

The Legacies of the Repatriation of  
Human Remains from  
The Royal College of Surgeons of England



Sarah Morton  
Keble College  
University of Oxford

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# Abstract

The repatriation of the human remains of Indigenous peoples collected within a colonial context has been the subject of debate within UK museums over the last 30 years, with many museums now having returned human remains to their countries of origin. Although the repatriation of human remains is often characterised as the 'journey home', there has been a lack of consideration of the physical presence and mobility of the remains and the meanings created as they move through different spaces.

This study uses the repatriations from The Royal College of Surgeons of England (RCS) to Australia, New Zealand and Hawaii as case studies to consider three key areas: (i) the impact of repatriation on museum landscapes; (ii) the journey of the repatriated remains and how this mobility intersects with wider discussions about restitution, sovereignty, identity, relatedness, memory and memorialization; and (iii) the repatriation archives, how they are thought about by the institutions that hold them and their future potential and meaning within a post-colonial context. Taking a more-than-representational approach and engaging with the materiality, mobility and agency of the repatriated remains and the documentation that relates to them, this study bridges the gap between research considering the approach of museums to repatriation, and ethnographic studies on the meanings of the return of ancestral remains to individual communities.

Combining work on museum geographies, deathscapes and absence opens up new ways of theorising and discussing repatriation through understanding the process in terms of the tension between absence and presence, and human remains as being in or out of place. Through engaging with the materiality and agency of the remains and viewing repatriation through a spatial lens, this thesis deals with aspects of the process that have received little

attention in previous studies, foregrounding the challenging nature of repatriation for communities, the issues around unprovenanced remains, and discussions about the control, management and meaning of information and data, identifying that a significant legacy of repatriation for RCS is the documentation the museum continues to hold.

What the journey of the ancestral remains repatriated by RCS illustrates is the emotive materiality of the remains, and agency that they and the distributed repatriation archive have as actors within social networks. It is therefore proposed that the concept of repatriation as having problematised human remains collections within UK museums is replaced with a nuanced and contextually sensitive understanding that recognises the role of the human remains in social interactions that impact on the emotional geographies of museum practice, and that rather than framing repatriation as post-colonial act that is either political or therapeutic, the return of ancestral remains be understood as part of a process of decolonisation in which there is space for discussion, disagreement and debate amongst all stakeholders.

Stich by Stich, Circle by Circle  
Weaving is like the creation of life,  
all things are connected

Aunty Ellen Trevorrow, Ngarrindjeri Elder



Figure 0.1: The author (second from right) with other participants attending the National Centre of Indigenous Studies Repatriation Course at Camp Coorong with the items we created using Ngarrindjeri weaving techniques as taught by Aunty Ellen Trevorrow.

Photograph: M. Pickering June 2015

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# 1. Introduction



**Figure 1.1:** Ancestral Māori remains repatriated by the Royal College of Surgeons of England arriving at Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.

Photograph: Karanga Aotearoa, Te Papa Tongarewa, November 2011

## 1.1 Introduction

In December 2001, The Royal College of Surgeons of England (RCS) agreed to return all human remains of Tasmanian Aboriginal origin held in the College museum collections to the Tasmanian Aboriginal Community. Since then, the College has repatriated human remains to Australia, New Zealand (Figure 1.1) and most recently to Hawaii. In 2013, the Hunterian Museum at RCS celebrated its bicentenary and as part of reflecting on the development of the collections over this period was keen to consider the impacts of the repatriations, the current and future role of the non-European remains still in the collections and the potential for maintaining the relationships formed as part of the return process. Developed in collaboration with RCS, this research project had the remit of exploring the legacies of the repatriation of human remains from the RCS collections, for both the College and the communities involved.

The repatriation of the human remains of Indigenous peoples collected within a colonial context has been the subject of debate within UK museums over the last 30 years, with the main focus being the arguments for and against repatriation. Advocates for repatriation suggest that the process fosters relationships and is therapeutic for Indigenous communities. Yet, despite the documentation of some of the initial impacts of repatriation, there has been little research on the longer-term impacts of the process on the different stakeholders involved. Therefore, the key aims of this research are to explore the meanings and values that RCS repatriations have created and to better understand the legacies of the process for both Indigenous communities and museum practice.

In this chapter I will begin by setting out the history of repatriation at RCS, for it is the return of these remains that forms the central case studies for this research. In the following section (1.3), I will place the change in practice at RCS within the wider context of the repatriation debates within the UK, highlighting the themes that have informed my three key areas of research as listed in section 1.4. Finally, in section 1.5 I will set out the structure of the following chapters, providing an overview of the whole thesis.

## **1.2 Repatriation at RCS**

The first documented approach to the Royal College of Surgeons of England (RCS) regarding the return of non-European remains was an inquiry in 1986 about the College's attitude to repatriation made by Michael Mansell of the Aboriginal Legal Service. In her reply, Curator Elizabeth Allen explained that the College was not in a position to formulate a policy on repatriation, however in her personal opinion the remains in question were 'valuable teaching material and therefore to be retained for the benefit of mankind' but that 'human remains of ethnic groups which worship their ancestors should, however, be given special

consideration'.<sup>1</sup> Within this statement are two of the elements that would come to frame the debate about the repatriation of human remains: (i) the conceptualisation of human remains as specimens and evidence; and (ii) the concept of the remains as ancestors. In stating that human remains from certain groups should be given 'special consideration', Allen also appears to indicate that by requesting that ancestral remains be returned, activists like Mansell were already having an impact on the way museum curators thought about particular groups of remains.

In the ten years that followed, the debate about repatriation at RCS continued, as it did in many other UK museums that held the remains of Indigenous peoples. Documents in the RCS archives suggest that a major concern for the curators dealing with repatriation claims was the lack of a common policy or approach to the issue and a reticence to discuss the issue publicly.<sup>2</sup> In response to a survey of repatriation policy carried out by the Museum Association in 1994, Curator Caroline Grigson replying on behalf of RCS stated that 'we do not wish to be drawn into public debate on these issues, but we have spoken privately to a number of people in various parts of the world who are concerned about this issue'.<sup>3</sup>

Having initially decided that requests for the return of Aboriginal Australian remains be rejected due to the 'outstanding scientific importance of the remains',<sup>4</sup> in 1994 the RCS Acquisitions and Disposals Policy was updated to state that requests for repatriation of remains would be considered if claimants could provide legal evidence of their relationship to

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Elizabeth Allen to Michael Mansell, 4<sup>th</sup> July 1986. Royal College of Surgeons of England Exit File 92.

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Corinne Duhig to Caroline Grigson 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1991. Royal College of Surgeons of England Exit File 92.

<sup>3</sup> Letter from Caroline Grigson to Moria G. Simpson 16<sup>th</sup> May 1994. Royal College of Surgeons of England Exit File 92.

<sup>4</sup> Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Council, 11<sup>th</sup> July 1991. Royal College of Surgeons of England Minutes of Council 1987-1992.

the remains. In explaining this policy to a delegation from the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre visiting RCS in 1997, Curator Jane Pickering explained that the College had 'a clear policy which covers all of its human remains and makes no distinction between ethnic groupings'.<sup>5</sup>

However, in 2001 the RCS Acquisition and Disposal Policy was updated to read:-

4.3.3: So far as human remains and other artefacts of indigenous inhabitants of North America, Australia and New Zealand are concerned, the College Council will consider sympathetically requests for the return of material for which accurate geographical provenance exists

RCS (2001)

This change demonstrates there had been a major shift in thinking in the seven years between the two policies, with the 2001 version reflecting Elizabeth Allen's view that some remains should be given 'special consideration'.

Following a series of discussions and meetings, in December 2001 RCS College Council agreed to the request from the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC) to return all human remains of Tasmanian Aboriginal origin without precondition.<sup>6</sup> In correspondence with the TAC, the College President Sir Peter Morris, himself Australian and a committee member of the *Working Group of Human Remains* established by the Department of Culture Media and Sport in 2001, explained that the Council was not only persuaded by the cultural arguments but also that there was 'no meaningful research that the remains could be used for, that could not be done in Australia with the collaboration and permission of the original peoples'.<sup>7</sup> The repatriation of the remains took place on the 3rd April 2002 and consisted of five bones that had been prepared and bound for traditional use, one skull and a slide of the hair and skin of Truganini. Having been labelled as the last full blooded Indigenous Tasmanian, after her death

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<sup>5</sup> Memo from Jane Pickering to Stella Mason titled *Australian Aboriginal remains: Background notes for the meeting with delegation from TAC*, 11<sup>th</sup> November 1997. Royal College of Surgeons of England Exit File 92

<sup>6</sup> Email from Simon Chaplin to Heather Sculthope, 21<sup>st</sup> December 2001. Royal College of Surgeons Exit File 92.

<sup>7</sup> Letter from Sir Peter Morris to Heather Sculthorpe 25<sup>th</sup> March 2002. Royal College of Surgeons Exit File 82.

in 1876, Truganini's remains were displayed in the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery. The handing back of her remains to the Tasmanian Aboriginal people in 1976 therefore represented a particularly significant and politically symbolic event which I will return to in the next chapter.

In July 2003, the repatriation of the Australian material from RCS, first requested by the Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action (FAIRA) in 1990, took place. Representatives from FAIRA, acting with the authority of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), oversaw the repatriation of 59 items, or groups of items. A cranium and skull that research prior to the repatriation had identified as lacking a secure provenance, were included in the return as a loan on the understanding that if a reliable provenance were later established, ownership would be transferred without precondition.

In 2003, the New Zealand Government mandated the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa to develop a formal programme of repatriation for remains of Māori and Moriori origin. RCS received a formal request from the Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme, requesting the repatriation of twenty items from the collections in June 2006. Having now established a process for the repatriation of ancestral remains, RCS swiftly agreed to the New Zealand return with the repatriation taking place in November 2007. As had occurred with previous repatriations, Indigenous representatives came to RCS and carried out a private ceremony before overseeing the transport and return of the remains.<sup>8</sup>

The next repatriation was initiated when auditing work on the collections brought to light a mandible of Tasmanian origin which had been previously been listed as missing. As the 2001 agreement to return all Tasmanian material still applied, Senior Curator Simon Chaplin

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<sup>8</sup> Letter to Sir Rodney Sweetnam from Dr Seddon Bennington, 17<sup>th</sup> December 2007. Royal College of Surgeons of England Exit File 173.

initiated contact with the TAC regarding repatriation, and the return of the mandible took place in September 2009.<sup>9</sup> Just over six months later, research by the voluntary organisation Four Directions found the skull of a Hawaiian woman listed on the RCS on-line database SurgiCat and informed native Hawaiian repatriation organisation Hui Mālama I Nā Kūpuna O Hawai'i Nei.<sup>10</sup> Having established this was the only specimen of Hawaiian provenance in the College collections, Hui Mālama and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs sent a formal repatriation request in June 2010. Having considered this request, RCS College Council agreed to the return in March 2011 and the repatriation of the skull took place in September 2011.

As well as the four repatriations of non-European remains from the RCS collections, there have also been two returns of European material, which although not the focus of this research are worth mentioning. Following a five year campaign, in 2004 the skeletal remains of the 'red barn murder' William Corder<sup>11</sup> were returned to his relatives for cremation and six pathology specimens removed at post-mortems of Jewish victims carried out by the Red Cross team working at Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in 1945 were handed over to the United Synagogue Burial Society. No longer used for teaching, the Bergen-Belsen specimens came to light in collections survey in 2001 and due to the sensitive nature of the material, RCS contacted Rabbi Professor Jonathon Magonet for guidance. The handover of the specimens to the United Synagogue Burial Society for burial at Bushey Cemetery took place in September

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<sup>9</sup> Email from Simon Chaplin to Alan Bennett, 30<sup>th</sup> June 2009. Royal College of Surgeons of England Exit File 208.

<sup>10</sup> Email from David Meanwell to the Royal College of Surgeons of England Museums, 24<sup>th</sup> May 2010. Royal College of Surgeons of England Exit File 259.

<sup>11</sup> In 1827 Maria Marten was shot and killed by her lover William Corder. Having fled the scene Corder later sent letters to her family purporting to be from Maria but the discovery of the murder the following year created widespread public interest in the case, with Corder becoming a notorious villain. On being captured and found guilty of the crime Corder was sentenced to hang. His body was then dissected and his skeleton eventually put on display in the Hunterian Museum at The Royal College of Surgeons of England (McCorristine 2014).

2001.<sup>12</sup> Finally, the highest profile case of human remains subject to requests for removal from the RCS collections is that of Charles Byrne, also known as the Irish Giant. Born in Ireland, Charles Byrne had a condition (now known as acromegaly) that caused him to grow to seven feet seven inches tall. Arriving in London in 1782 he was celebrated as an extraordinary curiosity. However, Byrne was in poor health and this, combined with the loss of his life savings led to his death in June 1782 aged just 22. Byrne had been concerned that his body would be claimed by one of the anatomists with an interest in unusual specimens so he reportedly paid for his body to be buried at sea in a lead coffin, yet John Hunter managed to secure the remains for his collection. Currently on display in the Hunterian Museum, the remains have been the subject of media attention and frequent requests asking that RCS honour Byrne's wish for burial at sea. Having considered the case, in 2008 the College Council and the Board of Trustees of the Hunterian Collection decided that retaining and continuing to display Byrne's remains was justified by their historical and medical importance and that the majority of visitors to the Hunterian Museum found their 'dignified and considered' display to be appropriate.<sup>13</sup>

### **1.3 The Repatriation Debate**

The shift towards a more sympathetic approach to repatriation seen at RCS, can be understood as the culmination of thirty years of extensive discussion about human remains held in UK museum collections (for example Alberti et al. 2009, Jenkins 2011, Brooks and Rumsey 2006, 2007, Lohman and Goodnow 2006, Payne 2004, Curtis 2003). Although the future of all human remains collections has been debated, it has been the human remains of Indigenous people collected within a colonial context that have been viewed as the most

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<sup>12</sup> Letter from Simon Chaplin to Rabbi Professor Jonathon Magonet 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2001, and Letter from Simon Chaplin to Syma Weinberg 4<sup>th</sup> September 2001, Royal College of Surgeons Museum Archive, Exit File 78.

<sup>13</sup> Minutes of the Board of Hunterian Trustees, 6<sup>th</sup> February 2008. Royal College of Surgeons of England

controversial due to the conditions under which they were obtained. Prized as a resource for studying racial difference, in the nineteenth-century the collection of the remains and body parts of colonised populations, such as those in Australia, America and New Zealand, operated on a global scale. The accounts of grave robbing and desecration of bodies, described by researchers like Fforde (2004), demonstrate that the collection of the remains of Indigenous peoples followed a wider historical trend for the exploitation of the bodies of the poor and disenfranchised that continues in some dimensions of modern health and biomedicine (Hurren 2012, Richardson 1987, MacDonald 2010, Waldby and Mitchell 2006, Scheper-Hughes 2002, Cohen 2002).

