

dead tiger and Georges Clemenceau was a very great tiger. Therefore Georges Clemenceau is very dead". All the pieces in *On Paris* were previously published in *Dateline: Toronto* (1985), together with others from Hemingway's two-year spell at the paper. There is every reason to repackage them in handy pocket-size format, but in a time of more severe exchange rates the reader paying £7.99 for seventy pages might have been grateful for a crumb or two of editorial guidance – even if only the information that it was Gérard de Nerval, not Baudelaire, who led the lobster past the tempting café tables to his spartan studio.

JAMES CAMPBELL

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## Medical History

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**Helen MacDonald**

**POSSESSING THE DEAD**

The artful science of anatomy

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In 1904, an article in the *Daily Mail* described an investigation in Adelaide into Dr William Ramsay Smith, who was alleged to have sent dissected bodies to Arthur Keith at the Royal College of Surgeons' Hunterian Museum. The article reported an anonymous Harley Street surgeon saying such traffic was hardly surprising given the perpetual shortage of corpses, which resulted from "the squeamishness of the British public", with its "false, mawkish sentiment". A clerk working in the Anatomy Inspector's office noticed the

article, cut it out and pasted it into a scrapbook, where a century later it was noticed by Helen MacDonald, a historian with an eye for such details.

*Possessing the Dead: The artful science of anatomy* uses a wealth of such information to investigate carefully and sensitively the aftermath of the 1832 Anatomy Act in Britain and Australia. This act was a response to the notorious Burke and Hare murders, carried out in Edinburgh to provide bodies to sell to Dr Robert Knox for anatomizing. Those murders are still a part of popular culture in Edinburgh, as in the street song, "It's doon the close an' up the stair / A but-an'-ben wi' Burke and Hare / Burke's the butcher, Hare's the thief / And Knox is the man that buys the beef". There is even, as MacDonald points out, an Edinburgh pole-dancing club called The Burke and Hare, where presumably flesh in some sense is still for sale. More crucially, as MacDonald emphasizes, whatever the abuses of the 1832 Act – and she details many – Burke and Hare always remained its justification, for if bodies were not legally available, then market forces and the Resurrectionists would illegally satisfy demand.

Inevitably the unclaimed bodies which came to be possessed by the government were those of the poor, the destitute, the insane and the marginalized. In a fine paragraph in the final chapter, MacDonald contrasts how the bodies of the anatomists themselves were cremated, or instead were buried, in country churchyards, in graves overlooking the Pacific, or, in Knox's case, "in some spot where the sun might shine longest on the green sod"; but never, never, was the beef anatomized.

CHRIS MCMANUS