

Rebecca Gowland and Tim Thompson, *Human Identity and Identification* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013, 233 pp., £26.99, €43, \$49.99, paperback).

Traditionally, an individual is viewed as the sum of two components: the biological component, i.e. the body, and the socio-cultural component, i.e. the spirit or mind. These two components are often studied separately in questions dealing with identification and identity. Following this dichotomous view of the individual, identification is often based on individual biological categories (age, sex, ancestry and stature), almost systematically, without considering the physical and emotional impact that socio-cultural and environmental factors can have on identity and identification methods. The authors of *Human Identity and Identification* (Cambridge University Press, 2013), Rebecca Gowland and Tim Thompson, reaffirm the importance of considering such factors by presenting a holistic view of human identification and its construction and categorisation in relation to current discourse within both social and biological sciences. Through an analysis of the different body components, the authors expose the embodiment of identity, the examination of the interrelationship of the physicality of the body and the social milieu, and its impact on identification. The authors synthesise and bridge the mostly disparate biological and social discourses on the human body in order to advance human identification sciences towards a more integrated approach that includes both the social discourse on identity and the biological techniques and protocols constructed for biological identification.

Chapters 1 and 2 of this book present the Western historical contexts within which human identification techniques were developed; the social (but body-mediated) conceptions of different categories of human identity and their biological counterparts (gender and sex, ageing and age perception, ethnicity and race, socio-economic status) are presented in parallel, in relation to the body and to one another, illustrating the complexity of these connections. Each biological or social theory, concept and idea is briefly presented, illustrated by one or several examples and multiply referenced. Readers, who no doubt will come from a diversity of backgrounds, will appreciate this. The authors also set out the modern contexts and

applications of human identification, and the difficulties in successfully identifying individuals because of the complexity of the role of the physical body, which acts as the projector of both social and biological identities.

Chapters 3 to 6 each examine different tissues of the human body, and how each one contributes to human identification and identity, by synthesising and integrating these two traditionally disparate strands of research on the human body. Much like a dissection, the order of the chapters follows an examination of the body from the outside-in (the skin, blood, the eyes, body fat, the skeleton), and its relation to identity and identification methods, from the macroscopic (e.g. dermatographics, blood groups, iris and retina scans, organs and the delicate subject of organ transplants, skeletal biological profile) to the cellular and molecular (DNA, microbial body communities and isotopes) levels. Each chapter starts with a synthetic but complete presentation of the anatomical, functional and histological characteristics of the bodily structure concerned, followed by a presentation of the identification techniques that can be applied to it for individuals of extant or past populations, and the way in which the body becomes constructed and enmeshed within aspects of social work through each structure. Several compelling examples clearly illustrate this fact for all the tissues explored. Chapter 7 deals with intentional dermal and skeletal modifications, surgical implants and virtual identities and their role as representatives of an individual or collective social and psychological identity through the physical body, which are informative for identification.

This book will be of great interest to researchers and practitioners in forensic anthropology, bioarchaeology, forensic medicine, pathology and social sciences alike. It regroups and confronts the main biological and social theories, concepts and techniques pertaining to human identity and identification to better present their strong intertwining that can be found at every level of the human body. The diversity and great number of references in this work are of particular value as they allow for further investigation of the different concepts presented throughout the book, as well as accurately reflecting the holistic approach adopted by the authors.

Each chapter set outs to illustrate how past biological reductionism (dominance of DNA) and the common artificial and static categorisations of the biological and social dynamic continuums that contribute to identity need to give way to social constructionism, i.e. constructing social identity and understanding the physical body and its plasticity that lead to the variable and adaptable physical embodiment of social and biological processes that are accessible through biological markers. The context of human identification clearly demonstrates the need to address identity as a social orchestration of mutual influences between the biological body and social aspects of that identity, rather than as a series of biological categories. In this regard, this work serves as a convincing advocate for the creation of a stronger and lasting bond between the social and biological sciences in general, and for questions and fields of research related to identity and identification in particular.

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The Greyfriars Research Team with Maev Kennedy and Lin Foxhall, *The Bones of a King: Richard III Rediscovered* (New York, Wiley-Blackwell, 2015, 232 pp., £18.99, €18.89, \$29.95, hardback).