Due to this controversial history, when requests for repatriation began to be made to museums in the United Kingdom by Indigenous campaign groups like the TAC, support came from within certain sections of the museum community who argued that amends should be made for the harm inflicted by colonial collecting practices (Hubert 1989). In the heated debates that followed, human remains became polarized as either ancestors to bury or objects to study, with the idea that human remains are not objects eventually becoming reflected in guidelines and policy (Teague 2007, DCMS 2005). However, work in history of medicine (Alberti 2011, MacDonald 2010) and geography (Parry 2008, Parry and Gere 2006, Greenhough 2006) has shown that body parts are materially complex and their meanings are not static. Following work on materiality (Law 2002, Anderson and Wylie 2009, Mol 2002) it can be suggested that human remains can embody different meanings for different people at different times, allowing us to move past the polarised debate about person or thing and explore the issues that arise at the intersection of different meanings. Yet this approach leaves the concept of 'respectful treatment' that can be found in many museum human remains policies difficult to define and raises questions around how human remains are

conceptualised and respectful treatment materialized within practice in relation to storage, study, conservation and display; key issues that I will address in this thesis.

A review of the repatriation literature reveals that the pro-repatriation argument has generally been grounded in the conviction of the therapeutic benefit for the claimant communities (Thornton 2002, Besterman 2003). However the validity of this argument has been questioned due to a lack of evidence (Jenkins 2011, Batty 2005). This highlights how different stakeholders define and understand the therapeutic benefits of repatriation and the benefits for communities who have had remains returned requires further research. There is also a need to take a wider view of the meanings of repatriation for Indigenous communities and the importance of the process as means of addressing a historic lack of power and control. By considering the agency of the dead (Fontein 2010) and the body as a site of political struggle (Verdery 1999, Young and Light 2013), it can be argued that the remains of Indigenous people held in museum collections materialise the impact of colonisation and the concept of Indigenous inferiority, with the museum being the space where this identity was defined and made visible (Gorman 2011, Fforde 2004). For Peers (2004) this positions museums as sites of contestation, with the process of repatriation being about the relinquishing of power and the return of control to Indigenous communities.

In challenging the traditional authority of museums and the meanings and values they place on remains, repatriation requests have both influenced and been part of the development of an issue based museology movement that aims to embrace community representation and advocates for a sharing of museum authority (Hooper-Greenhill 1992, Macdonald and Fyfe 1996). This shift in practice has seen an increasing emphasis on museums building mutually beneficial relationships with source communities, and Peers and Brown (2003a) have suggested that the trust built by repatriation is an opportunity for further collaborative

working. This has led RCS to consider how they could sustain this type of relationship after the repatriation process has concluded, and what the benefits of this type of global relationship might be for the both community and museum?

In engaging with repatriation requests, Western museums have had to examine how they conceptualise identity and relatedness, as in many Indigenous cultures it is being 'nurtured by the same source' that creates a sense of relatedness and common ancestry (Howard 1990), a connection between land and people often expressed as 'connection to country'. Whilst there are examples of the initial impacts of repatriation on group identity (for example Palm Island 2002, Simpson 2005, West 1987) there are still questions to ask about the longer-term effects on relatedness, indigeneity and connection to place. By placing repatriation in the context of a wider process of Indigenous rights and restitution movements, its role in the construction of identity at local, national and international levels becomes clear, suggesting complex layers of collective identity that are linked to heritage and memory (McDowell 2008). For Hemming and Wilson (2010, 185) this complexity is reflected in many of the issues that repatriation creates for Indigenous communities, issues which they argue need to be 'better understood by non-Indigenous interests so that a just approach to repatriation can be developed.'

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

Using the RCS repatriations as a case study, this thesis will consider three key areas: the impact of repatriation on museum landscapes; the journey of the repatriated remains and how this mobility intersects with wider discussions about restitution, sovereignty, identity, relatedness, memory and memorialization; and finally the repatriation archives, how they are thought about by the institutions that hold them and their future potential and meaning within a post-colonial context. My initial research aims were:

**1: To explore the impact of repatriation on the conceptualisation of human remains in museum collections and how this has influenced performance and practice in museum spaces.**

The use, storage and display of human remains in museums has been widely debated (for example see Lohman and Goodnow 2006, Alberti et al. 2009, Barbian and Berndt 2001, Brooks and Rumsey 2006, Cassman et al. 2006). The thread that runs through this body of work is the treatment of human remains with respect, but this remains a poorly defined and subjective concept. As Krmpotich et al. (2010, 379) argue, respect is culturally constructed, but it is through engagement with remains that it gains traction, which suggests a need to consider the emotional, intimate and tactile human-object engagements that take place within museums (Dudley 2010). What also emerges from the wider literature is the heterogeneous nature of museums and the need to understand policy, approach and practice within their specific contexts. Therefore, the first aim of this research is to explore the impacts of the repatriation process through the materialities of the human remains in the collections of returning institutions and of the repatriated remains stored and cared for by museums in their countries of origin. As museums and their collections are inherently spatial (see Geoghegan 2008, Hill 2007, Bouquet and Porto 2006), the complex geographies of the spaces and practices relating to human remains collections will be considered in order to understand how the ideas and conceptualisation of human remains contained within museum policy are materialised in day to day practice.

This is an area of research that builds on the current body of work in museum geographies that considers the spatial and affective dimensions of collections and archives (DeSilvey 2007, Patchett 2008, Livingstone 2003, Naylor 2002, Geoghegan 2010, Hill 2006b, 2007, Driver 2013, Hill 2006a, DeSilvey 2006). In exploring the materialities of the human remains/ancestral remains store I am following Geoghegan and Hess (2014) in examining the

affective nature of the space. However, I expand on their understanding of museum store rooms by considering these stores as deathscapes and applying ideas of death being in/out of place (Cresswell 1996, Petersson 2010) to spaces not currently considered by the deathscapes literature (Maddrell and Sidaway 2010a, Kong 1999, Young and Light 2013). This research will also contribute to the ongoing debates about the use, display and storage of human remains in museums, by opening up and challenging the concept of respectful treatment through a consideration of practice and affect.

**2: To investigate the complexities of the repatriation process and analyse the impacts on individual and group identity, relatedness and sense of place.**

Previous work on the repatriation process has examined its impacts on institutions, individual communities, or particular high profile and controversial cases, such as Kennewick Man (see Hurst Thomas 2000, Burke et al. 2008). Although the literature paints a complex portrait of repatriation and its role in politics, power and control of heritage (Fontein 2010, Hubert 2003, Hurst 2005, Lyons 2002, Gerstenblith 2003, Pickering 2010), and identity, relatedness and belonging (Palm Island 2002, McDowell 2008, Atkinson 2010, Krmpotich 2014), there is still a particular focus on therapeutic value of the process and its ability heal the 'trauma of history' (Thornton 2002, 20, see also Jenkins 2011). Following Verdery (1999), it can be argued that the remains of Indigenous people held in museum collections represent the Western construction of an inferior Indigenous identity. Therefore within the context of the wider Indigenous rights and restitution movements, the process of repatriation can be understood as a relinquishing of power and return of control. Yet in this reading, the focus on the symbolism of the remains comes at the expense of attending to their physical presence. I therefore suggest that considering the materiality of the remains offers an approach by which the affective presence of the remains and their role in a complex assemblage of memories, representations and embodied performance can be studied, and their intersection with issues

around control of heritage, post-colonial politics, identity, belonging, memory and memorialization can be explored.

This section of the research will contribute to the literature on the repatriation of human remains by attending to the parts of the process that fall between the deaccessioning of the remains from museums and communities being able to return those remains to country. It also develops the concept of corpse geographies as proposed by Young and Light (2013), by considering the affective nature of absence and extending this area of research beyond named political figures to the remains of those who are largely now unknown as named individuals. Finally, by considering the materialities of poorly provenanced remains, this research will also add to existing work on memory and memorial landscapes (Hay et al. 2004, Dwyer and Alderman 2008, Till 2003, Szpunar 2010, Wagner 2010, Petersson 2010, Petersson and Wingren 2011).

**3: To examine the materialities, meanings and potential uses of the information and documentation produced, duplicated and made mobile as part of the repatriation process.**

The third research aim turns from the materiality of the remains themselves, to consider the materialities of the documentation that travels with them, independently of them and also continues to reside in the locations they have moved through. This documentation can comprise of archival information about the collection and subsequent movement of the remains, museum records, scientific data and archives produced as part of the repatriation process itself. It can be discrete records, such as repatriation reports and/or information entangled in wider archives. Although there are ongoing academic debates around who owns cultural heritage (for example Cuno 2012, 2008, Renfrew 2000) and the restitution of cultural artefacts (for example Hitchens 1997, Greenfield 1989, Tythacott and Arvanitis 2014, Kendall 2011), there has been less attention paid to the archives of information left behind and the

need to balance issues of control and political relations with the practical aspects of the repatriation process (Pickering 2010, 2012). While for some museums, working with communities has become part of their practice (Krmpotich and Peers 2011, Karp and Levine 1991, Peers and Brown 2003b, Sleeper-Smith 2009), in medical, science and natural history museums, repatriation is often framed as the end of the process with little consideration being given to the legacies of the documentation and its potential future meanings and uses.

In her review of geographical engagement with museum spaces and collections, Geoghegan (2010) cites the influential essay *The Cartographies of Collecting* by Rebecca Duclos (1999) which argues for the role of cultural geographers in examining collecting and collections. What Geoghegan's review makes clear, is that in recent years the formation and mobility of museum collections have become sites of geographical research (Driver 2013, Hill 2006a, 2007, 2006b, Patchett 2010, Duclos 1999, DeSilvey 2006, Geoghegan and Hess 2014). However, this growing body of work has so far neglected to address the geographies of deaccessioning. Therefore in mapping the materialities of the archives created by the global movement of repatriated human remains, this final area of research builds on work around the geographies of collections and museum objects, the ownership and control of bio-information (Greenhough 2006, Parry 2008, 2004, Bardill 2014, Widdows 2009) and ideas around the material presence of absences (Meier et al. 2013, Hetherington 2004, Meyer and Woodthorpe 2008, Meyer 2012, DeLyser 2014). This research will therefore contribute a new thread to work on museums geographies and also to the debates about the restitution of cultural heritage which, in attending to the legal, political and ethical issues, have thus far tended to ignore the challenges and legacies of the process (Tythacott and Arvanitis 2014).

Although these were the aims with which I begun the research, as my research progressed these aims changed and developed in response to the complexities that emerged as I

undertook the fieldwork. The further development of these research aims will therefore be discussed in section 4.4.

## **1.5 Organisation of Thesis**

This thesis is composed of the following chapters:

### **Chapter 2: Situating the Royal College of Surgeons of England Repatriations**

In this chapter I will situate the RCS repatriations already discussed within the wider context of the creation of collections, changing practice and the repatriation debates. In the first part of this chapter I will link the global movement of human remains to ideas on the commodification and objectification of the body, the concept of Indigenous inferiority, shifts in thinking about race and the development of Indigenous activism that, by the 1980s, had made repatriation an international issue. Taking the framing of human remains as either objects or ancestors as a starting point, I will review the wider literature that addresses the fragmentation, objectification and commodification of remains and situate the RCS repatriations within context of wider socio-cultural shifts in the UK around consent and the retention, use and display of human body parts.

### **Chapter 3: The Legacies of Repatriation**

In the first part of this chapter I will review the literature that deals with the practice and impacts of repatriation before moving on to consider the meanings and values of repatriation process based on the three key themes that emerge from the literature: identity and kinship; therapeutic value; and politics, power and control. In the final section I will draw together the gaps in understanding I have highlighted in this and the preceding chapter and set out the key questions that this study will address.

#### **Chapter 4: Researching Repatriation: Methods, Approaches and Reflections**

Having already introduced the key concepts of materiality and agency in Chapter 2, in this chapter I will describe how my research was planned and undertaken, the advantages and limitations of applying a spatial lens to into the RCS repatriations and my reasons for employing more-than-representational methods. I will give an account of the three phases of my fieldwork and the organisations and communities that participated and will also reflect on the research process and my own positionality.

#### **Chapter 5: The Impact of Repatriation on UK Museums**

In this chapter I will explore the impact of repatriation through considering the materialities of the human remains collections at RCS. Placing my observations at RCS within context of other UK museums, I will then consider how the collections, institution, people and place influence the concept of respectful treatment. As previous work on the ways human remains are conceptualised has mainly focused on institutional policies, I intend to concentrate on the interplay between place, practice and meanings. Drawing together work in museum geographies (Geoghegan and Hess 2014) and deathscapes (Maddrell and Sidaway 2010a, Young and Light 2013), my aim is to understand how the repatriation of human remains has contributed to the creation of new local geographies in museums and how the affective nature of these spaces impact on behaviour.

#### **Chapter 6: Returning the Ancestors to Country**

Using the case study of the remains repatriated by RCS, this chapter will address the tensions around repatriation as either therapeutic or politically symbolic. By following the global journey of the remains repatriated by RCS, I will focus on the materiality of the remains to explore the meanings they hold and the issues created by their physical presence. Through considering place, practice and meaning my aim is to uncover the agency the remains have as

social actors, while also taking into account the material presence of the remains and developing a better understanding of the complex and entangled nature of repatriation.

### **Chapter 7: The Lost People: Dealing with Unprovenanced Ancestral Remains**

In this chapter I will deal with the issue of unprovenanced remains. Starting with the current debates in Australia and New Zealand about a National Keeping/Resting Place, I will then situate the discussions within the broader literature on memory sites and memorials to draw out the role of unprovenanced remains as social and political agents at different scales.

### **Chapter 8: Following the Paper Trail: The Documentation of Repatriated Remains**

The final empirical chapter will focus on documentation, meaning the individual records held on each set of remains, the data produced as part of the provenancing research, and the letters, emails, photographs and videos that document the repatriation process itself.

Through following the documentation that accompanied the remains returned by RCS, I will examine the tensions between the restitution of information to communities and the practical aspects of managing data and consider the meanings of this material and its potential for future use.

### **Chapter 9: Conclusions and Recommendations**

In the concluding chapter I will summarise the results of my research, highlight the contributions made and draw together the threads of absence, presence and agency that run through the preceding chapters. I will also discuss the relevance of my findings to professional museum practice and point to avenues for future research.

## 2. Situating the Royal College of Surgeons of England Repatriations

All those Old People and the people we got here, [they are] all our family. We know where they were taken from, illegally taken from their burial grounds; their resting places and we know that they are our ancestors, we are connected to them. They were taken away from us. Where they've been and what has happened to them, we don't know, we can only guess, but we've got a good idea that they've been taken, they've been looked at, they've been studied, that their spirit has been at unrest. We believe that the things that happen around us, our lands and water, is all connected. It's part of it, and what's happening here is part of the healing process, when we bring our Old people home.

