

Death and Violence

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Abstracts

Contaminated remains: Violent deaths and monstrous ashes

Dr Imogen Jones

University of Leeds

On 13th October 2017 the High Court handed down its judgment relating to the disputed disposal of Ian Stewart-Brady's body. Brady was a serial killer who in the 1960's, with the assistance of his partner Myra Hindley, tortured and murdered five children. Their victim's bodies were buried on Saddleworth Moor, an area of peatland lying to the north-east of Manchester. The dispute centred on the right of Brady's named executor (Makin) to dispose of his body as he wished. It gained traction when Makin refused to provide Christopher Sumner, the Coroner for Sefton (the area in which Brady died), with detailed assurances regarding his plans for Brady's body. This case, and with-it Brady's remains, brought to the fore the issue of what to do when a person's lifetime actions are so toxic that they contaminate that person's corpse and, indeed ashes.

The treatment of Brady's body raises various questions relating to violent death. The unimaginable violence suffered by his victims substantially contributes to the notoriety of the murders, but also sets the scene for the social harm caused by the crimes. The notion that Brady, via his ashes, might 'touch' the body of Keith Bennett, which still lies hidden on the moors, or indeed the areas inhabited by the family of his victims, underpinned the legal dispute. Thus, both social life and physical space were impacted by Brady's life and death. I explore these intersections in this paper.

'At first it was just prostitutes, so who really cares?': The Yorkshire Ripper and endemic hatred of prostitutes

Claire Cunningham

PhD Candidate, University of Sheffield

The case of the Yorkshire Ripper and his victims highlights significant inequalities, many of which remain today. It was a long running investigation, resulting in extensive media coverage and leading to two inquiries into the behaviour of the police and press. Previous research has highlighted clear parallels in its portrayal with the Jack the Ripper murders and these parallels are maintained despite a changing victim pool. This has been utilised to illustrate patriarchal attitudes towards female murder victims and the wider female population. However, it has not been examined with a more intersectional approach.

This research examines what this case tells us about attitudes towards specific women; Sonia Sutcliffe and the victims who were labelled 'prostitutes.' Using a

mixed methods approach to analyse coverage from 696 national newspaper articles between 1975 and 1981. Coverage of the middle class victims was more sympathetic than for the working class victims. However the main factor in the portrayal of the victims was whether the women were labelled as ‘prostitutes’ or not. Judgements regarding these women is evident in the media examined and also in later academic commentary.

This research argues that whilst a feminist approach is enlightening it must be tempered by a more intersectional approach which highlights a far more endemic hatred of prostitutes than previously acknowledged. Further research is required to establish if other groups are equally disparaged, even after death.

Violence, place and haunting: Using Spectrality to explore murder and inequality

Dr Louise Wattis
Teesside University

The paper examines a series of murders involving young women linked to sex work, which occurred in the same Northern town between 1998 and 2003. It explores the case on a number of levels. Firstly, it situates violence, and these murders specifically, in the localised spaces of advanced marginality, which follow in the wake of deindustrialisation and economic decline, as well as in terms of enhanced risks for street sex workers relating to their stigmatisation and criminalisation. In addition, I draw upon the concepts of spectrality and haunting, which have gained currency across the social sciences, to illuminate the irrevocable connections between place, violence and emotion at the level of the local. Studies of place deploy spectrality and the figure of the ghost to consider how acts of violence and atrocity transform the essence of physical and social space. For the purposes of this article, the concept of haunting is used here to explore these young women’s lives and deaths, which retain a strong presence in the collective memory due to their powerful connections to place, as well as the cultural work of the media in keeping them alive in the local imagination. Finally, the political potential of haunting – as a means to confront past and ongoing injustices, is also considered, which draws attention to the combined structural conditions in which these young women were murdered.

The role of intimidation and paramilitary punishment attacks in death by suicide in Northern Ireland

Dr Sharon Mallon
The Open University

Transitioning between violence and peace in Northern Ireland has not been straightforward. The term ‘imperfect peace’ was initially coined to acknowledge that certain forms of intimidation and violence (including paramilitary punishment attacks ‘PPA’) were tolerable in the interest of reform. Evidence suggests these types of incidents have continued to rise. Since the end of the conflict the suicide rate in Northern Ireland has also risen dramatically.

Anecdotally, some of these deaths have been linked to paramilitary punishment attacks (PPA) and intimidation. However, to date there has been no empirical research exploring these areas.

This paper presents data that explores the link between individual deaths by suicide and intimidation. We examined data from Coroner's and GP files, and interviews with family members in relation to a two-year cohort of individuals who died by suicide in Northern Ireland. Using all three sources of data, we identified 18 men who had experienced intimidation in the year preceding their deaths. Fourteen of these men sought help from medical professionals in relation to the threat.

A modified version of sociological autopsy method, in conjunction with sociological theories in relation to shame and victimization, will be used to explore the reaction of these men to the intimidation and their efforts to gain assistance. Our findings will highlight the continuing problem of intimidation in Northern Ireland and demonstrate the failings of emerging state to adequately respond to this insidious form of violence.

Working with those who have killed – moral, 'rehabilitative' and wider issues for individuals and society

Dr Andrew Shepherd

Clinical Lecturer, University of Manchester, and SpR Forensic Psychiatry, NHS North West of England Deanery

Taking the life of another represents, in some ways, the ultimate expression of interpersonal violence and results in the harshest of legal adjudications; including a mandatory life sentence in the case of 'murder.' Societal responses, including incarceration, are complex and can be conceptualised as an act of balance between 'voyeurism' and 'looking away' from the spectacle; although some, including the victim's social network, are forced into a process of 'witnessing.' Utilising on a series of vignettes, drawn from the author's clinical practice, the following paper seeks to better explore the psychosocial processes that accompany the act of imprisonment following the perpetration of homicide.

