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Editorial

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As academics, we strongly believe in the free circulation of thoughts and ideas. This journal is thus the outcome of a research programme that lasted for several years, during which the overarching objective was to generate dialogue between academics and practitioners with various expertise on human remains in contexts of mass violence all over the world. We launched this journal with the aim of pursuing this dialogue, and this issue perfectly illustrates this objective.

As editors of *Human Remains and Violence. An Interdisciplinary Journal*, we are aware that this issue marks an important milestone in the existence of our journal since it is the first one to be published straight away in open access, that is, without fee or subscription. We are convinced that this initiative will increase the journal's impact and worldwide readability and generate even more editorial projects.

This fifth issue shows perfectly how rich is our scope. Written by expert authors, the six scientific articles contained herein address the issue of exhumations of human remains from a diversity of angles and with a variety of geographical focuses, thereby prompting a comparative assessment of the issues raised and of the solutions adopted by different states faced with human remains.

Looking at the past through a historical lens, Queralt Solé and Jacques Gersternkorn respectively explore, on the one hand, the building of the Valle de los Caídos (the Valley of the Fallen) – a huge cenotaph assembling Franco's tomb and the remains of the Spanish Civil War's soldiers, and, on the other, the fate of an eighteenth-century Jewish cemetery recently discovered in the French city of Lyon. The convergence between those two case studies is fascinating: while one illustrates the distant consequences of a civil war and the on-going process of coming to terms with a difficult, violent and still polemical past, the other reveals how Holocaust memory nowadays influences the treatment of ancient but 'ordinary' Jewish graves unrelated to mass violence. Both contributions highlight the persistence of human remains that do not rest until properly buried, as well as they do the long-lasting aftermaths of irregular inhumations. Linking the past to the present and focusing on the case of victims of Brazilian dictatorship, forensic anthropologist Marco Aurélio Guimarães argues that exhumation – although a social and historical event – can be properly understood only when the routine and technical work conducted in mortuaries is taken into account.

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Turning more to the future, legal scholar Melanie Klinkner dissects normative provisions in order to propose guidelines ensuring the protection of mass graves and, in her own words, to serve as 'a tool to enhance the chance of identifying victims of gross human rights violations and safeguarding evidence to help bring perpetrators to justice'. The inescapable links between human remains and mass graves, forensic evidence and criminal justice are also at the heart of Jeremy Sarkin's legal analysis of the potential – and positive – impact of scientific and technological developments in the search for, recovery and identification of the missing and the disappeared. To conclude this issue, political scientist Keith Krause addresses the critical – yet often overlooked – question of body counts, considering what is at stake in its various manipulations.

All of the articles enlighten a complex and yet always crucial powerplay between numerous actors – be they administrations, clerics, developers, family members or magistrates – and argue that corpses and human remains produced by mass violence have a political agency that goes far beyond the funerary rituals themselves. These contributions also clearly demonstrate, when read as a whole, that interdisciplinary work is a necessity when we are questioning what is at stake in the treatment of human remains. Rather than evidencing splits and fractures, the meeting of diverse disciplines to address various societies' reactions to the presence or absence of human remains thus tends to reveal a globalising trend in terms of forensic knowledge, social and cultural reactions and legal impact. This is precisely why we very much hope that the dialogue between experts will continue, now free of obstacles thanks to the Open Access Initiative supported by our publishers, Manchester University Press. To finish, we want to express to them, in the name of all academics who have been and will be involved in the life of this journal, our sincere gratitude.

Élisabeth Anstett, Jean-Marc Dreyfus & Caroline Fournet
Editors