrawal, and much of the protection of privacy. Consent, in the case of almost all museum collections of archaeological human remains, and many collections of anatomical or pathological human remains, is normally acquired by proxy, if at all. The final pillar, justice, is arguably the least frequently attained in medicine. It is not compatible with, for example, developing a drug using subjects who will not be able to afford the developed treatment, or concentrating only on potentially lucrative new treatments at the expense of those which could be equally life-altering but for which the market is smaller or poorer. In museums, justice is arguably the central principle behind the arbitration of repatriation claims and renegotiating post-colonial relationships between the historically dominant collecting cultures and exploited, swindled, or robbed indigenous groups. However, this paper is most concerned with practices that are intended to safeguard the privacy of the subject — a concern that could be considered under any of the headings.

The comparison between medical ethics and museum ethics feels especially pertinent because both deal with human bodies and are shaped to guide us through the intersection of research, public, and individual needs. However, comparing the universal dissemination of the pillars of medical ethics to the often-agonized confrontation with cultural relativity that constitutes museum ethics, it is necessary to ask whether a more subtle and contextual ethics can inform the treatment of archaeological bodies in museum care. It is possible that we will see a move away from the quest to identify an ethically sound, standardized practice towards fostering a climate in which contextual responses to ethically complex situations are decided by discussion and by attention to individual encounters with museum collections. Maranda (2015) detects a change in the ethical discourse of museums from ethics as shared, prescribed, behavioural codes towards personal, situational, and conscience-driven decision-making; and Gazi (2014) advocates a reflective approach to exhibition ethics which privileges honesty.

The privacy of the dead

Human remains are emotionally powerful and evocative (Krmpotich, et al., 2010; Podjed & Bartulović, 2012), though the emotions they produce are variable and unpredictable, arising not only from the circumstances of the encounter but also the history of the individuals involved. Human bodies are polysemic objects, and they are read differently by the viewer according to the context of their display. Naming or not naming is one of the means by which biological matter is located on the spectrum from object of science to lived life (Nilsson Stutz, 2023). One of the foundational principles of modern medical ethics is the maintenance of anonymity in the case of researching human material and in disseminating that research. This principle safeguards the privacy of living human subjects, and minimizes the prejudicial effect that personal knowledge might have on the researcher. Vainio (2012) notes that anonymity is a core principle of ethical practice not only in medical research but also in qualitative social science (though there are some dissenting voices, whose rejection of anonymity will be considered below). Anonymity may be justified for any or all of the reasons of ontology, analysis, and independence (Vainio, 2012: 687). The ontological implication is that, by anonymizing people, a social and potentially personal relationship is transformed into data: a fact (or series of facts), not a person. This is important for the researcher's relationship to a subject. In the museum gallery, the place of the researcher is supplied by the visitor, who is able to relate more easily to anonymized human material as 'exhibit' rather than establishing a potentially problematic or ambiguous personal relationship. The second justification is 'analysis', which has no direct equivalent in the case of museum exhibition, since analysis is rarely a significant dimension of the encounter, but in the case of social science research, analysis is the way that the process of anonymization allows utterances to become abstracted examples of a theory or model. Finally, the justification of independence values anonymity because it strengthens the autonomy of the research and clarifies the disinterest of the researcher.

The other side of this coin is that naming the remains of the dead closes the gap between observer and observed, makes the relationship personal and more emotionally charged.

Keeping secrets

There is an interesting ethical problem not only for museums or institutions considering display, but for all scholars whose work involves publishing potentially sensitive information about past people: their wealth, their sexuality, their physical abnormalities, their secrets. This is an issue considered in detail by Masterton (2010). She argues that the dead have interests beyond those of the living, that posthumous interest is a valid philosophical concept, and that the living have duties to the dead. For that reason, a person's good name or reputation is of moral relevance in regard to historical persons and human remains. Masterton argues that the duties of scholars in the present include truthfulness (accuracy of representation), recognition of historical injustice, and privacy. She considers a number of case studies in which information that has become available to researchers stands to harm the

reputation or infringe the privacy of named and known past individuals, particularly the growing popular appeal of posthumous diagnosis of medical conditions or genetic peculiarities. For example, Queen Christina of Sweden (d. 1689), whose gender identity, sexuality, and physical sexual characteristics have been a source of scandal and speculation both during her lifetime and consistently since her death. Her remains were examined for evidence of her ‘gender identity’, by which was actually meant her physical sex characteristics, first by physical anthropologists and more recently from her DNA. Masterton points out that not only are there technical difficulties and ambiguities of interpretation in such an endeavour, there are also ethical problems in making public such intimate detail for reasons only of titillating the public.

This is part of a bigger question which is what ethical responsibility do those who study the past have to guard potentially sensitive, secret, or highly personal information about past people? This is of concern not just to archaeologists, but also to historians and other past-oriented scholars. Keith Jenkins makes no mention of any responsibility towards past people in his 2004 essay: the intellectual ethics he describes come from a concern with present and future justice. Much writing on ethics across the disciplines assumes an orientation towards living and future beings. Those who have already died are not so much explicitly excluded as unconsidered.

The celebrated dead

Many of the human remains displayed in museum or other institutional contexts are necessarily anonymous. However, some institutions display the remains of historically identified individuals, often famous (royalty, senior clerics, saints, and celebrities) or infamous people (criminals). What are the ethical implications of exhibiting the remains of known individuals?