That was never how the media saw it. Before the first digger blade hit the tarmac, the only story was the hunt for the king under the car park. If the news leaked of the discovery of so much as a knuckle bone, still less an entire skeleton with a twisted spine and a gaping war wound in the skull, it would inevitably provoke a feeding frenzy. On her lap, in the plastic box, as months of research would ultimately prove, Appleby held the skull of a king. (p. 57)

The media frenzy surrounding the discovery of Richard III's skull in the centre of Leicester by a team of archaeologists obscured the thorough and fascinating research that was conducted following the excavation. This research is described in this short but dense and fascinating book bearing the strange signature of the 'Greyfriars Research Team'. This team remained informal throughout the research and its members are listed after the table of contents. They range from Jo Appleby, an osteoarchaeologist, to Robert C. Woosnam-Savage, expert in medieval arms, armour and battlefield archaeology, with, in the middle of the list, the isotopes expert Angela Knight. The discovery was triggered when Philippa Langley, an 'enthusiastic member of the Richard III Society based in Edinburgh', suggested that the remains of the infamous Richard III – whose legacy is mostly remembered by the villain character described long after the King's death, by Shakespeare – should be searched for. The archaeologist Richard Buckley used the scholarly works of medievalists to guess where the chapel of the Greyfriars monastery might have been: hence the carpark in the centre of Leicester, and the incredible luck of finding a curiously positioned though entire skeleton, with a twisted spine, after a few hours of digging. As soon as the skeleton had been excavated with great care, a wide range of experts contributed to the project, from skeletal analysis to 3D printouts, from specialists in medieval armaments to literary scholars, epigraphists and art historians. X-rays were taken, DNA samples were compared to those of acknowledged heirs of Richard III. Each chapter develops in a simple and very approachable way the expertise in different fields. The analysis of the wounds shown on the bones proved that the King had been killed after having been downed by his enemies. The sentence that Shakespeare attributed to King Richard III, 'My kingdom for a horse', is proved, then, to be very plausible. Genealogy was important in the search for identification, as 'if a true line of descent could be confirmed, mitochondrial DNA offered the best chance of finding a match between Skeleton 1 in the car park and a living relative'. Richard III had died without children but one of his sisters, Anne of York, had one surviving daughter whose lineage continues to this day. But DNA matching – a complex process in itself, used for criminal cases and increasingly in the field of international criminal law and for the identification of victims of mass violence and genocide – did not appear sufficient to the researchers. Caroline Wilkinson, Professor of Craniofacial Identification at Dundee University, used CT scans to 'put flesh on the crane and the bones'. The result was superimposed onto

an early portrait of Richard III kept at the National Portrait Gallery; ‘the match was startlingly close’. The last chapters of the book are filled with a study of the news reception, the media frenzy and the exhibition of the bones. People queued for hours to see the skeleton, before the coffin was sealed and buried in the cathedral. Richard III’s legacy is now more than a play by Shakespeare: there is a Visitor’s Centre named after him, in an attempt to rejuvenate a cityscape that has been hit hard by economic recession.

The certain identification of an individual’s remains almost 500 years after their death is an extraordinary, maybe unique, enterprise. What is not said in this interdisciplinary book is what a political analysis could say about the monarchistic leaning of a country where so many scientists were ready to work at weekends to uncover the bones of one of their kings.

Jean-Marc Dreyfus, The University of Manchester

Zoë Crossland and Rosemary A. Joyce (eds), *Disturbing Bodies: Perspectives on Forensic Anthropology* (Santa Fe and New Mexico, School of Advanced Research Press, 2015, 248 pp., \$39.95, paperback).

Disturbing Bodies examines the social, political, ethical and methodological implications of exhuming human remains from a variety of perspectives. It adds to the growing literature on the topic but is original enough to stand out. Thus, a remarkable issue is that the editors are not forensic scientists, but archaeologists *sensu lato*. Crossland and Joyce are known for their theoretical contributions to archaeology, and they bring with them the insights and concerns of their discipline. This is particularly obvious in their excellent introduction, but also informs several chapters, which show a significant integration. Two main ideas run through the entire volume: one is that forensic work is a culture-specific practice that has to be tuned in to the different contexts in which it operates. The other is that forensic anthropology is more than a set of techniques. In keeping with the tenet that forensic anthropology is first and foremost anthropology, they propose professional and academic practices that are more reflective and critical, and illustrate these with their own experiences.