Tom Trevorrow, Chair Ngarrindjeri Heritage Committee 28th August 2004  
(as cited in Hemming and Wilson 2010, 183)

### 2.1 Introduction

The symbolism of this physical movement of repatriated human remains is often characterised as the 'journey home' (see Turnbull and Pickering 2010, Atkinson 2010, Barbosa 2002, Besterman 2004). However, before exploring the context, meaning and values created by the repatriation process, I propose to trace the path of the remains backwards and situate it within the historical context of their original collection and physical and conceptual journey to becoming museum objects. Therefore in the first two sections of this chapter, I will follow the remains on their 'journey from person to object' (Alberti 2011, 100) and examine the underlying social, political and scientific contexts to explain why RCS held the remains of Indigenous peoples. Revealing the networks through which the remains moved, opens up a discussion about the objectification of the body and the conceptualisations of the dead, that addresses the fragmentation and circulation of body parts and the role of the remains in supporting an understanding of Indigenous peoples that was influential in their subsequent treatment.

Having shown how human remains were used to materialise an Indigenous inferiority that was constructed with no reference to how living populations saw themselves, section 2.4, *Indigenous Rights and Changing Practice*, introduces the key accomplishments of Indigenous activists fighting for the return of their ancestral remains and sets them within wider socio-cultural shifts around understandings of race and human rights. I then put the history of repatriation at RCS into the context of the changes in museum practice and the discussions about the use, storage and display of human remains within museums that were happening at a national level.

In section 2.5 I address the polarisation of the repatriation debate, and the framing of the remains as either objects or ancestors. Following on from the review of the creation of collections, I draw on a diverse range of work that considers the fragmentation, objectification and commodification of the body to argue that considering the materiality and agency of the remains offers a way of moving beyond the ontological tensions of person or thing to explore the multiple meanings that human remains can hold.

## **2.2 The Creation of Collections**

The study of the human remains of Indigenous peoples in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries developed from an interest in the physical description of human kind and analysis of human difference which can be traced back as far as the ancient Greeks and the fourth century BC Hippocratic Corpus (Gieson and White 2013, 14). In the mid-sixteenth century, the physical differences between European populations once again became a subject of interest with anatomist Andreas Vesalius describing the distinct skull shapes allegedly exhibited by inhabitants of different European nations (Fforde 2004, 8). However, it was not until 1684

that Francois Bernier proposed the first system to classify human kind using explicit racial divisions, a development that Stocking (1988) suggests was prompted by increasing encounters with different Indigenous populations.

The debates on human classification continued in the eighteenth-century with the main approach being the use of discernible external physical features to define human variety (Fforde 2004, 10). However this approach was rejected by a group of zoologists who in the mid to late eighteenth-century, pioneered the practice of comparative anatomy, a prominent member of the group being the English surgeon-anatomist John Hunter (Stocking 1988, 5). Born in 1728 near Glasgow, Hunter moved to London in 1748 to assist at his brother William's anatomy school.<sup>14</sup> Having developed skills in dissection and anatomy, John Hunter trained as surgeon and went on to develop new ideas on the treatment of gunshot wounds and venereal disease while serving in the military. During this time he also began his anatomical collection which by the 1780s would be one of the largest collections in Europe, consisting of 14,000 specimens (RCS undated-b, 8-9). Hunter's collection contained preparations showing healthy and morbid human anatomy, but also included comparative anatomy and zoological specimens that demonstrated animal physiology, reproduction and development (Alberti 2013, 19). Although best known for specimens that illustrated human and animal pathology, physiology and anatomy, Hunter also collected numerous specimens specifically to investigate racial variation.

### **Classifying Human Difference**

John Hunter's fellow anatomist Petrus Camper was among the first to start collecting human crania for the purpose of analysing human difference, however his collection was soon

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<sup>14</sup> Having studied medicine, William Hunter built up a reputation as a physician and man-midwife. William Hunter's own anatomical collection became the founding collection of The Hunterian Museum at the University of Glasgow.

surpassed in both size and variety by Hunter's own (Grey Turner 1945, 360, Chaplin 2008). According to Causey (1955, 3), Hunter's collection contained 'numerous specimens' collected to investigate racial variation, including a Māori skull and preserved head, five skulls of Australian Aboriginals, one skull of a Tasmanian Aborigine and 'a series of adult skeletons showing racial types'. Addressing these collections, Cressida Fforde (2004, 13) stresses their significance, arguing that they represent 'the beginning of a science that aimed to quantify human difference by systematic analysis of skeletal remains'. Following Hunter's death in 1793, his assistant William Clift cared for the collection until the British Government eventually agreed to its purchase in 1799.<sup>15</sup> Hunter's collection then passed into the care of the Company of Surgeons, soon to be The Royal College of Surgeons, and a board of trustees was established.<sup>16</sup> Under the care of The Royal College of Surgeons the collections continued to develop (see Alberti 2013). Hunter's original 'race collection' expanded through individual donations and the purchase of other collections, notably the Joseph Barnard David collection in 1867 and the Anthropological Society collection in 1890.<sup>17</sup> By the early twentieth century, the Royal College of Surgeons of England held one of the largest and most geographically varied collections of human skeletal remains in Britain which was heavily used for scholarly research (Fforde 2002a).

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<sup>15</sup> In his will, John Hunter stipulated his collection was to be sold to the Government in its entirety but on his death in 1793, Britain was at war and finances were tight. After several petitions to Parliament, in 1799 the government finally agreed to purchase the collection for £15,000 (RCS undated-b, 21).

<sup>16</sup> 'The Royal College of Surgeons in London' was established in 1800 on presentation of a new Royal Charter. In 1843, a new Royal Charter expanded the remit of the organisation beyond the city of London and changed its name to 'The Royal College of Surgeons of England'.

<sup>17</sup> Joseph Barnard Davis was an English medical doctor who is best known as a collector and craniologist. As a polygenist, Barnard was a critic of human speciation and his belief that morphology would provide evidence of a separate origin for different races drove his collecting (MacDonald 2006, Fforde 2004). Beginning his collection with the purchase of two skulls in 1843, he accumulated over 1700 crania and 14 complete skeletons. In 1880 he sold his collection to The Royal College of Surgeons, with the transfer from Barnard Davis's home in Staffordshire to the College in Lincoln's Inn Field, London taking twelve months (Larson 2014, 182, Quigley 2001)

Driving the creation and study of these collections was the growing interest in human evolution and racial diversity.<sup>18</sup> Prior to the late eighteenth century the majority view had been that environmental factors produced physical differences between human groups. By the first half of the nineteenth-century, this monogenist view was being challenged by polygenist theories asserting that racial differences were too great to be explained by environmental causation and different races were therefore separate species (Stocking 1968). Whilst the differences between the two paradigms led to great debate, what was shared by both was the presumption of European supremacy. Following the publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859, natural selection became an important topic of discussion and in response, physical anthropologists began to focus on locating evidence of human evolution in the bodies of modern people, increasing the demand for skeletal remains and soft tissue samples. To demonstrate the increasing size of collections during this period, Fforde (2004, 33) uses the example of the Anatomy Department at the University of Cambridge, where the 1862 collection of 82 skulls, 12 skeletons and 36 bones had, by 1891 increased to 1402 skulls, 13 skeletons, 1800 bones and 280 specimens in spirit.<sup>19</sup> As ideas of race had become bound to the physicality of the body, for those attempting to understand racial variations, bigger sample sizes meant better statistics, creating a demand for specimens in vast numbers that fuelled a global market for human remains.

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<sup>18</sup> Popularised by Franz Joseph Gall, the science of phrenology was based on the concept that a person's character was inscribed in their skull. By the mid-1820s phrenology had swept through northern Europe creating what Cooter (as cited in Larson 2014, 169) described as 'craniological mania' and a market for human crania that rivalled that of the anatomists (Larson 2014, Turnbull 2007, Roginski 2015).

<sup>19</sup>Although all body parts were of interest to those studying human similarity and difference, the skull had the most cachet. Frances Larson argues that, although it was shunned by many academics, the practice of phrenology established the importance of the human head but for the craniologist rather than being a 'physical imprint of its owners personality', each skull was 'a specimen in a great classificatory exercise' (Larson 2014, 175-176).

## Mapping Global Networks

Through mapping the global and local collection networks between Australia and the United Kingdom, Cressida Fforde has shown that donations of human remains to University departments were often made by past students or staff who held posts in the colonies, whilst private collectors relied on friends to enhance their collections (Fforde 2004, 57-58, Fforde and Hubert 2006). For example, having financed and led the party of scientific gentlemen who accompanied Cook on the *Endeavour*, on his return to England in 1771, Joseph Banks became the patron of many of the influential figures in comparative anatomy, including John Hunter. Writing about Banks, Turnbull (2007, 33) documents the network of naval and military officers, government officials, surveyors and naturalists through which he secured 'racially typical crania', with the newly established Royal College of Surgeons being the main beneficiary of this procurement. As Turnbull notes, many of those in Joseph Bank's collection networks owed their position or prospects to him indicating that, although money was not involved, the collection and transport of human remains was carried out through a gift exchange network (Appadurai 1986). In a more blatant example from the early twentieth century, Fforde cites a letter from Professor Arthur Robinson at Edinburgh University to the Australian based collector William Ramsay Smith that illustrates a collector being offered scientific literature in return for donations:-

You say you lack some good books on anthropological measurements and methods. If you will tell me what you already have and give me the titles of those you want I will see if I can advise anything to fill the blanks and as I am in touch with one or two people who know where to look for older editions I may be able to get the volumes you wish to have, if so it will give me great pleasure and I will let you have them as soon as they come to hand. I need scarcely say, as custodian of the Museum, how very much I am indebted to you for the last and previous consignments nor how gladly I shall receive any other specimens you send.

Arthur Robinson 7th March 1911 (as cited in Fforde 2004, 73)

In moving through these networks, human body parts undertake a conceptual shift from person to object allowing them to become commodities with a value established by rarity and

perceived scientific importance. This is a process described as Alberti (2011, 100) as the 'journey from person to object'.

This conceptual shift from person to specimen is evident in the archival information I examined as part of my research into Vedda remains in the RCS odontological collections.<sup>20</sup> The Vedda remains are part of a larger collection of material donated to RCS by the British anatomist and primatologist William Charles Osman Hill, who between 1930 and 1945 was Professor of Anatomy at the Ceylon Medical College in Colombo.<sup>21</sup> Osman Hill is primarily known for his study of the comparative anatomy of primates but this was a post that also allowed him to pursue his interest in the anthropological study of the Vedda people. Much of Osman Hill's research involved observations on the physical anthropology of living Vedda communities, but the RCS Osman Hill Archive (reference MS0521) also contains evidence for comparative studies on the skeletal remains and brains of Vedda, Sinhalese and Tamil people and the detailed records of two dissections carried out on Vedda males. Osman-Hill had found obtaining a Vedda body difficult as few Vedda people attended hospital and the transport of the recently dead by other Vedda was hampered by the belief in spirits.<sup>22</sup> Therefore in 1932, Osman Hill made an application to the Government Agent of Ratnapura District requesting authorisation for the removal of skeletons, parts of skeletons and bodies of deceased Vedda

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<sup>20</sup> The Vedda (or Veddah) are the Indigenous inhabitants of Sri Lanka who descended from the original Neolithic community and lived on the island prior to the arrival of the Sinhalese people from Northern India in the fifth century BC. The continuing influx of different peoples into Sri Lanka has seen many Vedda communities be adsorbed into mainstream Sinhala society (in the North Central and Uva provinces) or Tamil society (as on the East Coast). Although often identified as the 'Vedda people' the inland and coastal communities see themselves as distinct groups and claim no relation to each other. Some communities dislike being identified as Vedda as it is considered the lowest of the regional castes, and therefore brings social disadvantage. Other communities self-identify as Wanniya-Laeto (forest-dwellers) which differs from the imposed definition of 'Vedda', meaning hunter (Thamarai 2009, Dharmadasa 1990, Dart 1990)

<sup>21</sup> The specimens referred to are the two wet preserved brains (RCSOM/OH/W120/01 and RCSOM/OH/W121/01), wet preserved body parts including a head (RCSOM/OH/W137/01) and plaster casts of body parts (RCSOM/OH/53—59). No requests for the return of these remains have been received by RCS and my research did not uncover any other examples of request to European museums for the repatriation of Veddah ancestral remains.

<sup>22</sup> Letter from the District Medical Officer, Alutnuwara to William Charles Osman Hill 28<sup>th</sup> March 1931. Royal College of Surgeons of England Archive MS0521/2/32-34

and that Dr Josef of Alutnuwara Hospital be informed of the death of any Vedda in the vicinity to allow him to embalm the body.<sup>23</sup> In November 1932, Osman Hill was informed of a Vedda male in Alutnuwara hospital who was not expected to survive long. As the patient was unwilling to be moved to Ceylon, on his death his body was preserved by Dr Josef and transported to Colombo packed in a wooden box. In a letter from Osman Hill to Miss Green dated 7<sup>th</sup> March 1933, Osman Hill makes clear his annoyance at having to transport the box containing the body in his own car for the final stage of the journey to Ceylon.<sup>24</sup>

Prior to the death of the Vedda patient, the issue of gaining consent had been raised by the Director of Medical and Sanitary Services (DMSS) Dr Briercliffe and Osman Hill recommended to Dr Josef that if feasible, he should get permission for the post mortem from the patient or his relatives.<sup>25</sup> In February 1933, Osman-Hill was informed of a second Vedda in the hospital who was not expected to survive. In this case the DMSS agreed that a post mortem could be carried out but that the patient's consent or sanction from his relatives needed to be obtained, however no record of consent has been found in the archive.<sup>26</sup>

What emerges through the letters and Osman Hill's own notes, are the networks through which he gained access to the Veddah body he was so interested in dissecting. Although Osman Hill seems to be sympathetic to the plight of the Veddah people, he appears to have no qualms about the objectification of a living patient. This is a trait that MacDonald (2010) writes about in relation to other anatomists, notably Joseph Barnard Davis who was

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<sup>23</sup> Letter from William Charles Osman Hill to Dr W. Chanmugam 12<sup>th</sup> November 1932. Royal College of Surgeons of England Archive MS0521/2/32-34

<sup>24</sup> Letter from William Charles Osman Hill to Miss Green 7<sup>th</sup> March 1933. Royal College of Surgeons of England Archive MS0521/2/32-34

<sup>25</sup> Letter from William Charles Osman Hill Dr Byron Josef 6<sup>th</sup> December 1932. Royal College of Surgeons of England Archive MS0521/2/32-34

<sup>26</sup> Letter from William Charles Osman Hill to Dr Byron Josef 13<sup>th</sup> November 1933. Royal College of Surgeons of England Archive MS0521/2/32-34

remembered by a fellow doctor as a man who 'looked on heads simply as potential skulls' (John Beddoe 1910, as cited in Larson 2014, 184).