In many cases, it is precisely having a known individual on display that makes the exhibit engaging and popular. To be able to attribute a personal name and often a detailed biography to an exhibit of human material is rare. In fact, most of the time, the names of individuals recovered through archaeology are not known. In such cases, it is not uncommon for the researcher, the museum, or the public to give a name or nickname and even invented life histories to the anonymous individuals on display. Well-known examples include some northern European bog bodies — Lindow Man, on display in the British Museum, was famously known as Pete Marsh (Giles, 2020). Ötzi, the iceman, has been the subject of various creative attempts at biography and empathetic reconstruction (Robb, 2009). In another example from a well-known museum display, osteologically known individuals have been personalized by archaeologists or museum staff in order to present more engaging life histories and to promote an empathetic visitor experience. The remains of the people who died when the *Vasa* sank in 1628 and who are at the centre of an exhibition at the Vasa Museum in Stockholm have been elaborated in this way. Given names in alphabetical order, Adam, Beata, and the rest are presented to the public with their individualizing osteobiographies.

Having some kind of a name or individuation undoubtedly makes a body better able to constitute a locus of empathy and engagement. In other cases, it is precisely because bodies or body parts formerly constituted the persons of famous or notorious individuals that they are of interest to the viewing public. A human finger on display is quite interesting, but the finger of Galileo, on display at the Museum of the History of Science in Florence, is very interesting indeed.

Sometimes our knowledge of the personal history of the subjects of exhibition is uncomfortable and leads to greater unease at their display (e.g., Hon, 2013; Claes & Deblon, 2018). The exhibition of Charles Byrne, known as the Irish Giant, at the Hunterian Museum in London, is a well-known case in point. Byrne was subject to extensive medical interest during life and made arrangements that he should be buried at sea so that no anatomist should have his body. After his death in 1783 at the age of twenty-two, however, his body was sold covertly to the anatomist and surgeon John Hunter, who prepared and mounted his skeleton and put it on show in his own museum. Since 1799, the Hunterian Museum has been owned and housed at the Royal College of Surgeons in London, and Byrne's skeleton was exhibited there almost continuously for over two centuries. Whether it should continue to be shown has been the subject of a long debate, in the pages of the *British Medical Journal* as well as other publications (e.g., Doyal & Muinzer, 2011; Smith, et al., 2012; Muinzer, 2013, etc.), now resolved in favour of removing the bones from display, though retaining them for study.

The removal of Charles Byrne's skeleton from public view is part of a recent trend to sequester individuals from display and to move the default policy to one of *not* displaying human remains in the absence of a compelling reason to do so. It is of a piece with the removal from display of the body of Saartje Bartman, an indigenous woman from South Africa who died in Paris in 1815, and her repatriation and reburial in 2002 (Gladstone & Barlo, 2011: 359, 362); and the 1993 repatriation and reburial of the Australian aborigine known as Tambo, who had been displayed in Drew's Dime Museum in Cleveland for many decades (ibid.: 359, 362).

Charles Byrne is an unusual case in that we know for certain that the investigation and exhibition of his remains was not in line with his wishes. Usually, although there is no explicit consent for display, there is no recorded desire not to be exhibited either. The trend towards removing the bodies of named and celebrated individuals such as Byrne, Tambo, and Bartman is partly bound up with post-colonial sensibilities about problematic and painful histories which have led to extensive repatriation claims against colonial museum collections. These cases are situated within the more familiar political and ethical context of the colonization, objectification, and control of the bodies of indigenous people by European colonial powers. As such, their repatriation and reburial are part of the broader project of post-colonial reparation. However, there is also a growing discomfort about invading the privacy or outraging the dignity of the dead. Museum exhibitions of human bodies place the viewer in a potentially transgressive and uncomfortable relationship with the exhibit. This is in tension with the noted widespread desire to have a material encounter with human remains. Whether that voyeuristic contact is violating or titillating, or both, depends to some extent on how it is framed by the museum.

There are still many circumstances where the display of human remains, within the context of a known and retold biography, is respectful and important. An obvious example would be the display and veneration of saintly relics in some religious traditions. In those cases, the provenance of saints' body parts is essential, and the relics are self-authenticating through their power to act miraculously in the world (e.g., Geary, 1990; Walsham, 2010; Sbardella, 2021).

Between person and thing: naming

Giving a name to human remains, whether it is the name that an individual is known to have possessed in life or one chosen in the present, calls the individual out from the numberless ranks of the dead and gives them the prerequisite for a biography, for a storied self. A name is a way of ascribing subjectivity. But there are two sides to that coin. Enduring fame can be a way to honour the dead, but it is also inevitably a selective and partial process which could equally result in intrusive and humiliating afterlives, over which the individual has no control.