Thus, in the second chapter Luis Fondebrider writes from the vantage point of someone who has been at the forefront of the investigation of crimes against humanity for thirty years. He underlines the diversity of situations in which forensic experts operate and the need to adapt to different cultural and religious contexts. An all too common situation, however, is the lack of distinction between the state apparatus that committed the crimes and the one that has to investigate them. Fondebrider makes the crucial point that it is necessary to understand the State in order to examine its crimes: forensic anthropologists, then, have to become political anthropologists, too.

The chapter by Isaías Rojas-Pérez follows this line and offers an illuminating account of forensic work in Peru and its relationship with the State, by problematising the ambiguous position of the expert. What I find problematic is the divide

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between the muted subaltern identified by the anthropologist in the place of exhumation and the holders of epistemic authority (forensic scientists). The discovery of the wise but marginalised subaltern is a trope of much recent ethnography, which locates the anthropologist in a situation of moral and epistemic superiority vis à vis other experts. The situation is far less clear to me: many forensic practitioners working in mass-grave exhumations show a degree of reflection on their work that is at odds with the image delineated by Rojas-Pérez.

The chapter by Tim Thompson outlines the difficulties of standardisation in forensic anthropology. As others contributors, Thompson asks practitioners to embrace anthropology in a more holistic way, which, he argues, implies accepting all those aspects that are not quantifiable and that are therefore difficult to homogenise. Unfortunately, he does not delve so much into the problems faced by practitioners in different cultural contexts, but focuses on issues of standardisation of methods and training. While important, they are less interesting from an anthropological perspective.

Hugh Tuller's chapter presents another dichotomy present in some forensic research, in this case research dictated by transnational organisations: the dichotomy between the identification of victims and the retrieval of evidence of crimes against humanity. Surprisingly, some organisations consider that specialists tasked with recovering victims should not collect criminal evidence in mass graves, so as not to jeopardise the neutrality of the endeavour by hinting at culprits. Tuller forcefully argues for forensic archaeologists working as archaeologists, not mere technicians. Therefore, he defends a forensic archaeology that, in line with the aims and potentialities of archaeology, can identify patterns of behaviour and contribute to narrating the events surrounding mass killings.

Crossland's chapter offers an original analysis of the popular literature produced by forensic scientists. She argues that this kind of examination can open new avenues for rethinking forensic practice. Crossland sees experts portrayed as liminal figures inhabiting 'a zone of transgression where normal practices can be subverted in the search for truth' and whose mission is to rearticulate the dead with the living. It is perhaps worth noting that although the genre of forensic writing is certainly very Anglo-Saxon it is not completely unknown outside this tradition, as proved by the memories of Peruvian anthropologist José Pablo Baraybar, *La Muerte a Diario* (2012).

Two papers tackle the vexed question of race: Welsh-Haney and Boys approach the problem from the perspective of the forensic anthropologist and emphasise the disconnect that often exists between physical definitions of race and the subjective perceptions of individuals and collectives. As professionals, they advise avoiding unequivocal racial (ancestry) terms in forensic reports. Pamela Geller, in turn, offers a fascinating account of the conditions in which the 'Seminole' skulls of Samuel G. Morton became part of his collection, exposing the history of violence that underlies much nineteenth-century forensic science. In the opinion of this reviewer, the later discussion is not so penetrating: that identities are ambiguous, fluid and hybrid and the vocabulary of physical anthropology too bounded and static has been pointed out before. However, are we not running the risk of dema-

terialising bodies by emphasising subjective and cultural perceptions over physical traits?

Debra Martin summarises many of the points raised throughout the volume. As other contributors, she makes a strong defence of forensic anthropology as part of anthropology in general and proposes to overcome another divide: the one between past and present which is inherent to the division of labour between bio-archaeology and forensic anthropology.