### **2.3 Commodification, Objectification and Identity**

In relation to the living body, Lock (2002b) connects the objectification of a particular group of people with them becoming vulnerable to exploitation. This link is supported by the theme of the exploitation of the bodies of the poor and disenfranchised, that runs through the historical discourse (Hurren 2012, Richardson 1987, Sharp 2000, Alberti 2011) and is continued within the modern context (Waldby and Mitchell 2006, Scheper-Hughes 2002, Cohen 2002). This is not to suggest that dissection and anatomisation of body parts was restricted to the lower classes. As Alberti (2011) points out, the 'medical gaze' was turned on all patients, but it is the taking and use of the bodies of the poor and disenfranchised without consent, that demonstrates the inherent imbalance of power (Hurren 2012, MacDonald 2010, 2006, Richardson 1997, 1987, Hallam 2012, Harrison 2010). When seen within this context, it can be argued that that removal of human remains from Indigenous communities without consent and against the wishes of those communities, demonstrates a similar imbalance of power that operated on both a local and global scale.

In *Collecting the Dead*, Cressida Fforde discusses a number of documented examples of the collection of Indigenous human remains in Australia, highlighting the cases of William Lanne and Tommy Walker as examples of public outrage caused by the desecration of Aboriginal corpses (Fforde 2004, 153). Tasmanian Aborigine William Lanne (or Lanny), was most well known for being labelled the 'last full-blooded Tasmanian man'. On his death in 1869, a dispute broke out between The Royal Society of Tasmania and William Crowther, who wished to secure Lanne's remains for The Royal College of Surgeons in London. Having considered the

arguments put forward, the Tasmanian government decided that a burial should take place, but, due to importance of Lanne's remains to science, after a reasonable interval an exhumation could take place. However, prior to the burial, Lanny's head, hands and feet were removed, violations discovered at the funeral when rumours the body had been mutilated led to the coffin being opened (Cove 1995, 47-48). This caused a scandal that resulted in the termination of Crowther's appointment at the Colonial hospital, although he was later reinstated and went onto receive a medal of honour and fellowship from The Royal Society of Surgeons in Britain (Petrow 1997, 90). In the case of Tommy Walker, a Ngarrindjeri man who was a popular figure in Adelaide, the post-mortem removal of the majority of his remains by coroner William Ramsey Smith was not discovered until concerns about Ramsey Smith's practices prompted an exhumation. Due to Walker's popularity, there was widespread outrage over the desecration of his body and Ramsey Smith was charged with 'the misuse of human remains' and dismissed from his post, although, as with Crowther, he was later reinstated (MacDonald 2010, 204-205). For Fforde (2004), the public outrage in these cases is evidence that the collection of Indigenous human remains was not considered acceptable at the time, indicating the need for a more nuanced understanding of the fragmentation and circulation of body parts.

The literature on the traffic of corpses in Europe reveals a complex range of views (Park 1995, Lock 2002b, 2003, Sharp 2000, Foltyn 2008, Alberti 2011, Hallam 2010). Discussing the difference in social attitude in the thirteenth-century, Katharine Park contrasts the resistance to the division of the corpse yet acceptance of regulated autopsy in Italy, with the social revulsion for dissection in Northern Europe. Suggesting these distinctive attitudes were due to cultural differences in how the dead body was materialized, Park (1995, 115) distinguishes between the understanding of a quick and radical separation of body and soul in Italy, and Northern European beliefs, in which the body's connection to the living person lingered

making the dead body active and sensitive. How then does this view of the corpse as semi-animate, fit with acceptance of the fragmentation of the body that is represented by the Christian cult of relics (Lock 2002a) ossuaries (Hallam 2010) and Renaissance cabinets of curiosity (Alberti 2011)? Rather than being in tension with the concept of the dead body as retaining selfhood, Park argues that it is actually *because* the selfhood of the corpse persisted that fragmentation was accepted. The body was integral to the self, and personal identity inhered in the scattered parts which is why dissection, an endeavour of no use to the corpse, was viewed as an act of objectification and violation (Park 1995, 119-126).

In the sixteenth-century, changes in medical thinking saw descriptions of the fluid interplay of vapours and liquids being replaced by the concept of separate organs integrated into the body as a whole (Park 2006, 261). This conceptualisation of the body can be seen as part of the move towards the scientific approach of the nineteenth-century in which an understanding of the body is sought through fragmentation and categorisation (Alberti 2011, 72). The increasing demand for dead bodies to supply the surgeons and anatomists who strove to understand and categorise the body fuelled the development of a market for corpses, with shortages resulting in the well documented practice of grave robbing (see Alberti 2011, Hurren 2012, Richardson 1987, Hallam 2012, MacDonald 2006, 2010). Yet accounts of the anatomy school in Sheffield being demolished by an angry crowd and an outraged mob storming the anatomical school in Cambridge in 1835 over the attempt to commandeer the body of a pauper, illustrate that within wider society the practice of dissecting corpses was condemned (Richardson 1987, Donnelly 1975). Just as identified by Fforde (2004) in relation to the treatment of the corpses of William Lanne and Tommy Walker, the taking of human remains was against the social norm and represented a violent interruption of normal cultural processes.

## Constructing Inferiority

What we see in the examples of crowds attacking anatomy schools given above is the distinction between the popular attitude towards the corpse and that of the medical professionals. In *The Birth of the Clinic*, Foucault (1973) examines the shift in the way illness and disease are formulated and treated at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century, arguing that in this period the body becomes a site of observation and learning. Using the term 'medical gaze' to describe the gaze of the medical professional under which the dead body loses its status as a person and becomes an object, Foucault suggests that this is a gaze understood to be free of invention and in its purity, able to bring the truth about the body to light. Although developed in relation to the relationships between the medical professional and living patients, given that most of those carrying out research on the taxonomy of race saw themselves as collecting empirical evidence free from bias, Foucault's concept of the medical gaze provides a useful lens through which to view the work of anatomists and physical anthropologists. However, it does need to be noted that although this 'medical gaze' maybe applied to all bodies, through unequal social relationships populations of groups can become 'othered', and it is this 'otherness' that allows certain peoples to become considered as a resource for exploitation (Coffee 2008, 265, Taussig 1987).

An illustration of how, rather than being free from bias, research on the taxonomy of race was grounded in a colonial ideology that assumed European superiority, comes from the work of Samuel George Morton. An American physician and naturalist, Morton supported polygenist theories and believed he could define the intellectual ability of racial groups by skull capacity. In *Crania America*, Morton (1839) claimed his research showed that Caucasians had the biggest brains and argued for a racial hierarchy that placed Germans, English and

Anglo-Americans at the top, and American-born blacks at the bottom.<sup>27</sup> Redman (2016, 26) suggests that, having amassed a sizable personal collection of crania, Morton's research helped to create a professional precedent, signalling to other scholars that 'the question of race could be understood through the collection and study of human skeletons'. However, having examined Morton's measurements, biologist Stephen J. Gould asserted that Morton had mismeasured the skulls in order to produce data that supported his prejudicial view (Gould 1981, Gould 1978). Although Gould's approach to re-measuring the skulls has been critiqued and his assertions debated (Weisberg 2014, Weisberg et al. 2016, Lewis et al. 2011, Editorial 2011), his argument that scientific method is inevitably tainted by bias has endured, and Morton's work has become a cautionary example of racial bias in the science of human difference (Weisberg 2014).

Morton's study of racial difference consisted of two stages, reviewing of the ethnographic literature, then attempting to give the ethnographic findings a physical basis in the properties of human crania (Weisberg 2014, 167). Hence Morton's description of Native Americans as 'slow in acquiring knowledge; restless, revengeful and fond of war', was based on his conclusion that the smaller brain cavity of Native Americans led to decreased average intelligence (as cited in Redman 2016, 25). Turnbull argues that this approach meant that the remains of Indigenous people did not just have value as a site of information about humanity's past, but also 'in respect of the destiny of native peoples within Britain's new Australian sphere of colonial ambition' (Turnbull 2007, 28). In the shift from the Enlightenment view that all human beings possessed the capacity for social and moral progress, to the nineteenth-century discourse focused on a hierarchy of race types, Turnbull suggests that bodily forms and structures are used to materialise idea about race, becoming

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<sup>27</sup> Inevitably Morton's work was celebrated by those who supported the status quo of race relations in the United States and upon his death in 1851 he was eulogized in the antebellum in the South as 'having helped to definitively and scientifically prove the inferiority of the African in relation to the European' (Redman 2016, 25, Fabian 2010).

symptomatic of inferiority and underpinning the understanding of, and approach to Indigenous peoples.<sup>28</sup> So the predetermination of racial categories saw the living indigenous body constructed as inferior; a view supported and legitimised through the facts and figures produced by studying the dead (Turnbull 1991, Zimmerman 1989a).

In his study of the role of British anatomists and phrenologists in the construction of Aboriginal race, Turnbull highlights the framing of Aboriginal Australians as an endangered community. An example of this 'doomed race' theory comes from the journal of Sydney based surgeon and naturalist George Bennett, in which he argues for a swift and systematic collection of Aboriginal Australian remains and ethnographic material that, once in museums, would act 'as lasting memorials of the former races inhabiting the land' (Bennett 1834 as cited in Turnbull 2007, 43). Although McGregor (1997) suggests the concept of Aboriginal Australians as a doomed race may partially have come from a pessimism borne out of Aboriginal resistance to assimilation, Turnbull points to the study of Aboriginal remains as what distilled this pessimism 'into belief in the inevitability of racial extinction' (Turnbull 2007, 44).

Evidence of the framing of Aboriginal Australian people as a doomed race, can also be found in the description of William Lanne as the 'last full blooded Tasmanian Aboriginal male' (Cove 1995, 47). Consequently, Truganini, a women of the Nuenonne people who found herself labelled as the last surviving 'full blooded' Indigenous Tasmanian, requested her body be buried in the mountains or at sea, due to her fear of suffering a similar fate to Lanne (Ryan 1996). As it transpired this was a well-founded fear, as on news of her death in 1876, The Royal Society of Tasmania applied to the colonial secretary for her remains. However, strong

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<sup>28</sup> With reference to Australia, Paul Turnbull (2007) argues that rather than starting to inform the managing of Aboriginal people following the impact of Darwinian thinking, the concept of race and theories of human difference were already having an impact by the early 1830s.

community sentiment, and a desire to avoid another public scandal, meant the request was refused and her body was buried within the walls of Hobart's female convict factory (Turnbull 2016, 203). In 1878 the Royal Society's had their application to disinter Truganini granted on the understanding her remains would not go on display, yet in 1905 Truganini's remains became an exhibit in the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery. Displayed as the remains of 'the last pure-blood Tasmanian Aboriginal', Truganini's body had important political implications related to the notion of racial purity and claims to indigeneity. The body of Truganini was scientific evidence that there were no 'full blood' Tasmanian Aboriginal people left, a scientific 'fact' which would come to underpin the Tasmanian Government's approach to those claiming to be Tasmanian Aboriginals. For as Cove concludes, '[p]olitical claims to Aboriginal status would be judged against shared European assumptions of Aboriginality in which supposedly scientifically objective and politically disinterested definitions and research would carry weight' (Cove 1995, 62).

The use of Indigenous human remains to justify the colonial ideology of European superiority and their categorisation and display as 'other' means they can be understood as being the material representation of an Indigenous inferiority that was constructed with no reference to how living populations saw themselves (see Turnbull 1991, Zimmerman 1989a). According to Fforde (2002a, 31), 'the West appropriated Aboriginal identity, subsuming it within its own conceptualization of a superior self' and this can be seen reflected in the classification and organisation of Western museum displays and stores. As Hooper-Greenhill (1992, 5) identifies, the Enlightenment era museum had shifted from the Renaissance model of a hoard, to one requiring hierarchical and contextual dimensions; the same ordering models inherent in ideas of race, nation and gender. In his study of anatomical museums within the United Kingdom, Alberti (2011, 126) posits the idea of these museums as 'an atlas of disease' in which the normal is compared to the deviant. A concept extended by Gorman (2011, 151)

to all museums through his argument that fundamentally museums are 'spaces that define difference and make it visible'. Therefore, through categorising, studying and displaying of human remains according to colonial views of racial difference, European superiority and national identity, could be materialised in relation to the uncivilised and savage 'other'.

## **2.4 Indigenous Rights and Changing Practice**

As discussed in the previous section, the main impetus for the collection and study of human remains of Indigenous peoples was the investigation of race. However, by the late nineteenth-century the narrative was shifting, as anthropologist Franz Boas began questioning the theory of defining race by physical features (see Boas 1984, 1940). In the 1920s and 30s the growing dissatisfaction with the approach to research into human difference was reflected in the reduction of the numbers of human remains collected by European institutions and the calls for the term 'race' to 'to be dropped from the vocabulary of science' (Haddon and Huxley 1935, 107, Fforde 2004, Stepan 1982). The racist ideology of Nazi Germany and the growing anti-Nazi sentiment during the Second World War, helped this argument gain purchase, leading to the 1950 UNESCO statement on race that opens with the statement; 'scientists have reached a general agreement in recognising that mankind is one' (UNESCO 1952 as cited in Harraway 1988, 211). For Stocking (1988), this view represents a return to the monogenist tradition, yet as Fforde (2004) points out, the key difference is that this is monogenism underpinned by egalitarian principles rather than an assumption of European superiority. The scientific advances of the twentieth-century also had an important impact with the focus on the typology of bones being replaced by genetic research (Gieson and White 2013, 15). Although this does not mean that race has not continued to be an issue, as the shift in research focus from body to blood raised new questions around indigeneity and identity that I will return to in the next chapter.