Dead human bodies and body parts exist on a continuum between objects of science and lived lives. Their place on that scale can move, changing over time and with the changing cultural context in which they are presented and in which they are encountered. In a museum context, professionals choose language which both reflects and constructs a place on that continuum. As Cassman, Odegaard, and Powell (2007: 1) observe, terms like *specimen*, *object*, and, they think, *corpse* imply a greater distance between the remains and those who deal with them; *fossil*, *skeleton*, and *cadaver* are neutral; and *individual*, *person*, and *human remains* tend to reduce the distance between the dead and the living. When considering the ethical implications of how and where human remains are located conceptually, there is an important division between their significance for the past people whose remains they are, and the multiple stakeholders who encounter those remains afterwards. This does not only include modern people. Human remains have had important meanings for people in the past, too. Archaeologically, contexts in which human remains have been repurposed, relocated, adapted, or incorporated into later material structures are known in British prehistory since at least the upper palaeolithic (e.g., Parker Pearson, et al., 2005; Bello, et al., 2011; Brück & Booth, 2022). Past and present stakeholders bring to the encounter with human remains varying degrees of emotional engagement. At the 'lived lives' end of the spectrum are practices like using human tissue to make mnemonic and emotional items, such as hair jewellery (Lutz, 2011), ashes tattoos, when the cremated ashes of an individual are mixed into tattoo ink to write their individualized body permanently into another body (Heessels, et al., 2012), or saintly relics. These human remains are often profoundly emotionally meaningful. Also closely linked to the 'lived lives' end of the scale is the punitive retention of body parts — the taking of war trophies, or display of enemy or criminal heads on spikes, for example. At the other end are medical or scientific specimens or those rare occasions when human bodies are put to utilitarian use, such as being eaten (Saladié & Rodríguez-Hidalgo, 2017), processed for fertilizer (Pollard, 2022), or otherwise quarried for materials. The latter occasions are not commonly documented anthropologically,

and usually occur as part of an effort deliberately to dehumanize the victims of war, genocide, or murder.

Anonymity is one of the strategies used to move the remains further towards the universal body as an object of enquiry (thing) and away from a biographied and personalized self (person). In archaeological research, like medical research, naming individuals whose given names in life are unknown is generally frowned upon. I remember as a student being taught not to nickname the human skeletons I encountered during excavation or in the lab. But is human dignity always best served by maintaining anonymity? Ethnographers, folklorists and oral historians working with living informants have generally found that anonymity was emphatically not wanted by their informants. Instead, they wanted their names attached to their stories, and a chance to tell their truth (Martin Hobbs 2021). Of course, the exhibition of bodies is not the same as the telling of stories. However, responses to the exhibition of bodies have included the view that the individuals on show should be named where possible. Burns (2007) has argued that ethical qualms about Gunther von Hagens' 'Bodyworlds' exhibitions would be partially alleviated by including the name of the body donor on the card label that, at the time and location she visited the exhibition, bore von Hagens' signature. Leaving bodies and body parts unnamed contributes to their 'othering'. In the case of 'Bodyworlds', it moves the attention from the body as a real person, formerly alive and still perhaps acting as what anatomists call a 'silent teacher', towards von Hagens himself — the artist signing his work. The plastinated body is resituated as both a piece of authored art, and as an object of science. Neither of these incarnations leave much space for it also to be a person, a lived life.

Two exhibitions

Choosing to display any item in a museum or gallery changes its meaning and subordinates it to our categories (Hein, 2011). Sometimes a human body, or part of one, can be repositioned as a specimen or a curiosity (Gladstone & Barlo, 2011). This might be the desired outcome, such as at a medical museum, where the 'thingness' of the body is more important than its personal identity, and arguably the medical museum protects the 'patients', in the same way that photos in a medical journal do, by removing identifying features as far as possible (Sallam, 2019). What seem to be most important, however, are the uses to which displayed human remains are put (Claes & Deblon, 2018). As an example, consider two exhibitions only a few hundred metres apart: one a temporary exhibition at the National Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh, and the other the permanent display at the Surgeon's Hall Museum. The first was called 'Anatomy: A Matter of Death and Life' and ran from 2 July to 30 October 2022. The exhibition was particularly concerned with the history of anatomy in Edinburgh. The city was famous for medical education, especially in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but also notorious as the location of the Burke and Hare murders, a series of at least sixteen murders committed over about a year, mostly in 1828, by a couple of men who sold the bodies they obtained to a respectable anatomy school. By choosing vagrants, strangers, and friendless paupers, Burke and Hare managed to carry

out the murders without anyone even noticing for about a year. Eventually, they were caught. Hare offered to give evidence against his former partner, and so although both were guilty, and others were certainly involved as well, only William Burke was executed. The story of these murders is still very well known in the city and beyond, and was in some ways the hook for the exhibition (Phillipson, 2022).

Exhibits included medical tools, engravings, and models, as well as some of the devices used to try to keep bodies safe from grave robbers in the first third of the nineteenth century. The exhibition also showed a collection of miniature coffins and effigies, found eight years after the murders, elsewhere in the city, which might reference the graveless victims of Burke and Hare. It also includes the anatomized, prepared, and mounted skeleton of William Burke himself. During an interview, Tacye Phillipson, the senior curator of science at the NMS and the lead curator behind this exhibition, described to me the extensive discussions that had taken place among the curatorial team on the inclusion of human remains. For them, the decision to include the remains of a single named person was taken because it assisted the narrative of the exhibition — to make a coherent story. They decided not to include other human remains or anatomical preparations because the power of human remains is such that they can easily overwhelm other aspects of the story or message of the exhibition. Phillipson was determined that the exhibition should avoid scientific triumphalism, and be fair to all those involved in the story of anatomy. She especially wanted to convey the historical inequalities that led to the exploitation of the bodies of the poor and dispossessed to build the medical expertise practised by the rich and educated. It matters whose bodies are on show. To this end, the exhibition of the skeleton of a named person was contextualized in the history of medical museums and collecting. Phillipson's approach acknowledges and centres the asymmetry of power between the exhibitor and the exhibited. As Fforde (2004) notes, the history of public dissection and exhibition of human remains was a mechanism through which were constructed the power relations that police the boundary between normal and deviant, between functioning society and those who threaten it. In England, Wales, and Scotland, the threat of public dissection marked out the most serious of crimes, although the 1832 Anatomy Act ended the use of criminal bodies for science and replaced them with the bodies of the poor (Hurren, 2012). The Anatomy Act now cast the destitute, the friendless, and the placeless as the deviants, outside normal society and objectified accordingly. These were the bodies supplied to Edinburgh's anatomists and the quarry for the body parts that continue to populate its museums. It is certainly possible to argue that putting anything in a museum, and maybe especially into a museum display, objectifies it, subordinates it to the narratives and categories that inform the collection and exhibition, as what is potentially 'other' is fitted to known and familiar frameworks (Hein, 2011: 119–21).