Theoretically, the perpetrator (alleged and convicted) is situated as a defended psychosocial subject: Drawing on concepts from psychoanalysis as well as sociological and criminological theory, the act of forced 'identity work' required of the individual is reviewed and discussed. The various fields (for example the legal, intrapersonal and prison) in which the process must be undertaken are teased out - with the proposal that each forces the process in its own particular way.

By way of conclusion, a series of reflections are offered on the nature of clinical work with those who have killed another person - particularly focussing on the moral, 'rehabilitative' and interpersonal issues that arise during the course of such work. Finally, the implications of the work are considered in terms of the potential to considering the experience of the victims of the crime - both immediate (e.g. family) and on a wider scale (society).

Bereaved family activism in the aftermath of lethal violence: A case study of mothers against violence

Dr Elizabeth Cook

University of Sheffield

In the aftermath of lethal violence, victims are confronted with uncertainties and demands placed upon them by communities, criminal justice agencies and wider society. Lethal violence in the family does not end with the death of a loved one; it endures in families and friends connected through ties of kinship, identity and social bonds. As Gadd (2015:1032) writes, “[w]hen people are seriously harmed or murdered, it is often difficult to discern where the violence ends and the aftermath begins”. For victims, responses to violence emerge in efforts to rebuild relationships, restore meaning and to be heard whether in the form of court proceedings, public testimony or truth commissions. While some argue that the retelling of these experiences threatens to incite further violence, the practice of sharing these stories out of isolation can also encourage victims to make sense of lethal violence, reclaim control and gain recognition. This paper explores these issues through the phenomenon of bereaved family activism: namely, the attempts by bereaved families to manage their experiences of violent death through public campaigns. While these efforts take a number of different forms, today bereaved family activism can be found in the persistent campaigns for accountability by the Hillsborough Families, the police reform efforts of Doreen Lawrence, and more recently, the Grenfell Justice Movement. Drawing upon in-depth interviews and participant observations, this paper investigates one such campaign, *Mothers Against Violence*: a local charity that emerged in response to an intense period of gun violence and ensuing community outcry nearly two decades ago.

Death by bureaucracy

Rebecca Williams

PhD Candidate, University College London (UCL)

Hundreds of thousands of people reside within the UK ‘unlawfully’, tens of thousands are detained every year, and hundreds die in NHS care each month. In line with European policies, UK law states that these ‘undocumented’ or ‘irregular’ migrants are ineligible for state funded specialist end of life care. They often die in isolation, suspended between care, housing and legal services, and awaiting deportation. Their situation is one determined by their documentation; their recognition by the State. This paper will trace how the category of ‘irregular migrant’ materialises through healthcare bureaucracy. Particularly how, through a national financial restructuring, the NHS (and therefore Home Office) were able to identify irregular migrants and pursue financial compensation and deportation. Revealing that, in line with bureaucratic individualisation and notions of personal responsibility, it was financial structures rather than immigration policy that allowed for irregular migrants to become traceable. Shifting scale from macro to micro-economics, it will document how bureaucratic acts of ‘resistance’ and ‘compliance’ performed by healthcare staff determine care outcomes. It will demonstrate how the State and the ‘other’ are constructed through these bureaucratic processes; the financial and legal repercussions of which are considered a ‘death sentence’.

Risky deaths: Life insurance and urban violence in New Orleans

Nikki Mulder

PhD Candidate, Leiden University

This paper investigates the role of life insurance policies in people's attempts to arrange good funerals after bad deaths. Funerals for young Black men in New Orleans, USA, confront families and funeral homes with monetary challenges. After violent deaths, elaborate mourning rituals are important spaces for the articulation of human value and social solidarity, yet the professional services of funeral homes and cemeteries come at a high price. I explore how the risk of untimely, violent death produces a need for life insurance on the one hand, and how life insurance benefits become difficult to claim after a violent death on the other hand. Rather than only pricing and redistributing risk, I argue that life insurance also produces new responsibilities and risks in practice. The paper is based on ten months of ethnographic fieldwork (2017-2018) in New Orleans, which included dozens of in-depth interviews with life insurance agents, funeral directors, policyholders and beneficiaries. The paper contributes to an understanding of the social life of insurance, particularly in a context of urban violence and economic vulnerability.

Nazi concentration camp architecture and topography: Challenges to the totem of Auschwitz

Dr Rachael Burns

University of York

Auschwitz acts as a totem of the Holocaust and man's industrialised inhumanity man, as a memorial site to remember the lost, and as a museum to learn. How we view events of the recent or distant past may be proscribed to us through memorials, museums or books. It is difficult, for example, to read or watch a film about the Holocaust without encountering Auschwitz and images thereof, reproducing an archetype of the topography and architecture of concentration camps. Sophie is under the scrutiny of guards in Auschwitz watchtowers in *Sophie's Choice* (1982); Bruno befriends Schmuël across the barbed-wire fence of a thinly veiled Auschwitz in *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* (2008); and Auschwitz, and the testimony of an Italian survivor was the inspiration for *La Vite E Bella* (1997).

Empirically examining the architecture of concentration camps across Germany and through case studies of Mittelbau-Dora and Neuengamme concentration camps, this paper seeks to challenge the totem of Auschwitz. I argue that it was the outward *normality* of the many buildings, repurposed as camps, which allowed the civilian populace to psychologically sequester from the full horrors of the Holocaust taking place therein. In examining the architectural and topographical facades of the camps physically sequestering them from civilian population, and the encroaching of totalitarian 'darkness', I argue that the development of the concentration camp system was the manifestation of Arendt's concept(s) of evil and the epitome of 'wolves in sheep's clothing'.