The UNESCO statement on race and shifts in thinking on human difference can also be placed within context of the wider post World War II discourse on universal human rights that supposedly enabled subjected people on the periphery to challenge the arrogance of the 'centre' (Olick and Coughlin 2003, 45). Elazar Barkan (2003, 96) argues that this global discourse empowered those who had been situated as 'other', an empowerment that was 'a challenge to the contemporary nation states self-perception as a just society'. The Indigenous Land Rights movement in Australia that had emerged in the 1960s was followed by calls for the restitution of Aboriginal cultural heritage (Fforde 2002a, 34, Turnbull 2016), with a similar pattern being seen in other countries with Indigenous populations, including New Zealand (Hole 2007, Tapsell 2002) Canada (Collison 2007, Phillips and Johnson 2003, Conaty 2006), Norway (Schanche 2002, Holand and Sommerseth 2012, Harlin 2008) and South Africa (Bredekamp 2006). By the 1970s, Indigenous activists in America were challenging the ongoing differential treatment of white and native remains and campaigns for repatriation and reburial of ancestral remains held in museums started to gain momentum (Zimmerman 1989a, McGuire 1989, Trope and Echo-Hawk 2000). Turnbull (2010, 117) suggests that initially many researchers in archaeology, anatomy and physical anthropology were perplexed as to why Indigenous people should demand the return of ancestral remains that had been held by museums, universities and medical institutions, in many cases for over a century or more. Despite the fact that the reburial movements of the 1970s and 80s reflected long-held concerns about removal of the dead (Fforde 2004, Hole 2007, Turnbull 2002), some prominent researchers questioned the motives of repatriation campaigners, suggesting them to be political rather than grounded in obligation, customary law and the continuing distress caused by ancestral remains having been removed from country (Atkinson 2010).

Fforde suggests that the attention paid to repatriation and reburial by the United Nations and the World Archaeological Congress (WAC) illustrates the significance the issue had gained by the mid-1980s. Having pro-actively sought the involvement of Indigenous groups (Hubert 1992, Zimmerman 1989c, Doumas 1989), in 1989 WAC adopted *The Vermillion Accord* which fundamentally recognises that the concerns of various ethnic groups in relation to their ancestral remains are legitimate and to be respected (WAC 1989, Zimmerman 2002, Turnbull 2010). Although the direct impact of the *Vermillion Accord* on museum practice in the UK appears to be limited, Zimmerman (2002) argues that in the US it contributed to an atmosphere of change that facilitated the passing of subsequent legislation. In 1989, the revelation that almost 18,500 human remains were stored in the Smithsonian Institution was the catalyst for a national effort by Native American tribes and organisations for repatriation legislation. The subsequent passing of the *National Museum of the American Indian Act* in November 1989, then served as an important precedent for the *Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act* (NAGPRA), signed into law twelve months later in November 1990. From a practical standpoint, NAGPRA mandates the procedures and standards in relation to the repatriation of Native American human remains, funerary objects and objects of cultural patrimony. It was also politically significant, as it was the first time an Indigenous population was recognised in law as the rightful owners of their cultural heritage and as such, has been framed as human rights legislation (Zimmerman 2002). As Trope and Echo-Hawk (2000, 136) state; 'in many ways, NAGPRA is historic, landmark legislation for Native Americans. It represents fundamental changes in basic social attitudes toward Native peoples by the museum and scientific communities and the public at large.'

In Australia the repatriation policies of the 1980s are described by Cubillo (2010, 21) as 'ad hoc, uncoordinated and reactionary'. However, by the early 1990s most state museums had developed repatriation policies and in 1993, Museums Australia published *Previous*

*Possessions, New Obligations: Policies for Museums in Australia and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*, which set out guidelines for repatriation. In New Zealand, where the repatriation of Māori remains had begun in the 1970s, a similar, yet distinct pattern emerges. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s increasing Māori involvement in museums, as both visitors and staff, led to a greater level of iwi (tribal) involvement in museums and questioning of why ancestral remains and taonga (highly prized objects) had become part of collections (Hole 2007). In 1998, when the Dominion Museum in Wellington was reopened as the bicultural Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa, it had a functioning marae (community meeting place) and wahi tapu (ancestral remains vault) (Williams 2005).

Although issues of repatriation had arisen in specific national contexts, by the 1980s debates about the repatriation of Indigenous human remains and restitution of cultural artefacts were becoming international and a number of institutions in the United Kingdom were being approached by Indigenous organisations from Australia, New Zealand and America (Simpson 1994). In the late 1980s and through the 1990s, a few institutions did agree to return remains in their collections, although the only UK institution with a large collection to respond positively to these early repatriation requests was the University of Edinburgh, who having adopted a pro-repatriation policy returned ancestral remains to Tasmania and mainland Australia in 1991 (Fforde 2004, 2009). Throughout the 1990s discussions about the repatriation of Indigenous human remains continued, with the presentation of the debate being as a conflict between the importance of human remains for scientific and archaeological research and the spiritual concerns of Indigenous peoples. The positioning of the remains as either objects or ancestors is an issue I will pick up in the next section (2.5) but I first want to focus on the changes that resulted in many more UK institutions adopting a pro-repatriation policy and agreeing to return ancestral remains.

## **Putting the RCS Repatriations in Context**

Having already set out the changes in approach to repatriation request that occurred at RCS, I now want to set these within their social context but to do so it is first necessary to consider the origins of public museums in the United Kingdom.

The Enlightenment museum can be viewed as a space of cultural authority that was seen to uphold and communicate truth (Harrison 2005). Both Coffee (2008) and Bennett (1995) have highlighted the museums' role as a medium to civilize and educate the population on their position in society, or as stated by General Pitt Rivers, to 'divert the ignorant masses from agitators who strive to make them break with their past' (Pitt Rivers 1891 as cited in Coombes 2004, 285). McCall & Gray (2014, 20) describe the original concept of the museum as collections-focused, building-based and holding curatorship as central. The consequence of this was that a narrow social group claimed exclusivity in determining the function of museums. As already discussed, in categorising and displaying human remains, museums had a role in materialising the colonial view of 'other' and the collections of the remains of Indigenous peoples are thus tangible parts of the colonial legacy of UK museums (Barkan and Bush 2002, Lowenthal 1996, Simpson 1996, Henare 2005). However, as Barkan (2003) points out, the extension of the principle of human rights to peoples previously excluded will alter the conceptualization of those rights, and within context of this developing narrative by the 1970s museums had started to be accused of being isolated from the modern world, elitist and obsolete (McCall and Gray 2014, 20). The result, according to Carter and Orange (2012), was the development of issue-based museology that challenged the eighteenth-century conception of the museum as a physical collection of objects. Sometimes termed 'new museology', this approach advocated for a sharing of authority and for museums to engage and embrace community representation, transparency, and inclusiveness (Hooper-Greenhill 1992, Macdonald and Fyfe 1996, Moore 1997, Vergo 1989, Gorman 2011). The resultant

shifts in practice, have led Tiffany Jenkins to suggest that museums were attempting to secure new legitimacy by creating a distance from discredited foundational remit (Jenkins 2011, 54). However to understand the shifting social purpose and mission of museums it is important to set these changes within their social and political context.

After a period of expansion and expenditure, the political and economic pressures of the 1980s led to a reappraisal of the funding and management of culture and the arts in the UK with organisations being required to look for new sources of revenue to support their income. In 1997, the incoming Labour administration renamed the Department of National Heritage the Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS), marking the beginning of a new governmental approach to heritage. In its *Centres for Social Change* policy document published in 2000, DCMS makes explicit the expectation that nationally funded and local authority museums be part of the national strategy for social inclusion as ‘agents of social change’ (McCall and Gray 2014, 22). As well as setting a wider agenda, there is also a direct political involvement with the repatriation debate, with the statement made in 2000 by the Prime Ministers of United Kingdom and Australia demonstrating a commitment to the return of Aboriginal ancestral remains:-

The Australian and British Governments agree to increase efforts to repatriate human remains to Australian indigenous communities. In doing this, the Government recognises the special connection that indigenous people have with ancestral remains, particularly where there are living descendants.’

Report of the Working Group on Human Remains (DCMS 2003, Paragraph 4)

Jenkins (2011) argues that that this political involvement in the repatriation debate forms part of a wider social trend for making repatriations that developed after the Second World War. Reflecting on these various redress movements, Olick and Coughlin (2003) posit that regret is a symptom of modernity and form of historical consciousness tied to the decline of the nation state. This international emphasis on morality and self-examination are, according to Barkan (2003), important factors in the political will to apologise for historical crimes. Termed the

'politics of regret' by Olick and Coughlin (2003, 56), Jenkins argues that this global trend both impacts and influences the repatriation debate, but equally developments within the United Kingdom must also be placed within their social context at a national level.

In 2001 the DCMS established the Working Group on Human Remains to examine repatriation and the wider issues around human remains held within UK collections by taking evidence taken from museum professionals, scientists, and representatives from Indigenous groups and organisations (Gieson 2013b). Influenced in part by the joint prime ministerial statement on repatriation made the previous year, the basis for the working group's remit was the Select Committee on Culture, Media and Sport report *Cultural Property: Return and Illicit Trade* published in July 2000. This report had recommended that there should be discussions that worked towards preparing a statement of principles and guidance relating to the care and requests for return of human remains, better access to information on holdings of human remains, and a consultation exercise on the terms of legislation to permit the trustees of national collections to deaccession human remains (DCMS 2003, 2). During the preceding three years, there had been a number of exhibitions in London that displayed dead human bodies and body parts, the most controversial being Gunther von Hagens' *Body Worlds* (see Jagger et al. 2012, Goulding et al. 2012), raising questions around consent and the dead as objects of display. However both Jenkins (2011) and Swain (2013) point to the public 'scandal' caused by the retention of children's body parts at the Royal Liverpool Children's National Health Service Trust (Alder Hey) and Bristol Royal Infirmary, as what put the issues of respect and consent high on the political agenda. The subsequent enquiries led directly to the passing of the *Human Tissue Act* (2004), and establishment of the Human Tissue Authority (HTA) to regulate the use and storage of human remains less than 100 years old (HTA 2010). The result being that as a medical museum with specimens less than 100 years old in their

collections, RCS hold *Storage of a Body or Relevant Material and Use for Public Display* licences from the HTA.

The fundamental principle that underpins the *Human Tissue Act* and work of the HTA is that of consent, a concept that, alongside respect and consultation, also featured strongly in the *Report of the Working Group on Human Remains* (DCMS 2003). The Working Group report takes the stance of endorsing the repatriation of Indigenous human remains ‘wherever possible and appropriate from both public and private collections’, acknowledging that a number of British institutions, including RCS, had already agreed to return remains (DCMS 2003, 3). It is also important to note that Section 47 of the *Human Tissue Act* gave nine national museums the power to de-accession human remains under 1000 years old, an action the British Museum and Natural History Museum had both previously argued was prohibited under the *British Museum Act 1963* (White 2013, 45).<sup>29</sup> In 2005, DCMS published non-statutory guidance on how to approach the issues surrounding the holding of human remains by museums in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The *Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums* defines human remains as ‘the bodies, and parts of bodies, of once living people and includes modified remains used in the creation of artefacts (DCMS 2005, 9).<sup>30</sup>

Tiffany Jenkins (2011, 78) argues that the shift towards UK museums agreeing to the repatriation of Indigenous remains is a symptom of a wider ‘crisis of cultural authority’ within the sector. For Jenkins it was the particular set of social circumstances and challenges to the legitimacy of the museum as an organisation which came from within the museum sector

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<sup>29</sup> The nine national museums given the power to deaccession human remains under Section 47 of the *Human Tissue Act* are the Armouries, the British Museum, the Imperial War Museum, the Museum of London, the National Maritime Museum, National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside, the Natural History Museum, the Science Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum.

<sup>30</sup> In line with the Human Tissue Act 2004 the term human remains as used in the *Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums* does not include hair and nails, although it is acknowledged that some communities give these a sacred importance (DCMS 2005, 9).

itself that problematised human remains collections and allowed the pro-repatriation claims to gain traction:-

Repatriation advocates associated their cause with prominent issues, high on the political and media agenda, which raised questions about how contemporary body parts were acquired, stored and used by the medical profession and by artists. Linking to these controversies gave their issue greater weight and credibility as a problem. It also helped extend the problem from an issue associated with human remains from overseas groups, to one where the holding of *all* remains – including those from Britain – is deemed problematic.

Tiffany Jenkins (2011, 25)

In questioning the benefits of repatriation for both the museums and communities involved, Jenkins attempts to separate repatriation as a politically symbolic action from the therapeutic benefits cited in the pro-repatriation arguments, concluding there is lack of evidence for the latter (also see Batty 2005, Nail 1994, Foley 2003). This raises two important questions: Firstly, what are the legacies of repatriation for the museums and communities involved; and secondly, what meanings does this global movement of human remains create? These are questions that I will consider in more detail in the next chapter but I first want to return to the concept of human remains as being either objects or ancestors, as how human remains are understood is one of the fundamental complexities of the repatriation process that this thesis aims to explore.

## **2.5 Objects or Ancestors?**

In *Returning the Ancestors*, Besterman (2004, 1) describes the quandary raised by overseeing the repatriation of the skeletal remains of six Indigenous Australians and asks ‘was this an act of scientific betrayal to be condemned, or an act of humanity to be celebrated?’ This question is one that underlies much of the discourse on repatriation, which Teague suggests has tended to be either pro or anti-repatriation, framing the debate as a contest between science and tradition (Teague 2007, 245). On the ‘scientific’ side of the debate, human remains are a source of potential information about human origins, disease and past environments (see

Grupe and Peters 2003, Mulvaney 1991, 1989, Jenkins 2003, Payne 2004, Foley 2004, Brothwell 2004, Stringer 2003, Morris and Foley 2002, Walker 2000), with the counter argument foregrounding the humanity of the remains and arguing they are not objects to be studied, but ancestors to be buried (for example Smith 2004, Fforde 2004, Hubert 1992, 1989, Hubert and Fforde 2002, Besterman 2004, Turnbull 1993, 2002, Zimmerman 1989a, Zimmerman 2002, Atkinson 2010, Hemming and Wilson 2010, Weatherall 2000). Fforde (2004, 108) blames the media for this polemic view of the debate, as only the most extreme views on each side get presented. However in the 2003 panel discussion *Human Remains: Objects to Study or Ancestors to Bury*, both the title and Jane Hubert's opening remarks speak to this division as having become normalised within the disciplinary discourse:-

Indigenous accounts of repatriation reflect the perception of the remains of their ancestors as living people, even though the bodies that are returned may be no more than a few pieces of skin and bone. This contrasts with the perspectives of scientists and museum curators [...] who perceive human remains as specimens, or as labelled and classified components of a collection.

Jane Hubert (2003, unpaginated)

The tensions between the two positions are particularly evident in the debates about the fate of The Ancient One, also known as Kennewick Man. Discovered in 1996 on the banks of the Columbia River in the United States, dating of the remains of Kennewick Man showed them to be over nine thousand years old. Under the NAGRPA legislation any bones over five hundred years old are considered Native American and Kennewick man was therefore claimed by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. This claim was contested by a group of eight scientists who filled a lawsuit to prevent the federal agency handing over the remains to the Umatilla (Hurst Thomas 2000). This high profile case has been widely discussed but what emerges from the literature is that the Kennewick Man lawsuit is fundamentally a clash of two systems of conceptualizing history (Owsley and Jantz 2003, 141, also see Burke et al. 2008, Gerstenblith 2003, Hurst Thomas 2000, Chatters 2002). Fforde (2004) and Besterman (2003) have both argued that statements made by some scientists suggesting that

Indigenous groups have no connection to ancient remains show a lack of respect for differences in cultural attitudes and beliefs; 'if we wish to debate the issues solely on the grounds staked out by Western rationalism we assume the right to deny the alternative realities and belief systems of indigenous communities' (Besterman 2003 unpaginated).