All this contrasts notably with the second Edinburgh museum exhibition I want to discuss. The Surgeons' Hall Museum is housed at the headquarters of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, and is a typical medical museum. It is packed with human remains. The vast majority of the body parts on display at Surgeons' Hall are anonymous. Mostly, they are labelled with the name of the body part and a direction to the viewer to note what is typical or pathological in the specimen.

In this way, museum labels function like captions in a textbook. Names, biographies, and provenance are not usually included in the displayed information, although they might appear in a catalogue entry. Although the Surgeons' Hall Museum is intended as an educational facility for medical students, since its inception it has also been a resort of curious tourists, and from early in its history the curators have tried to encourage students to make greater use of it. The curious tourists, by contrast, continue to arrive and pay their entrance fees to walk around the collections. According to Irving (2023), 10,256 non-medical visitors came to the museum in 1839. Now the annual figure is around 87,000. And not all the exhibits have obvious educational potential. There is, for example, a pocket book bound in the skin of William Burke, the murderer whose skeleton was on display in the National Museum. Unlike the temporary anatomy exhibition at the NMS, the Surgeons' Hall Museum does not offer much context or a clear narrative to the display of all its exhibits, especially in the history of surgery collection. The style of display, for the vast majority of exhibits, is highly depersonalized, where exhibits stand for typical or pathological organs. Human remains are framed as part of natural history, not of personal biography or individualized identity. Yet a very small number of exhibits do not adhere to this protocol. For example, the museum displays a jar containing a supernumerary limb — a stunted third leg, which was removed from a fifty-year-old man in the mid-twentieth century. The exhibit is accompanied by some of the history of the limb's former possessor. This man had been treated as an outcast or monster, and his parents took his extra leg to be a diabolical marker of their own sin. He lived the life of a recluse, feared and avoided by his community. Following the removal of the limb by an Edinburgh surgeon, the man was able to wear trousers (rather than a kilt) for the first time. Sadly, however, the psychological effects of fifty years could not easily be reversed and, a few weeks later, the unnamed man returned to his solitary existence, where he died shortly afterwards of an infection unrelated to his surgery (Irving, 2022). Similarly, the visitor learns the story of a woman whose severely deformed pelvis caused her to lose all six of her babies, and who died herself after the successful delivery of her seventh child by caesarean section. Both of these stories have enough detail that it requires only very little empathetic imagination on the part of the visitor to evoke an emotional and interpersonal reaction. We respond, in many ways, as we would to a character in a book, whose story we have shared, and on whose experiences we have dwelt. Indeed, writer Ann Lingard (2016) used a residency at Surgeons' Hall to create poetry and prose in many voices, including the imagined voices of the doctors, the donors, and their families.

Archaeologists are familiar with navigating the territory between using human remains as a scientific and universal source of data, and respecting them as evidence of lived lives and narrative biographies of people who had names. Perhaps the question of naming relates to the use to which the human remains are put. In medical museums, for example, it is important that human material exemplifies either a healthy or a pathological anatomy. If all body parts are so idiosyncratic and unique, their educational value for medical teaching is massively diminished. Instead, their value lies in their interchangeability. Body parts are therefore typically labelled with the name of the organ or organs and the pathology demonstrated. The

biographical identity of the individual, unless directly relevant to the condition exemplified, is unlikely to be mentioned. But in museums, as in archaeological research, there is certainly a case that our ethical responsibility to past people is better discharged by fully humanizing them.

These two museums demonstrate different ways of displaying human remains in the same district of the same city: one largely anonymous, and one exhibiting the remains of a named individual, but only a single exhibit in an exhibition that, if the curators had made different decisions, offered the opportunity and pretext to present a cornucopia of bodies and body parts. What can we conclude about anonymity? It is hard to reach a clear principle to determine the circumstances under which it might be appropriate to identify the individuals from whom bodies and body parts are taken for exhibition. Naming or not naming an exhibit depends on what the exhibition seeks to achieve, what story it tries to tell. That must be weighed against how best to acknowledge the human subjects of display, their wishes, their story. Anonymity does not always help that cause and might sometimes work against it. In our development of thoughtful and considerate ethical responses, naming is not necessarily shaming.