A similar position is adopted in the final chapter, by Rosemary Joyce. She extends to the deep past the ethical responsibilities facing those who deal with the recent dead. She argues that this responsibility is expressed, among other things, through the narratives that we construct about the dead and the way in which we describe them. The word ‘remains’, she writes, expresses well the persistence of the dead in the present. and this persistence (‘human remains remain human’) is what explains the ‘grave responsibilities’ met by archaeologists digging the dead.

In sum, this is an excellent volume that proves, in an eloquent way, that forensic anthropology is much better when it is simply anthropology.

Alfredo Gonzalez Ruibal, Spanish National Research Council

Anthony Oliver-Smith et al., *Forensic Investigations of Disasters (FORIN): A Conceptual Framework and Guide to Research*, <http://www.irdrinternational.org/2016/01/21/irdr-publishes-the-forin-project-a-conceptual-framework-and-guide-to-research/>

Anthony Oliver-Smith (Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at the University of Florida), Irasema Alcántara-Ayala (Professor and Researcher on Integrated Disaster Risk), Ian Burton (Emeritus Professor in the Department of Geography at the University of Toronto) and Allan M. Lavell (PhD in Economic Geography and founding member of the Latin American network for the social study of disaster prevention – LA RED) come together with a guide available online that will lead the reader through the basics of disaster investigations. They thus provide a conceptual foundation for understanding risk construction as a process, defining analytical themes such as hazard, exposure, vulnerability and resilience, and explaining how the process evolves from the social construction of risk to the social production of disaster.

This guide is an interesting, easy-to-read and very informative text about disasters in general and specifically about the research of disasters and disaster risk management. The bibliography, while not extensive, is in itself a good contribution for anyone interested in the topic of disasters. Images, text boxes and case studies make this guide fresh and attractive, directed to a wide audience, from undergraduate students to ministerial policy makers. As such, the guide, which can be downloaded for free, should be part of the library of public policy planners, urban and rural developers, doctors, sociologists, economists, etc.

I must nevertheless confess that the concept of ‘Forensic Investigation’ attached to the guide, is hard to comprehend, and I personally believe unnecessary. It is

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explained by the authors that the term ‘forensic’ is used to indicate a search for root causes, and that concern about the use of the term forensic has been expressed previously, which maybe should received more attention because it predisposes the reader to find something in the text that is not there, at least not substantially. In fact, I would not have attached so much importance to the use of this term if it were not part of the title of the book, but whatever the reason why the authors chose to use this term, it cannot be ignored that use of the term forensic is mostly, if not entirely, related to the processes of a court of law, if not to crime itself. In fact there are many scenarios where the disaster research roots are far removed from the court of law. Of course, proper research of any disaster can be used in a judiciary process, but the starting point of disaster research should not be forensics. In addition to this, all the approaches suggested for the research of disasters are mainstream, and unspecific for forensic research.

Leaving the title behind, this guide does a great job of demystifying disasters, explaining in depth the concepts of risk drivers, hazards, vulnerability and exposure. The multifactorial causes of disasters and the demonstration of them as a product of social construct and not as events happening out of the blue are the main messages of this guide. From this perspective, all disasters can be anticipated – if not within a specific time frame, can at least the risks be identified and some measures can be taken to prevent or diminish the damage resulting from them.

The proposed, multidisciplinary and context-specific method of research, although sometimes difficult to implement, is well argued and should be taken on board by governmental authorities. Independent research can contribute enormously to disaster risk management, but in order to have a real impact it must be embedded within the larger national and international framework.

Awareness on the part of governmental agencies, the media and the public in general that disasters have social roots (in other words, that there is nothing ‘natural’ about them) and that they happen and have consequences as the result of our conduct is vital in terms not only of accountability but also as an effective means of prevention. An informed public and media, focused on the root causes of disasters more than on their more visible aftermath, can pursue a more involved and committed action on the part of the authorities.

Disasters have, sadly, become a frequent reality that tends to greatly affect the most vulnerable populations. The conceptual framework presented in this worthwhile book makes the reader aware not only of the possibilities for prevention but also of the misuse or neglect of information.

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Stefanie Jansen-Wilhelm, *Accepting Assistance in the Aftermath of Disasters: Standards for States under International Law* (Antwerp/Cambridge/Portland, Intersentia, 2015, 246 pp., £49.56, €66.52, \$71, paperback).