In his critique of the repatriation debates, Piotr Bienkowski suggests that what is really under discussion here are metaphysical questions about the relationship between mind and body. Viewed in this way, the science versus tradition debate can be understood as the dualist and materialist views that underpin Western science, clashing with the panpsychism (or animism) view of matter as intrinsically sentient (Bienkowski 2006, 3-4). This suggests a need to approach repatriation debates through respecting these differences in world view. However Coffee (2008, 266) argues that this can lead back to the creation of a primitivised 'other' with the alternative world view being portrayed in stereotypic caricature or as naïve. In order to move forward from the opposition of science and tradition, Turnbull (2002) proposes that what is required is more communication and understanding; to respect a different world view there has to be recognition of the metaphysical position on which our own world view is built. This is a view supported by Hurst Thomas who concludes that 'historical disciplines are products of Western traditions, and anthropologists need to recognise that they are prisoners of their own cultural background' (Hurst Thomas 2000, 244).

So far, my discussion of the science versus tradition debate has foregrounded the polarisation of views. It should not however be assumed that this is an accurate reflection of this complex issue. For example, the consultation physical anthropologist Steve Webb carried out with Aboriginal groups in Australia the mid-1980s, found that although there was a mistrust of Western scientists, far from being anti-science many Indigenous people were interested in archaeological research and were willing to discuss a compromise with researchers (Webb

1987). For Turnbull this mistrust is only to be expected. For many years research was something done to Indigenous people, so what they want is involvement and the freedom to employ new knowledge in culturally appropriate ways (Turnbull 2002, 65). As an example, and in contrast to the Kennewick Man case, Owsley and Jantz (2003) highlight the scientific analysis of human remains dated to 9,800 BP from a cave on Prince of Wales Island, Alaska which was carried out with the authorization of the local tribal councils. The concept of the scientist lacking humanity and only being interested in human remains as 'specimens' has also been challenged; an example being Ken Arnold's description of the *Skeletons: London's Buried Bones* exhibition at the Wellcome Collection London;

In sometimes heated discussions about these issues, scientific approaches to this material frequently seem to be pitted against more empathetic and 'humane' ones. A striking feature of this exhibition is the manner in which it confounds that simplistic dichotomy. For here, the methodical work of osteologists helps to reunite these bones with fascinating, but otherwise hidden elements of their life stories.

Ken Arnold (2008, 6)

What these examples suggest, is that the division of the debate into science versus tradition is overly simplistic and categorising human remains as either objects to study or ancestors to bury, does not reflect the complex meanings they embody. Having argued that to understand other world views we must also acknowledge and understand our own conceptualisations of the body, I now turn to considering different understandings of the dead body in more depth.

### **Person or Thing?**

Since the late nineteenth-century the donation of human tissue has been considered an altruistic gift to society whilst the idea of human tissue being a commodity has been generally opposed (Parry 2008, Titmus 1997 [1970], Waldby and Mitchell 2006, Lock 2003). As Parry points out, this gift/commodity paradigm allows for a comforting and hygienic separation but is 'incapable of taking into account the entangled and unstable modes of commodification to which contemporary practice give rise' (Parry 2008, 1143). Work in this area by Parry and

Gere (2006), Parry (2008), and Hirschauer (2006) has put the problem of ontological indeterminacy at the heart of this issue. Used as a way of describing incompatible systems of being, Parry explains that, 'ontological indeterminacy is problematic because formal relations to objects are governed by their ontological status' so if this status is indeterminate it 'profoundly affects how that thing may be subsequently used' (Parry 2008, 1134).

Having suggested that to understand how fragmentation and commodification occur, consideration should first be given to what the body is, for as Sharp (2000, 288) points out, universalist thinking may actually hamper analysis. An alternative approach is therefore to consider what human body parts must lose in order to be ontologically re-demined and accepted as commodities. For Lock (2002a, 71), in order for body parts to become freely available for exchange they must first be 'conceptualized as thing-like, as non self and as detachable from the body'. By cutting the network of associations human remains become 'decontextualized, dissociated and detached' and it is this objectification that allows the transformation to commodity (Callon 1999 as cited in Greenhough 2006, 445). However, Parry (2008) suggests that the idea of a gift/commodity paradigm does not hold up to the complex contemporary exchange of human body parts and tissues. The polarisation of gift and commodity is also a position rejected by Appadurai (1986) who argues they should not be considered mutually exclusive forms of exchange; a gift for example may be a voluntary transfer but may also be motivated by the expectation of reciprocity.

Examples from both medical history (Alberti 2011) and human geography (Parry 2008) have shown how human tissues can acquire currency through reciprocal exchange, a pattern also seen in the supply of Indigenous human remains to scientific institutions in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Returning to the case of William Ramsay Smith, his key defence when brought before a tribunal in 1903 was that he had not acted for personal profit and had

taken no money for the supply of human remains (Fforde 2004, 67). Yet, as previously outlined, his ability to supply Indigenous remains was reciprocated by access to European scientific circles, copies of literature, and the publication of work (Fforde 2004, 73). This fits with Miller's (2002, 228) assessment that 'within gift exchange we find considerable use of calculation, even quite fine calculation – of strategy and interests with respect to inalienable good and the nature of relationships'.

Within a contemporary context the language of economic transactions involving human tissue shifts to one of compensation and procuring costs with the monetary value given apparently reflecting the added value through investment of labour (Parry 2008). In the nineteenth-century bodies and body parts were purchased by collectors with whole collections being freely sold at auction (Alberti 2011). In this particular social and historical context, these body parts were objects of value that had become exchangeable for money (Castree 2004, Jackson 1999), with the market value following a predictable pattern of demand endowing value, and rarity then increasing that value (Appadurai 1986). However to buy a whole collection was to purchase not only the prepared specimens but also the associated reputation of the collector or previous owner (Alberti 2011). Rather than precluding commodity candidacy, the association with a particular person and the social meaning of that connection increased value demonstrating that commodities can be still be heavy with social meanings and significations (Scheper-Hughes 2002, 2). This would suggest that human body parts do not have to be completely 'decontextualized, dissociated and detached' from all social meaning to be considered as commodities. Yet, if we accept that there are contexts in which human body parts can become commodities, what needs further consideration is how the composition of thing-like and person-like qualities shifts during that journey. Sharp's (2000, 293) argument that 'commodification insists upon objectification', suggests that body parts become objects through a process of objectification, and having already discussed the

objectification of living populations, it is clear that when considered within this context, the concept of the body as an object may be a disturbing and dangerous idea (Sofaer 2006, 64). However, can objectifying human body parts be considered in the same way as the objectification of the living body? This is a question that brings me back to the point of ontological indeterminacy and the key issue of whether the dead and fragmented body is person or thing.

### **The Material Body**

In relation to the preparation of medial specimens, Alberti (2011) suggests that traces of identity will hinder the process of objectification that sees human body parts transformed into material culture. An important critique of the process of objectification as proposed by Alberti, is that it does not take into consideration the material foundation of the body; body parts can become objects because they are material. Considering human body parts as objects or material culture does not necessarily require the removal of identity as they are able to embody traces of identity and biography, just as objects can be conceptualised as having social lives and the ability to represent aspects of the self (see Tilley 2006, Appadurai 1986, Kopytoff 1986, Hoskins 2006). In *The Social Life of Things*, Appadurai (1986) calls for the sociality of material entities to be considered. Objects do not just 'provide a stage setting to human action; they are integral to it' (Gosden and Marshall 1999, 169), and the concept of a cultural biography of things has been used to study the 'careers of museum things' through different contexts through mapping the relationships in which the objects are situated (Alberti 2005, 560, Gosden 2001, Gosden and Marshall 1999, Myers 2001). Therefore, just as with other objects of material culture, human remains and fragmented body parts are material and social and can be explored and understood through their materiality (Sofaer 2006, 87, Fontein and Harries 2013, Krmpotich et al. 2010).

If we accept the material foundation of the body, it follows that body parts can be commoditised. As with other objects, what governs commodity candidacy are social views on the types of objects that can become commodities. Conflicting or plural understandings lead to an incomplete or unstable commodity status that is 'contestable, negotiable and mutable' (Lock 2002a, 71, Radin 1996, Appadurai 1986). In writing about a trophy head, anthropologist Janet Hoskins (1989, 437) suggests the human remains can be defined in terms of a particular type of biography, being able to 'travel in both directions from person to object and then from object back to person'. Whilst this type of linear biography reveals how the meaning and value of an object can shift over time and depending on sociological and historical context, a limitation of this approach is that the meaning an object has in a particular moment, can become fixed (Hicks 2010).

To resolve this issue, I turn to a body of work that considers how 'matter can be bound up with relations between different 'versions' of the same thing' (Anderson and Wylie 2009, 32). For Law (2002), a single object can reveal multiplicity with various versions interfering and cohering. In relation to the living body, Mol (2002) posits that the distinction between object and subject is artificial and that no object or body is singular. Relations between objects are done differently in different places and by different actors, therefore reality is multiple. This instability of boundaries that separate subjects and objects, or the 'thinglike' from the 'nonthinglike', has become a topic of debate across the social sciences, which for Pels et al. (2002, 3) reflects a growing discomfort about the traditional hierarchies that separate subjects from objects. Within cultural geography, this discomfort has encouraged efforts towards 'more-than-human' modes of enquiry, an approach Whatmore (2006, 604) explains as neither presuming 'that socio-material change is an exclusively human achievement' nor excluding 'the human from the stuff of fabrication'. What emerges from these more-than-

human geographies is that engaging with materiality offers a means of working with ambiguous aspects of material presence and combinations of life and matter. Although what I perhaps should make clear is that in attending to the material nature of human remains, I am not positioning them as more or other-than human. What I am proposing is that by considering human body parts as being consistently negotiated as objects or ancestors, persons or things, allows for an exploration of the issues that arise at the intersection of these different meanings.

### **The Agency of the Dead**

In 2010 the *Journal of Material Culture* published a special issue that addressed the emotive materiality and affective presence of human remains. In the preface, Krmpotich, Fontein and Harris (2010, 372), identify the thread that runs through the diverse contributions, as being the theorisation of the issues 'through the lens of bones as active materials encountered and viscerally engaged with and responded to, as well as materializing evidence of human lives and relationships past and present'. This description of human remains as 'active' is an important point, as to consider what the remains do, is to suggest that they have agency.

Having already established the ontologically indeterminate and socially ambiguous nature of human remains, understanding their agency within this context requires further consideration. Howard Williams (2004, 265) writing about Anglo-Saxon cremation rites explains that the dead body is not a static and passive substance that is 'manipulated and disposed of by mourners to serve their socio-political ends'. Drawing on Hallam and Hockey (2001), Williams argues that the corporal presence of the dead has the agency to affect the experiences and actions of the living. In applying the contemporary theory of agency to ancient funeral rites, Williams demonstrates the role of the dead body in structuring interaction and shaping social networks. Yet as Dobres and Robb (2000, 3) have pointed out,

there is little consensus about what the term 'agency' actually means and that when broadly applied the term can become 'an ambiguous platitude meanings everything and nothing' underlining the need to define the meaning of agency being applied to the dead body.

For Bourdieu (1977) agency can be equated with intent. In contrast, Giddens (1984) argues it is the capacity to act rather than intent that is the measure of agency, a stance in which agency implies power. Reflecting on these definitions, anthropologist Tiffiny Tung (2014, 440) notes that while the dead body can be understood as part of a web of interactions, can they be said to have the capacity to act, or to have purpose, desires and intention? These are questions addressed by Latour (2005) in his discussion of Actor Network Theory (ANT) in which he positions objects as having agency. Following work in archaeology that considers objects as integral to human action (Gosden and Marshall 1999, Gosden 2001, Myers 2001, Hodder 1982), for Latour all actants are participants and there should be no distinction between the categories of human and object.

While acknowledging the importance of Latour's theorization of the role of objects in extended social ties, Tung (2014, 441) points out that the agency exercised by people, things and corpses are far from uniform and there is much to be gained in exploring how they differ. Like Tung, Sheila Harper (2010), suggests that Alfred Gell's (1998) theoretical model of agency provides a useful framework for researching the agency of the dead. In the relational theory of agency that Gell (1998, 26) developed to interpret art, agents (defined as that which performs the social action) can act on patients (that upon which the agent acts) by virtue of the patients' abduction, meaning that the agency of art objects derives from the way in which they affect the mind of the recipient. In order to deal with these complex relationships Gell developed the concept of the *nexus* and in which he differentiates between primary and secondary agents; primary agents being 'intentional beings' and secondary 'entities not

endowed with will or intention' yet essential to 'the formation, appearance, or manifestation of intentional actions' (Gell 1998, 36).

Although Gell's theory was developed within an art history discourse, Harper (2010, 314) applies it to the network of social relationships between the living and recently deceased, noting that 'the parallels between how mourners at a viewing abduct agency from the dead body and how spectators at an art gallery abduct agency from an art object are striking'. For Tung, it is Gell's concept of primary and secondary agency, which she equates to Robb's (2004) conscious and effective agency, that provides the analytical distinction that allows the interactions between people, corpses and objects to be explored:-

These analytical distinctions are further appealing because they do not require that we limit discussions to the animism of objects, but allow us to critically evaluate how objects can be a nexus of social relations and have real impacts on social interactions, networks of power and daily practices, revealing to us the kind, extent and effects of those particular forms of agency.

Tiffany Tung (2014, 441)

On the one hand, considering the dead body to have a secondary agency addresses the concerns that no separation between people and objects can obscure human agency (Alberti 2005, Gosden 2001) and yet it is also problematic as it seems to be based on an understanding of human remains as things, not persons.

One way forward is, that by destabilising the boundaries between person and thing, human remains can be considered as having both deferred human agency and agency as non-human actants. However, in recognising this tension I am not suggesting that attempting the separation of these different types of agency is of benefit. Even if this were possible, I agree with Krmpotich et al. (2010, 373) that given the understanding of human remains I have set out, it is a counter-productive to separate out 'the agency accrued from the material property of human bone and that accrued from bones as part of human beings'. Yet there is another

issue here, as for some people their ancestors, and by extensions their ancestor's remains, are sentient entities with the capacity to act. In dividing agency in to primary and secondary we are therefore in danger of being drawn back into the person or thing debate. Addressing this issue, Tung (2014, 442) suggests primary agency be ascribed to sentient entities and secondary agency to those considered non-sentient. This is an approach more sensitive to ontological difference, in that it allows other ways of conceptualising human remains to be taken into account, yet it still creates a division that may have an 'othering' effect. So although the tension between the different forms of agency has not been resolved, rather than be problematic, I would suggest that this indicates that a study of what the remains repatriated by RCS do, enable, constrain and provoke has the potential to contribute to our wider understanding of what agency actually means within this context.