Making it up

The expression ‘making it up’ means both to invent and to augment. Is there scope, in the exhibition of the archaeological past, to make it up, in both senses? In the written presentation and communication of archaeology there is a long history of using fiction, often in the form of vignettes (van Helden & Witcher, 2019). Such vignettes (e.g., Spector, 1993; Cooney, 2023) provide a set of eyes through which we can vicariously observe past events happening. They do not usually stray far into the psychological, emotional, or idiosyncratic character of a fictionalized past person. There is obvious scope to extend this fictionalizing approach in presenting material remains to the public. ‘Arguably,’ say van Helden and Witcher (2019: 18), ‘archaeologists have been slow to recognize, or at least to operationalize, the potential of personal microhistory or biography on the basis of human remains.’ More ambitious attempts to (re)create a past personality are evident in the works of Boutin and Haraldsson (e.g., Boutin, 2012; 2016; Boutin & Paolucci Callahan, 2019; Haraldsson, 2021). In conducting these explorations, they make use of lightly fictionalized narratives in which they give a name and a biography to the individuals they study. This is not just invention — it is ‘making up’, based on and developed out of the scientific information, but as a part of the effort of writing experiential and humanized pasts. It deliberately rejects the protocol of anonymity. These are not universal bodies.

The practice of giving a name and a story to a person who actually lived does raise ethical questions. First, are the stories we tell merely projections of a past ‘as wished for’, using the past to normalize our own narratives? And second, notwithstanding Dan Hicks’ pertinent point that ‘all history is rewriting history’ (Hicks, 2020), is the attribution of a name, worldview, or identity to a specific past person who might not recognize it, disrespectful of their difference? The balance here is between humanizing the people of the past by giving additional

traction for empathetic engagement, and misattributing a name and a lived experience. However, it is arguably the case that an erroneous but human story should be balanced not against a supposedly ‘neutral’ anonymity, but against the violence done to past people by pretending they have no story at all. After all, the dead are always and inevitably situated in stories that are not of their own making.

A spherical cow and an ethics of care

There is a long-standing joke, apparently originating in theoretical physics, that mocks scientific attempts to address complex real-world situations by postulating an unrealistically over-simplified model — a spherical cow. Because no cow is actually spherical, all the findings of the model are of no value in solving the situated and complicated real-world problems people face. Despite a widespread desire for them, fixed rules guiding the appropriate display of human remains risk positing an unrealistically clear-cut situation: a spherical cow. In the UK, a country which has a comparatively rich and extensive body of literature on archaeological ethics, there is apparently nevertheless a desire among museum professionals for an unambiguous code or body that would tell curators whether a proposed treatment of human remains was ethical, and if not, what steps would need to be taken to mitigate ethical harm. Triscott (2012) reported a round table discussion among art gallery professionals at which the desire to have gallery exhibitions in which any of the works include human tissue ‘signed off’ as ethical, although there is currently no regulatory body and no code that concerns itself particularly with human material in art. However, rules and codes on when and whether it is appropriate to display and identify the remains of named and known individuals are rarely adequate to the messiness and ambiguity of real situations, and can be counter-productive when they seem to offer an alternative to thoughtful and personal engagement. Decisions are contextual, complex, and rarely clear-cut. ‘Doing ethics’ is hard work but should not be circumvented or outsourced.

The British literature on ethics and human remains is comparatively extensive. However, much of it reworks or refines well-established lines of enquiry or endeavour. Additionally, much of the recent British literature is focused on practical questions of collections and research management, or shaping the visitor experience. While these are clearly significant matters, it is also important to maintain intellectual space for open-ended discussion. It is only through deep, personal engagement with issues such as the impact and implications of naming the dead that individuals can make thoughtful and contextual ethical decisions.

In conclusion, then, anonymity does not always protect the dignity or privacy of human remains, nor is anonymity always the best way to minimize possible harm, although there are circumstances in which scientifically useful information can be made available while affording some degree of protection to the individual. As archaeologists, we try to elucidate general truths about the past, which often requires large quantities of data. When those data take the form of human remains, their value is not necessarily in difference and idiosyncrasy but, as in many other fields of medical, scientific, and social research, in what is depersonalized, collective, and cumulative. But that is not all we do. We also seek out rich

and experiential personal histories in the past: the person who is often hard to find and whom we need to build out with plausible stories based on the, usually inadequate, data that we do have. As part of that project, it is entirely legitimate not only to use all the information we have, including a name, but also, where it is done with compassion and sympathy, to give a name to those past people.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This project is funded by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond. Stiftelsen för humanistisk och samhällsvetenskaplig forskning in a special call for Research on Research Ethics.

Notes

¹ This was the case when deciding the fate of the remains of Richard III and of unidentified remains from the Tower of London, for example, both of which exhumations aroused much media and public passion and were subject to conflicting

demands. I am grateful to Matt Morris and Alfred Hawkins for pointing this out.

