Editorial

This seventeenth issue of *Human Remains and Violence* shows that our journal is gradually and persistently contributing to the consolidation of a new, international and multidisciplinary field of studies questioning the social uses of dead bodies and human remains through different times, spaces and societies. The Spring 2023 issue features five original contributions grounded in art history, social anthropology, museology and forensic anthropology. They all enlighten the aesthetic, moral and political issues surrounding various funeral, scientific or patrimonial treatments of human remains in nineteenth-, twentieth- and twenty-first-century Europe and the United States.

Italian art historian Greta Plaitano, studying the history of ‘artistic anatomy’ teaching at the Milanese academy of fine arts during the nineteenth century, examines the complex links established between medical science and the visual arts in the development of this discipline in modern Europe, as well as the various issues raised by the use of anatomical preparations for art purposes. In so doing, Plaitano offers new insights into the long-lasting role granted to corpses in the visual arts grammar.

Austrian forensic anthropologist Constanze Schattke and her colleagues from three Austrian, German and Chilean scientific and cultural institutions focus their interest on the remains of fourteen Selk’nam individuals belonging to an autochthonous group of Tierra del Fuego (an archipelago off the southernmost tip of the South American mainland, across the Strait of Magellan), currently held by the Department of Anthropology at the Natural History Museum of Vienna. They demonstrate that the use of non-invasive methods aiming at rebuilding a biological profile may contribute to bringing these individuals closer to their communities of origin. In their related contribution, Chilean curator Fernanda Olivares and her colleagues from the University of Vienna uncover the fate as well as the social and cultural life of these same artefacts, from the moment they were collected to the
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present day, thereby revealing the long-lasting legacy of colonialism in European cultural institutions.

Turning to the United States, American forensic anthropologist Jay E. Silverstein analyses why and how the success of the process of identification of the remains of a First World War United States soldier found in France might be challenged by administrative, if not political, considerations.

Fast-forwarding to the present, Italian social anthropologist Silvia Romio, studying the professional and emotional experience of Italian funeral workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, shows the extent to which having to deal with corpses seen as contagious may challenge burial practices and representation.

Together these five articles reveal that the treatment of human remains is oftentimes as much a matter of science and ethics as one of politics and social norms.

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