Stefanie Jansen-Wilhelm’s study, developed out of her doctoral dissertation submitted at the University of Tilburg, offers a first extended analysis of legal

principles governing disaster response at the international level. The issue of state obligations in the wake of disaster is, as she notes in her introduction, one that to date has been granted remarkably scant attention in scholarship on international law. In an attempt to narrow this research gap, Jansen-Wilhelm undertakes an impressively broad-ranging exploration of sources containing various rights, rules and standards that, taken together, might be taken to constitute a legal framework for regulating state action in the aftermath of disasters.

The leading question at the heart of the study, helpfully stated in explicit terms at the outset, is as follows: 'to what extent does public international law contain standards for affected states determining whether the affected state must accept international humanitarian assistance after the occurrence of a disaster?' (8) It is, precisely, the question of state obligations (i.e. the extent to which states *must* accept assistance) that occupies the main part of the discussion. The point of departure for the analysis is supplied by the view that there currently exists no coherent legal framework on disaster response – the sources from which relevant rules and principles can be derived are, it is shown, scattered and fragmentary at best. In metaphor, these sources represent 'pieces of a puzzle' (the phrase occurs twice in the cover text) that must be fitted together so as to provide an orderly structure for guiding state action. It is to this task that the first substantive section of the study (Part I) is devoted. Two steps are followed here. First, the author chases down, in a wide-angle perspective, potential sources, identifying relevant instruments from across the broad field of international law and scrutinising how they might contribute to the demarcation of a clear framework on the acceptance of humanitarian assistance in the aftermath of disaster (Chapter II). This provisional framework is then, in the subsequent chapter, tested in relation to practical concerns, allowing for the diagnosis of various gaps and inadequacies and for the spotlighting of the need for more specific regulations and standards (Chapter III). To this end, the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and the provisions therein relating to housing, food, water and wealth, are identified as carrying particular promise for the realisation of a more concrete legal framework for the subject at hand.

Taking this argument forward, the second major section of the study (Part II) revolves around an attempt to tie together the disparate rules and principles identified as possessing relevance to disaster response issues into a more structured system of legal standards for state conduct. Focusing in particular on the ICESCR, this section opens with an in-depth consideration of the specific obligations that attend to Article 2(1) of the Covenant, as these may be adduced from the rules of treaty interpretation delineated in the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (Chapter IV). The theoretical principles outlined in this regard are then, in the chapter that follows, applied in relation to the practical ramifications of disaster response, whereby the analysis hones in on the particular rights to housing, food, water and wealth set out in the ICESCR and the obligations that states owe to their citizens to ensure the protection of such rights in the wake of disaster (Chapter V). Drawing these elements together, the study closes with a short summary in which the author succinctly recaps her arguments and presents her concluding

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view – namely, that if disaster-affected states are unable to protect and secure access to core rights (thus violating their obligations under international human rights law), and if they have no other extenuating reason for refusing aid, then they must, according to the dictates of international law, accept humanitarian assistance where it is offered.

Jansen-Wilhelm's monograph represents, doubtless, a valuable addition to the field of international law research. The text is well written, with any stylistic infelicities few and far between. The argument is, meanwhile, lucid, engaging and illuminating. That the study grew out of a PhD thesis is perhaps reflected in a tendency to restate and summarise key findings – at points, this does have the effect of rendering the discussion slightly more ponderous than one might wish. On balance, however, the doctoral origins of the text work in its favour, lending the argument a commendable meticulousness and rigour and ensuring a clarity of structure that effectively guides the reader through the material from introduction to conclusion. Whether one agrees with the author's findings, either in their overarching tenor or in their finer points, is, of course, open to question. One certainly suspects that subsequent scholars will look to question, refine and expand upon the analysis offered here. Anyone who does broach the subject in the coming years will, however, be heavily indebted to Jansen-Wilhelm's initial mapping of previously uncharted terrain. In sum, this is an impressive piece of scholarship that could – and should – help to initiate further discussion and debate on a significant issue within international law. One thus hopes that it will attract the wide readership that it deserves.

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