² In fact, that phrase does not occur in the Greek version of the oath, although similar sentiments are present. The formulation, ‘first, do no harm’ seems to date from a seventeenth-century Latin version (Sokol 2013)

References

- Bahn, P. 1984. Do Not Disturb? Archaeology and the Rights of the Dead. *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 1: 213–25.
- Beauchamp, T.L. & Childress, J.F. 2001 (1979). *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, 5th ed. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bekvalac, J. 2015. The Display of Archaeological Human Skeletal Remains in Museums. In: R. Redmond-Cooper, ed. *Heritage, Ancestry and Law: Principles, Policies and Practices in Dealing with Historical Human Remains*. Bülth Wells: Institute of Art and Law, pp. 114–21.
- Bello S., Parfitt, S., & Stringer, C. 2011. Earliest Directly-Dated Human Skull-Cups. *PLoS ONE*, 6(2): e17026. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0017026
- Biers, T. 2020. Rethinking Purpose, Protocol and Popularity in Displaying the Dead in Museums. In: K. Squires, D. Errickson, and N. Márquez-Grant, eds. *Ethical Approaches to Human Remains: A Global Challenge in Bioarchaeology and Forensic Anthropology*. Cham: Springer, pp. 239–63.
- Biers, T. & Stringer Clary, K. eds. 2023. *The Routledge Handbook of Museums, Heritage and Death*. London: Routledge.
- Bonney, H., Bekvalac, J. & Phillips, C. 2020. Human Remains in Museum Collections in the United Kingdom. In: K. Squires, D. Errickson, and N. Márquez-Grant, eds. *Ethical Approaches to Human Remains: A Global Challenge in Bioarchaeology and Forensic Anthropology*. Cham: Springer, pp. 211–37.
- Boutin, A. 2012. Written in Stone, Written in Bone: The Osteobiography of a Bronze Age Craftsman from Alalakh. In: A. Stodder and A. Palkovich, eds. *The Bioarchaeology of Individuals*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, pp. 193–214.
- Boutin, A. 2016. Exploring the Social Construction of Disability: An Application of the Bioarchaeology of Personhood Model to a Pathogenic Skeleton from Ancient Bahrain. *International Journal of Palaeopathology*, 12: 17–28.

- Boutin, A. & Paolucci Callahan, M. 2019. Increasing Empathy and Reducing Prejudice: An Argument for Fictive Osteobiographical Narrative. *Bioarchaeology International*, 3(1): 78.
- Brück, J. & Booth, T. 2022. The Power of Relics: The Curation of Bone in British Bronze Age Burials. *European Journal of Archaeology*, 25(4): 440–62.
- Burns, L. 2007. Gunther von Hagens BODYWORLDS: Selling Beautiful Education. *American Journal of Bioethics*, 7(4): 12–23.
- Cassman, V., Odegard, N., & Powell, J. 2007. *Human Remains: Guide for Museums and Academic Institutions*. Lanham MD: AltaMira.
- Claes, T. & Deblon, V. 2018. When Nothing Remains: Anatomical Collections, the Ethics of Stewardship and the Meanings of Absence. *Journal of the History of Collections*, 30(2): 351–62.
- Cooney, G. 2023. *Death in Irish Prehistory*. Dublin: Royal Irish Academy.
- De Tienda Palop, L. & Currás, B. X. 2020. The Dignity of the Dead: Ethical Reflections on the Archaeology of Human Remains. In: K. Squires, D. Erickson, and N. Márquez-Grant, eds. *Ethical Approaches to Human Remains: A Global Challenge in Bioarchaeology and Forensic Anthropology*. Cham: Springer, pp. 19–37.
- Doyal, L. & Muinzer, T. 2011. Should the Skeleton of ‘the Irish Giant’ Be Buried at Sea? *British Medical Journal*, 2011(343): d7597.
- Fforde, C. 2004. *Collecting the Dead: Archaeology and the Reburial Issue*. London: Duckworth.
- Fforde, C. 2013. In Search of Others: The History and Legacy of ‘race’ Collections. In: S. Tarlow and L. Nilsson Stutz, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of Death and Burial*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 709–32.
- Fforde, C., Hubert, J. & Turnbull, P. 2004. *The Dead and Their Possessions: Repatriation in Principle, Policy and Practice*. New York: Routledge.
- Gazi, A. 2014. Exhibition Ethics – an Overview of Major Issues. *Journal of Conservation and Museum Studies*, 12(1). doi: 10.5334/jcms.1021213
- Geary, P. 1990. *Furta Sacra: Thefts of Relics in the Central Middle Ages*, rev. ed. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Giesen, M. ed. 2013. *Curating Human Remains: Caring for the Dead in the United Kingdom*. Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer.
- Giles, M. 2020. *Bog Bodies: Face to Face with the Past*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Giordano, S. 2005. Is the Body a Republic? *Journal of Medical Ethics*, 31: 470–75.
- Gladstone, M. & Barlo, J. 2011. Corporeal Ethics and Museum Representation. In: J. Marstine, ed. *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics: Redefining Ethics for the Twenty-First-Century Museum*. London: Routledge, pp. 353–65.
- Haraldsson, H.T. 2021. Fictive Osteobiographical Narrative – The Missing Puzzle Pieces. In: H.B. Sigurjónsdóttir and J.G. Rice, eds. *Understanding Disability Throughout History: Interdisciplinary Perspectives in Iceland from Settlement to 1936*. London: Routledge, pp. 163–80.
- Heessels, M., Poots, F., & Venbrux, E. 2012. In Touch with the Deceased: Animate Objects and Human Ashes. *Material Religion*, 8(4): 466–88. doi:10.2752/175183412X13522006994818
- Hein, H. 2011. The Responsibility of Representation. In: J. Marstine, ed. *The Routledge Companion to Museum Ethics: Redefining Ethics for the Twenty-First-Century Museum*. London: Routledge, pp. 112–22.
- Hicks, D. 2020. The UK Government Is Trying to Draw Museums into a Fake Culture War. *Guardian*, 15 October.
- Hon, K.L. 2013. Human Dignity and Rights Beyond Death. *Journal of Medical Ethics*, 39(10): 651.
- Hurren, E. 2012. *Dying for Victorian Medicine: English Anatomy and its Trade in the Dead Poor, c.1834–1929*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Irving, C. 2022. An Unwanted Extra Leg. Blog post on Surgeons’ Hall website, 31 January 2022, <https://surgeonshallmuseums.wordpress.com/2022/01/31/an-unwanted-extra-leg/> (accessed 23 March 2023).
- Irving, C. 2023. Conserving the Humanity of Human Remains. In: T. Biers and K. Stringer Clary, eds. *The Routledge Handbook of Museums, Heritage and Death*. London: Routledge. Available at: <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/edit/10.4324/9781003195870/routledge-handbook-museums-heritage-death-trish-biers-katie-stringer-clary> (accessed 23 August 2023).