In this chapter, I have situated the repatriations undertaken by the Royal College of Surgeons of England (RCS) within the broader context of the collection of human remains for the study of race, shifts in museum practice and wider debates about the retention, use and display of human remains within museums. The global movement of the remains of Indigenous people materialised the impact of colonisation, with museums being the spaces which defined and made visible Western ideas of Indigenous inferiority. This positions museums as sites of contestation (Peers 2004) and so by placing repatriation in the context of the wider process of Indigenous rights and restitution movements, the process can be understood as a relinquishing of power and the return of control.

Having proposed that engaging with materiality offers a means of working with ontological indeterminate fragmented body parts, I would also argue that paying attention to the mobilities of the remains themselves, and the meanings they have and create for different stakeholders as they move through different cultural and political landscapes, will allow for a

more nuanced understanding of the legacies of the repatriation process. Therefore in the next chapter I move on to consider the literature that deals with the legacies of repatriation for the Indigenous communities and museums involved and the meanings and values created by this global movement of ancestral remains.

## 3. The Legacies of Repatriation



**Figure 3.1:** Walter Palm Island (third from left) at the opening of the Captive Lives exhibition, National Library of Australia, Canberra 1996

Image: National Library of Australia (<http://press-files.anu.edu.au>)

The great importance and significance of Tambo's return was demonstrated by his ability to bring the community together, although this could never be maintained at that level indefinitely. People talk about that sense of unity as one of their main memories of 23 February 1994. Another is the way in which the Island, so long represented in a negative way, shone positively in the media spotlight. Tambo is important for teaching other people respect for our traditions.

Walter Palm Island (2002, 227)

### 3.1 Introduction

Having considered the journey of Indigenous ancestral remains into museum collections, in this chapter I will review the literature that deals with the meanings and impact of their return journey. Starting with the impact that repatriation has had on the museums, I will explore the influence of repatriation on the respectful treatment of human remains, a

concept that runs through the body of work that considers the use, storage and display of human remains in UK museums (for example see Lohman and Goodnow 2006, Alberti et al. 2009, Barbian and Berndt 2001, Brooks and Rumsey 2006, Cassman et al. 2006). The literature relating to the process of returning ancestral remains will then be discussed, before finally examining the impacts on museum practice and the relationship between museums and Indigenous peoples.

Having identified the need for a better understanding of the complexities of the repatriation process, in the following section (3.3) I discuss the meanings of the repatriation in relation to identity, belonging and kinship, therapeutic value and finally politics, power and control.

Having shown there to be a gap between ethnographic studies and the broader political/historical narratives, in the final part of this chapter I return to the characterisation of the physical movement of repatriated remains as the 'journey home' to argue that the geographical concept of deathscapes is a useful lens through which analyse the mobility and agency of repatriated remains.

### **3.2 Respect, Return and Relationships**

Following the publication of the *Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums* by the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) in 2005, many UK museums with human remains collections developed their own human remains policies based on the principles of respect and consultation the guidelines advocate for (for example Museum of London 2011, Manchester Museum 2013, Natural History Museum 2006, National Museums Liverpool 2010). Within these policies human remains are separated from other objects and specimens, constructed as special and framed as deserving of respectful treatment. As Margaret Clegg (2013, 160) explains, 'these remains were once living, breathing people like us and that this

gives them a special place in collections'. Yet although respectful treatment is the cornerstone of many human remains policies, the term remains ambiguous and subjective. Research into museum practice by McCall and Grey (2014) indicates that in the case of human remains, as with the wider social inclusion agenda, museums have been left to find their own route in applying ideas and approaches to practice. Policies may be in place, but museum professionals have to negotiate the multiple expectations within those policies with the wider functions of the museum and their own roles and responsibilities.

For Donnelly (1989), the concept of respect in relation to human remains can be compared to the use of the term dignity in relation to human rights, and as Carter and Orange (2012, 119) point out, what is dignifying for one person may be humiliating for another. The ambiguous nature of respectful treatment and situating of human remains as 'special' parts of the collection has, Jenkins (2011) and Swain (2013) argue, problematised the issue of human remains in museums. For Jenkins, rather than having an external cause this problematisation has come from within with museum profession itself. Citing the covering of the unwrapped mummies at Manchester University Museum as an example,<sup>31</sup> Jenkins (2011, 132) suggests that the approach to human remains within UK museums has been driven by a discourse of respect in which considering human remains as specimens was disrespectful. What Jenkins does not take into account is that defining human remains as a separate and special part of museum collections can be understood as part of the context of categorising collections according to Western academic subject classifications. Nevertheless, conceptualising of

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<sup>31</sup> In an official statement the museum explained that 'the Manchester Museum is not against the display of human remains; rather it wishes to develop sensitive and respectful methods of displaying them' (Manchester Museum 2008b). However the public and professional reaction to covering the mummies was strongly negative leading to the museum uncovering some of the mummies; 'We started a consultation process with a total covering of three of the Museum's unwrapped mummies. As public feedback showed that this is not the most appropriate long-term solution, we are trying out a range of different approaches to gauge public opinion' Nick Merriman, Director of the Manchester Museum (Manchester Museum 2008a).

human remains as a special type of collection requiring respectful treatment does raise issues, for as Burns-Coleman (2010) identifies, situating human remains as sacred or inalienable possessions fixes their meaning and leaves little room for the alternative or transient values the remains may hold.

While agreeing with Jenkins (2011) that human remains collections in museums have been problematised, Swain (2013, 29) suggests the issue has simply been overcomplicated and needs to be seen as about human rights rather than respectful treatment.<sup>32</sup> For Krmpotich and Peers (2011) modern training for museum professionals has been shaped by the crisis of representation and encourages alternative means of demonstrating and validating knowledge which, following Ashley-Smith (1999), suggests a profession that has become more certain about its own uncertainties. Yet is this really the case and if so, how have repatriation claims and engaging with changed concepts of representation and ownership impacted on practice? Examining the impacts of repatriation on museums therefore offers a useful case study through which to explore these questions and examine how museums engage with their human remains collections, given the ontological indeterminacy of the remains themselves and the lack of clear policy guidance in relation to what constitutes respectful treatment.

### **The 'Journey Home'**

The focus of much of the existing repatriation literature is on the debates around the return of remains and the initial repatriation event. However, the limited number of studies that do consider the journeys repatriated remains take and the effect of the return of ancestral remains on communities, reveal the complex impacts of repatriation, and the need for a greater understanding of the long term legacies of the process.

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<sup>32</sup> Of relevance to this argument is that the UN *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* to which the UK is a signatory states that Indigenous peoples have the right to the repatriation of their human remains (The United Nations General Assembly 2007, Article 12).

In his account of the repatriation and burial of Tambo with which I opened this chapter, Walter Palm Island notes that a large proportion of the Palm Island community was involved in planning and organising the celebrations that accompanied this event (Palm Island 2002). Tambo was a Manbarra man from Palm Island, Northern Queensland who died in Cleveland, Ohio in 1884 having been taken to North America as part of Barnum and Bailey's travelling circus. In 1993 a Cleveland undertaker informed the Australian ambassador's office about the existence of Tambo's embalmed body and after raising the money for the trip, a delegation from Palm Island flew to Cleveland to collect Tambo's body. Recalling the event, what Walter Palm Island highlights is the affirming effect of returning Tambo's remains on the community stating that 'the great importance and significance of Tambo's return was demonstrated by his ability to bring the community together'. However, he goes on to say that this initial impact is not something that could be 'maintained at that level indefinitely' (Palm Island 2002, 226-7). The repatriation of Tambo is an example of repatriation as a special occasion that brings the community together, yet Palm Island's second point raises questions around the longer-term meaning and values of the event for this community.

Although the majority of the literature on the impacts of repatriation for communities centres on initial impact of, and feelings generated by repatriation (Fforde 2002a, Fforde 2004, Simpson 2005, Hubert 1989, West 1987, Hemming and Wilson 2010, Batty 2005), there is some published work that situates repatriation within the local cultural context and explores some of the longer term impacts the process can have on Indigenous peoples feelings of belonging and connection to the landscape. Noted examples are Krmpotich's (2014) study of the meanings of repatriation for the Haida, Ayau's and Tengan's (2002) account of repatriation of Native Hawaiian remains, Hubert's (Hubert 1989) description of young Tohono O'odham men continuing to visit reburial sites and the edited collection *We Are Coming*

*Home* (Conaty 2015) in which impacts and meanings of repatriation for Canadian Blackfoot communities are considered from Indigenous perspectives.

In approaching her study of Haida repatriation through the lens of kinship, Krmpotic makes it clear that her aim is to move away from the framing of repatriation as a political act in which the remains are objectified and politicised. However, Krmpotic's focus on memory and material culture rather than the remains themselves, creates a gap between her ethnographic study and the political/historical narratives that she identifies. In Hemming and Wilson's (2010) consideration of the social, cultural, political and economic implications of repatriation on the Ngarrindjeri people, the argument they make is that the repatriation debate fails to consider the complex local issues the process can create. For Hemming and Wilson these issues centre around land and landscape, with the lack of government support and funding for communities negotiating for reburial space and managing reburial sites being highlighted as major obstacles to Indigenous communities repairing cultural, spiritual and social damage (Hemming and Wilson 2010, 195). This positioning of repatriation as a financial and spiritual burden serves as an interesting contrast to the positive community experience described by Palm Island, suggesting that questions of the meaning and value of the repatriation process to different communities needs to be further explored if, as Hemming and Wilson (2010, 185) argue, a just approach to repatriation is to be developed.

Writing from the perspective of an Australian academic and museum professional, Michael Pickering (2012, 2010, 2006) highlights some of the issues faced by institutions such as

National Museum Australia:-

Since its inception in 1980, the National Museum Australia, like most Australian museums, has been returning remains and secret sacred objects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people upon request. [...] The Museum has also become the unofficial repository and repatriation service provider for some collections from overseas. For example, collections from Edinburgh University, the Royal College of

Surgeons, Manchester and Horniman Museums [...] are held by the Museum while they are awaiting repatriation.

Michael Pickering (2010, 165)

Pickering's description of the role of National Museum Australia (NMA) demonstrates that the presumption that remains are returned to communities directly is often incorrect. This is an important point, as taking on the responsibility for storing the remains creates new relationships between NMA and Aboriginal communities, at the centre of which are the remains returned by institutions such as RCS. Nor should we presume that eventually all the remains NMA currently hold will be returned to communities. The issue of how to deal with remains that have no provenance is a current topic of discussion in Australia (ACIR 2013, 2014) and New Zealand (Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme 2010a), yet what this means at local, state and national scales has received little attention in the wider repatriation literature.

### **Changing Practice and Developing Relationships**

Having considered the literature that deals with the impact of repatriation on museums and Indigenous communities separately it is also important to acknowledge the role of repatriation claims in the development of a museum practices that value and nurtures relationships with source communities. According to Jenkins (2011), the adoption of the ideas from the politics of regret and politics of recognition into museum practice is the reason why repatriation claims gained purchase and have been successful. However, I would suggest that repatriation should not just been seen as a product of this shift in practice, but as a contributing factor. The negotiation of repatriation claims pushed museums to engage with alternative narratives and the concept that diverse stakeholders could claim authority over museum objects. Gorman (2011) argues that these interactions had a direct influence on the re-articulation of museum ethics that saw human remains become unique things with

meanings, contexts and ways of informing, and therefore the repatriation movement contributed to a change in practice that foregrounds cultural practices involving objects, their communicative properties and transformations in value (see Miller 2009, Gell 1998, Kean 2006, Myers 2001). Described by Marstine et al. (2011, 92) as 'a slippage between material and immaterial', this change in perspective is illustrated by the return of a Ghost Dance shirt from Kelvingrove Museum and Art Gallery to the Lakota Sioux Indians in 1999 (Taylor 2004, Maddra 1996). Although Kelvingrove had initially argued against repatriation, on the shirt's return, the Lakota Sioux presented them with a new shirt which was used as the centre piece of a display explaining the battle at Wounded Knee and the reasons for the repatriation of the original (Taylor 2004, 92). Examples such as this are explained by Handler (2003) as museums coming to recognise that meaning does not only reside in the physicality of an object but also in the relationships and values that are constituted through practice.

The return of the Ghost Dance shirt is an example of the wider debate about the restitution of cultural heritage that the repatriation of human remains is part of. Restitution is a complex and continuous issue, yet according to Tythacott and Arvanitis (2014), it is one of the most important facing Western museums in the twenty first century. The debate is also highly political, reflecting global power relations and the efforts of some nation states to regenerate their cultural heritage for the national audience (Tythacott and Arvanitis 2014, 7). In response to this agenda, in 2002 a group of high profile museums in Europe and the USA signed the *Declaration on the Importance and Value of Universal Museums*. The declaration, of which the British Museum was a signatory, suggests that museums with geographically diverse collections are universal and therefore able to give a more insightful, and perhaps ideology free, viewpoint (Curtis 2006, 118). Critics condemned it as crude and lacking the careful judgment that repatriation claims require (UNESCO 2003, Museums Journal 2003), for as Gorman (2011) points out, for an organisation such as the British Museum to claim to be a

universal resource for the citizens of the world (MacGregor and Williams 2005), privileges knowledge and universal understanding over other value systems. This is an argument Neil Curtis (2006, 120) takes further, labelling the approach taken in the declaration as the 'successor to exploitative colonialism'. For Curtis the main problem with the *Declaration on the Importance and Value of Universal Museums* is the treatment of objects as art, raising an important point in relation to how museums can effectively represent people's feelings about material culture, rather than fetishize objects in and of themselves (Marstine et al. 2011, 92).