- Jenkins, K. 2004. Ethical Responsibility and the Historian: On the Possible End of History 'of a certain kind'. *History and Theory*, 43(4): 43–60.
- Jenkins, T. 2011. *Contesting Human Remains in Museum Collections: The Crisis of Cultural Authority*. London: Routledge.
- Jones, D.G. & Harris, R. 1998. Archaeological Human Remains: Scientific, Cultural and Ethical Considerations. *Current Anthropology*, 39(2): 253–64.
- Jones, P.J., Bellet, B.W., & McNally, R.J. 2020. Helping or Harming? The Effect of Trigger Warnings on Individuals with Trauma Histories. *Clinical Psychological Science*, 8(5): 905–17.
- Kariwiga, J., Wrobel, G. & Westaway, M.C. 2023. Papuan Pasts: The Origins of Papuan Human Remains Collections in the World's Museums, the Issue of Repatriation and Telling New Stories with Skeletal Data. In: T. Biers and K. Stringer Clary, eds. *The Routledge Handbook of Museums, Heritage and Death*. London: Routledge. Available at: <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/edit/10.4324/9781003195870/routledge-handbook-museums-heritage-death-trish-biers-katie-stringer-clary> (accessed 23 August 2023).
- Krmpotich, J.F. & Harries, J. 2010. The Substance of Bones: The Emotive Materiality and Affective Presence of Human Remains. *Journal of Material Culture*, 15(4): 371–84.
- Licata, M., Bonsignore, A., Boano, R., Monza, F., Fulcheri, E., & Ciliberti, R. 2020. Study, Conservation and Exhibition of Human Remains: The Need of a Bioethical Perspective. *Acta Biomed*, 91(4): e2020110. doi:10.23750/abm.v91i4.9674
- Lingard, A. 2016. Tell Them Our Stories. <https://eliotandentropy.wordpress.com/category/tell-them-our-stories-surgeons-hall-museum-edinburgh/> (accessed 06 April 2023).
- Lutz, D. 2011. The Dead Still Among Us: Victorian Secular Relics, Hair Jewelry and Death Culture. *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 39(1): 127–42.
- Maranda, L. 2015. Museum Ethics in the Twenty-First Century: Museum Ethics Transforming into Another Dimension. *ICOFOM Study Series*, 43B: 151–65.
- Martin Hobbs, M. 2021. (Un) naming: Ethics, Agency and Anonymity in Oral Histories with Veteran-Narrators. *The Oral History Review*, 48(1): 59–82.
- Masterton, M. 2010. Duties to Past Persons: Moral Standing and Posthumous Interests of Human Remains. Doctoral thesis, Uppsala University.
- Muinzer, T. 2013. Grave Situation: An Examination of the Legal Issues Raised by the Life and Death of Charles Byrne, the 'Irish Giant'. *International Journal of Cultural Property*, 20: 23–48.
- Nicolis, F. 2022. Handle with Care: Theoretical Issues on Human Remains. Paper presented at European Archaeological Association annual meeting, Budapest, September 2022.
- Nilsson Stutz, L. 2023. Between Objects of Science and Lived Lives. The Legal Liminality of Old Human Remains in Museums and Research. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 29(10): 1061–74.
- Papineau, D. 2012. Can We Be Harmed After We Are Dead? *Journal of Evaluation in Clinical Practice*, 18: 1091–94.
- Parker Pearson, M., Chamberlain, A., Collins, M., Craig, O., Marshall, P., Mulville, J., Smith, H., Chenery, C., Cook, G., Craig, G., Evans, J., Hiller, J., Montgomery, I., Schwenninger, J.L., Taylor, G., & Wess, T. 2005. Evidence for Mummification in Bronze Age Britain. *Antiquity*, 79: 529–46.
- Phillipson, T. 2022. *Anatomy: A Matter of Death and Life*. Edinburgh: National Museum of Scotland.
- Podjed, D. & Bartulović, A. 2012. Display of Human Remains in Slovenian Museums: An Ethical Problem. *Ethnologie Française*, 42(2): 271–80.
- Pollard, T. 2022. *These Spots of Excavation Tell: Using Early Visitor Accounts to Map the Missing Graves of Waterloo*. *Journal of Conflict Archaeology*, 16(2): 75–113.
- Robb, J. 2009. Towards a Critical Otziography: Inventing Prehistoric Bodies. In: H. Lambert and M. McDonald, eds. *Social Bodies*. New York: Berghan Books, p. 100.
- Roberts, C. 2020. Ethical and Practical Challenges of Working with Archaeological Human Remains, with a Focus on the UK. In: K. Squires, D. Erickson, and N. Márquez-Grant, eds. *Ethical Approaches to Human Remains: A Global Challenge in Bioarchaeology and Forensic Anthropology*. Cham: Springer, pp. 133–55.
- Rugg, J. & Holland, S. 2017. Respecting Corpses: The Ethics of Grave Re-use. *Mortality*, 22(1): 1–14.

- Saladié, P. & Rodriguez-Hidalgo, A. 2017. Archaeological Evidence for Cannibalism in Prehistoric Western Europe: From Homo Antecessor to the Bronze Age. *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory*, 24: 1034–71.
- Sallam, A. 2019. The Ethics of Using Human Remains in Medical Exhibitions. *Yale Journal of Biology and Medicine*, 92(4): 765–69.
- Sayer, D. 2017. *Ethics and Burial Archaeology*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Sbardella, F. 2021. Against the Sacred Body: The Processing of Remains in Catholic Circles. *Human Remains and Violence*, 7(1): 52–71.
- Scarre, G. 2003. Archaeology and Respect for the Dead. *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 20(3): 237–49.
- Scarre, G. 2013. Privacy and the Dead. *Philosophy in the Contemporary World*, 19 (1): 1–16.
- Smith, M., Knusel, C., Chamberlain, A., & Mitchell, P. 2012. We Cannot Change the Past, but We Can Learn from It. Letter to *British Medical Journal*, 24 January 2012.
- Sokol, D.K. 2013. 'First do no harm' revisited. *British Medical Journal*, 347: f6426.
- Spector, J. 1993. *What this awl means: feminist archaeology at a Wahpeton Dakota village*. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press
- Squires, K & D. Piombino-Mascali 2021. Ethical considerations associated with the display and analysis of juvenile mummies from the Capuchin catacombs of Palermo, Sicily. *Public Archaeology* 20(1–4): 66–84
- Squires, K., D. Errickson & N. Márquez-Grant 2020. Introduction. In K. Squires, D. Errickson and N. Márquez-Grant (eds) *Ethical approaches to human remains: a global challenge in bioarchaeology and forensic anthropology*. Cham: Springer: 1–15
- Swain, H. 2013. Dealings with the dead: a personal consideration of the ongoing human remains debate. In M. Giesen (ed.) *Curating human remains: caring for the dead in the United Kingdom*. Newbridge: Boydell and Brewer: 25–30
- Tarlow, S. 2001a. Decoding ethics. *Public archaeology* 1: 245–59
- Tarlow, S. 2001b. The responsibility of representation. In M. Pluciennik (ed.) *The responsibilities of archaeologists: archaeology and ethics*. Lampeter Workshop in Archaeology 4 (BAR Int. 981). Oxford: Oxbow: 57–64
- Tarlow, S. 2006. Archaeological ethics and the people of the past. In C. Scarre and G. Scarre (eds) *The ethics of archaeology: philosophical perspectives on archaeological practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 199–218
- Tarlow, S. 2016. Curious afterlives: the enduring appeal of the criminal corpse. *Mortality* 21(3): 210–228
- Triscott, N. 2012. Wasted debates: using human remains in art. Blogpost 18/2/12 <https://nicolatriscott.org/2012/02/18/wasted-debates-using-human-remains-in-art/> (accessed 05 December 2022).
- Vainio, A. 2012. Beyond research ethics? Anonymity as 'ontology', 'analysis' and 'independence'. *Qualitative Research* 13(6): 685–98
- Van Broekhoven, L. 2023. Entangled entitlements and Shuar Tsantsa (shrunk heads). In T. Biers and K. Stringer (eds), *The Routledge Handbook of Museums, Heritage and Death*. London: Routledge. Available at <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/edit/10.4324/9781003195870/routledge-handbook-museums-heritage-death-trish-biers-katie-stringer-clary> (Accessed 23 August 2023).
- van Helden, D. & R. Witcher 2019. Historical fiction and archaeological interpretation. In D. van Helden and R. Witcher (eds) *Researching the archaeological past through imagined narratives*. London: Routledge. Available at <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/edit/10.4324/9780203730904/researching-archaeological-past-imagined-narratives-robert-witcher-dani%C3%ABl-van-helden> (accessed 25 July 2023).
- Vizenor, G. 1986. Bone courts: the rights and narrative representation of tribal bones. *American Indian Quarterly* 10(4): 319–31
- Walsham, A. 2010. *Relics and remains*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Notes on contributor

Sarah Tarlow is Professor of Historical Archaeology at the University of Leicester, UK. She has researched and published extensively on the archaeology of death and

burial, post-medieval archaeology in northern Europe, archaeological theory and ethics. She is a member of the Ethical Entanglements project, led by Professor Liv Nilsson Stutz. Having completed a major project on the afterlife of the criminal corpse, she is now exploring interdisciplinary approaches to end-of-life decision making, and the intersection of life writing, history, and archaeology.

Correspondence to: Sarah Tarlow, School of Archaeology and Ancient History, University of Leicester, University Road, Leicester LE1 7RH, UK. Email: sat12@le.ac.uk. Twitter: [@sarahtarlow](https://twitter.com/sarahtarlow)