In response to this issue there has been increasing emphasis on museums working with source communities and exploring other forms of repatriation besides the return of objects, a process that has its roots in countries with native communities (for example see Tythacott and Arvanitis 2014, Bell 2003, Peers and Brown 2009, Stanton 2003, Scott and Luby 2007, Conaty 2003, Ames 1999, 1992, Butts 2002). Based on his experience at Glenbow museum in Alberta, Gerald Conaty suggests the anger with which Indigenous peoples confronted museums in the 1990s has diminished and rewarding relationships can now be developed; museums can be a space where restitution through dialogue can take place (Conaty 2006, 256). In the United Kingdom, supporters of repatriation within the museum sector have long pointed to the potential for repatriation to establish relationships that can be the basis for collaborative projects (Fforde 2004, Besterman 2004, Peers and Brown 2003a). However as Scott and Luby (2007) identify, collaboration is often based on short-term transitory projects or personal ties, and as such is not sustainable in the long term. Harrison (2005, 196) suggests that the problems encountered in setting up and sustaining collaborative work with Indigenous community groups, are caused by the uneven balance in power relations; tensions are caused by a problematic history that continues to be problematic. In addressing this issue, Krmpotich and Peers (2011) argue that collaborative relationships between UK museums and overseas communities can be achieved, citing the development of the practitioner research

network between the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford and the Haida First Nation from British Columbia. Based on the concept of communities of practice (see Kelly et al. 2006, Ames 1999) and collaboration rather than just consultation, the relationship between the Pitt Rivers and the Haida is not just about interpretation but physical engagement and performativity. Krmpotich and Peers (2011) suggest that this communities of practice model has worked at the Pitt Rivers Museum as it promotes dynamic long-term relationships with respect for expertise of all individuals in the network and a willingness to learn on all sides. This example from the Pitt Rivers Museum demonstrates that global relationships can be developed and sustained in the longer-term. However, the Pitt Rivers has Haida objects in its collections which have acted as the basis for the ongoing relationships they have developed. This raises questions about the networks formed during the process of repatriation, the role of the remains in those relationships and how an institution such as RCS that does not hold these types of collections might maintain a relationship with the communities and organisations to whom they have returned ancestral remains.

What RCS does hold, is information about the remains they have returned, a part of the restitution process that has received little attention, particularly with regard to the meanings and responsibilities of holding this type of information. As previous work has focused on relationships between museums with ethnographic collections and source communities, exploring the meanings and potential of the documentation held by RCS to sustain and create relationships will add a new facet to this area of museum practice as well as to discussions around the restitution of material culture.

### 3.3 The Meanings and Values of Repatriation

As discussed in the previous chapter, the collection and transportation of the ancestral remains of Indigenous peoples to European institutions caused a geographical dislocation that interrupted normal social processes. Remains previously thought of as ancestors became conceptualised as objects and given new meanings and values as part of collections, and the measurement, categorisation and display of those remains legitimised the construction of Europeans as 'superior' and continued subjection of Indigenous peoples. Hubert and Fforde (2002) suggest that the primary reason for Indigenous groups requesting the return of their ancestors is that the collection of the remains has disrupted the boundary between life and death for those ancestors and they will not be able to rest until accorded the appropriate funerary rights, yet they also acknowledge there are other dimensions to the return of ancestral remains. In arguing for the importance of having a 'spiritual connection' with the ancestors, Yorta Yorta Elder Henry Atkinson, highlights the connection between repatriation and identity:

Indigenous people must be allowed to have this spiritual connection with their ancestors – beginning with the performance of ceremonies by Indigenous custodians when their remains are released from their obscene holding areas before they commence the long journey home, where they can be joined by the waiting Indigenous community before –after due traditional customs – they are returned to the earth of their beginning.

Henry Atkinson (2010, 19)

Repatriation is also a means by which communities can lay claim to their own pasts and assert their right to control over the remains of their ancestors (Hubert and Fforde 2002, 2).

Therefore in this final section I want to consider the meanings and values of the repatriation process for Indigenous peoples following the three strands that emerge from the existing literature:- control, power and politics (Fontein 2010, Hubert 2003, Hurst 2005, Lyons 2002, Gerstenblith 2003, Pickering 2010); identity and kinship (Linnekin 1990, Palm Island 2002,

McDowell 2008, Krmpotich 2014, Conaty 2015); and therapeutic value (Thornton 2002, Atkinson 2010, Jenkins 2011, DCMS 2003, Hemming and Wilson 2010, Besterman 2003).

### **Identity, Belonging and Kinship**

In August 1990, Museums Victoria handed over control of the Kow Swamp collection of human remains and associated grave goods to the Echuca Aboriginal Cooperation. In his criticism of the political circumstances that had led to this decision, Australian prehistorian John Mulvaney suggested that these Pleistocene remains should be viewed as belong to all mankind, as handing control of remains this old to Aboriginal communities 'stretches the concept of territorial and cultural continuity beyond realistic limits' (Mulvaney 1991, 16).

What Mulvaney does not acknowledge, is that the argument that Indigenous groups have no connection to ancient remains is based on Western perceptions of kinship through common ancestry whilst in many Indigenous cultures being nurtured by the same source - a place, region or environment - creates the same sense of relatedness (Howard 1990, Linnekin 1990, Fforde 2002a).

The importance of space and landscape in the repatriation process comes through in the previous extract from the contribution by Yorta Yorta Elder Henry Atkinson to edited collection *The Long Way Home* (Turnbull and Pickering 2010), in which he refers to the ancestors being 'returned to the earth of their beginning' (Atkinson 2010, 19). This suggests that for Atkinson, identity is connected to place with a sense of belonging and continuity being based on a shared experience of landscape (also see Shaw et al. 2006, Wilson 2003, McDowell 2008). An understanding of this kinship relationship with the environment and concept of geographical relatedness can be seen in the shift in the approach of Western institutions to repatriation requests. For example the following extracts from the Acquisitions and Disposals Policy of the Royal College of Surgeons of England demonstrate the change

from having to prove direct descent to much wider conception of who could claim

ownership:-

So far as human material derived from named individuals is concerned the museums will consider requests for its return received from close relatives sympathetically provided that (i) they can furnish legal evidence of the relationship.

Acquisitions and Disposals Policy, Royal College of Surgeons of England 1994

So far as human remains and other artefacts of indigenous inhabitants of North America, Australia and New Zealand are concerned, the College Council will consider sympathetically requests for the return of material for which accurate geographical provenance exists.

Acquisitions and Disposals Policy, Royal College of Surgeons of England 2001

The use of the phrase 'indigenous inhabitants' in the 2001 policy is a reminder that although I have made reference to Indigenous communities and peoples, who the term 'Indigenous' actually encompasses has not been considered. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012, 6) considers the term Indigenous to be problematic as 'it appears to collectivize many distinct populations whose experiences under imperialism have been vastly different'. However, 'Indigenous peoples' a term that emerged in the 1970s, is felt by some activists to represent the shared experiences, issues and struggles of colonized First Nation peoples, allowing a collective voice to be expressed on the international stage (Smith 2012, 7). Although there is no universal and unambiguous definition of the concept of 'Indigenous peoples' the working definition put forward in Martínez Cobo's 1986 Report for UN has become widely adopted:-

Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing on those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal system.

Study of the Problem of Discrimination Against Indigenous Populations  
(Martínez Cobo 1986, para. 379)

Rather than focus on biological descent, Cobo's report foregrounds the important of self-identification as an Indigenous individual and acceptance as such by the group as the essential component of Indigenous peoples' sense of identity, preserving the sovereign right and power for communities to decide who belongs to them (Martínez Cobo 1986). In this understanding of indigeneity the biological grouping of race has been replaced by ethnicity, which as described by Littler (2008, 90), is the accumulated bonds of identification connected to ancestry and geographical area, and this is the definition I refer to when describing Indigenous peoples.

In considering the links between heritage, memory and identity McDowell suggests that for a social group to have a collective identity there must be a shared interpretation of events and experiences that formed the group over time (McDowell 2008, 41). To explore this in relation to repatriation, I return to Walter Palm Island's account of the repatriation and burial of his great Uncle Tambo on Palm Island:-

[T]he young people today do not know their real identity or are confused as to where they belong. This is significant because it contributes to the social problems that we have on Palm Island today. Participating in Tambo's return and reburial affirmed the identity of Palm islanders as Aboriginal and as Manbarra or Bwgaman, and gave people a sense of belonging to Palm Island.

Walter Palm Island (2002, 225)

In this example the repatriation not only re-established the Manbarra as the traditional owners of Palm Island, but through the inclusion of all the inhabitants in the ceremony showed that the Bwgaman, who had been removed to the island in historical times, belonged there (Fforde 2004, 158). Palm Island clearly links the repatriation to identity construction at both communal and personal levels, supporting Harvey's argument that memory and identity secrete themselves around sites, objects and practices (Harvey 2008, 21).

In her study of repatriation, kinship and memory on Haida Gwaii, anthropologist Cara Krmpotich locates the motivations driving the Haida to repatriate their ancestral remains within the broader context of Haida kinship. Drawing on work by Janet Carsten (2000), Krmpotich (2014, 173) argues that kinship is 'a dual process whereby marked and unmarked exchanges accumulate to create shared memories that join people across generations and spaces'. Krmpotich concludes Haida kinship structures were undermined by colonial processes and that in counteracting this legacy, acts of repatriation will continue to be part of a collective dialogue. Through paying respect to the ancestors, the Haida created situations that fostered shared experiences between generations; for the Haida a sense of community comes not only from the land but also from family.

In viewing repatriation through the lens of kinship, Krmpotich is attempting to move away from the trend of analysing repatriation within the frame of identity politics with a focus on indigeneity as a political identity. Having identified the 'interplay between identity, continuity and adaptability' that underlies her analysis of the repatriations to Haida Gwaii, Krmpotich suggests that what can be seen in the repatriation efforts are community, cultural, national and individual identities that are in tension with each other (Krmpotich 2014, 175). At a local level, repatriation and reburial ceremonies create a sense of belonging and revitalise local customs and tradition, but the development of the wider repatriation process also demonstrates the construction of an 'Aboriginal' identity at a national level (after Tonkinson 1990, 193). This suggests that repatriation is part of a wider process that involves the construction of group identity at various levels creating what Linnekin (1990, 170) described as 'nested identities'. Just as with other aspects of cultural heritage, repatriation can manifest the cultural identity of a group or nation at a local level (Barkan and Bush 2002, Lowenthal 1996), but the commonality between Indigenous communities fighting for the return of their ancestors and against the 'legacy of colonialism' (Hubert and Fforde 2002, 11) also creates a

common identity at national and even global scales (Hemming and Wilson 2010, Atkinson 2010).

At this point, I want to consider the meaning that human remains have as sources of data and how this can inform identity in other ways. One of the main arguments for the retention of human remains is based on their current and future potential as sources of information about human origins, disease and past environments (Grupe and Peters 2003, Mulvaney 1991, 1989, Payne 2004, Foley 2004, Brothwell 2004, Stringer 2003, Morris and Foley 2002, Walker 2000). Within physical anthropology and archaeology, scientific techniques that use samples from human tissue to trace geographical origins and genetic connections are well established. It is the use of molecular genetics to map human origins which I will focus on here for as Catherine Nash states, this has 'profound, but complex implications for ways in which collective identities and difference are understood and enacted' (Nash 2005, 455). In *Genetic Geographies*, Nash (2015) explores how popular genealogy and population genetics are creating new configurations of ethnic origin and belonging. Within these scientific constructions of ethnicity, DNA is utilized as a tool to understand relatedness with DNA extracted from both contemporary populations and human remains used to infer degrees of relatedness between contemporary and past populations, offering a scientific interpretation of ethnicity or ethnic belonging. However when considered within the historical context of the collection of human remains for the study of race and human difference, it is understandable that there are concerns that this is simply another scientific construction of identity based in Western ideology, with genetic markers replacing head shape (Reardon 2011, Ingold 2000, Mead 1996).

The collapse of the high profile Human Genome Diversity Project (HGDP) in the mid-1990s, demonstrates the tensions caused by genome studies. The aim of the project was to

represent genetic heritage by mapping the human genome, with highest priority being given to groups defined as 'unique, historically vital populations that are in danger of dying out or being assimilated' (HGDP publication cited in Lock 2002a, 79). By failing to address consent or property rights in relation to this genetic material, the Indigenous peoples identified as the source of that material were positioned as specimens (Lock 2002a, Nash 2005, M'charek 2005). By building the HGDP around the idea of human difference, Lock argues that the scientists involved conceptualized the body as a resource in the same way as their earlier counterparts (Lock 2002a, 83). A view supported by the description of Indigenous populations as 'in danger of dying out', a phrase directly reflecting the approach to race studies in the nineteenth-century, and the high value put on human remains of 'extinct' populations (see Chapter 2) . I would therefore suggest modern Indigenous concerns about genetic research need to be understood by placing them within the context of the historical study of the Indigenous body and construction of Indigenous inferiority, as this raises questions about how the data may be used:-

[A]s if my people have not had enough experimentation performed on their remains, it has been suggested that they undergo DNA testing. One wonders, why? I am worried about the terms used by non-indigenous for acknowledging one's Aboriginality? Will governments then be able to say that a person's DNA does not have enough of certain characteristics and that therefore, they are not indigenous?

Henry Atkinson (2010, 17)

What the previous statement from Henry Atkinson illustrates is his concern about the use of genetic research to define indigeneity; a potential return the use of ancestral remains to construct a type of Indignity that takes no account of how Indigenous people define themselves. This is not to suggest that all Indigenous people reject genetic research, for example at Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (Te Papa) DNA testing is not currently undertaken but, as their website states, 'a close eye is being kept on technological developments, particularly as methods become less invasive' (Te Papa Tongarewa undated-a).

For Te Papa, the goal of any genetic testing would be to aid the provenancing of ancestral remains, indicating the possible acceptance of geneticized relatedness if the data remained under Indigenous ownership. As Catherine Nash writes, 'population genetics may be rejected and resisted by some Indigenous groups or used strategically by others as a resource through which collective identity, origins stories and rights to land or other forms of collective cultural property can be affirmed' (Nash 2005, 455).

For Colin Pardoe (2013) the situating of discussions about scientific testing within the broader discourse of Aboriginal control has negatively impacted on the possibility of bi-cultural research. However examples such as the case of the Havasupai Indian Tribe in which information was used beyond the purpose for which consent was given, have led Bardill (2014) and Arbour and Cook (2006) to argue that community engagement in the governance of samples is the only way to build trust.<sup>33</sup> So having already noted that repatriation can be framed as being about the return of power and control to Indigenous peoples, what these debates about the ownership and use of DNA indicate is this is an ongoing process rather than a symbolic event marked by the handing over of ancestral remains.

### **Therapeutic Value**

It has been well established that Indigenous peoples continue to experience the social, cultural, economic and emotional effects of colonialism, and links have been made between these effects and mental health problems (for example Duran et al. 1988, Durie 1999, Durie 1998, O'Neill 1996, Salzman and Halloran 2004, Chandler and Lalonde 1998, Gone 2013, Chandler et al. 2003). In her discussion of these issues, Simpson (2008, 67) cites Native

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<sup>33</sup> In 1989 researchers from Arizona State University embarked on a research partnership with the Havasupai Tribe who lived in a remote part of the Grand Canyon. DNA from blood samples collected as part of the study into Type II Diabetes were later used for other unrelated studies without consent. In 2004 the Havasupai Tribe filed a lawsuit against the researchers which was eventually settled out of court in 2010 (Mello and Wolf 2010)

American psychologists Eduardo and Bonnie Duran (1995), who contend that colonial oppression 'wounds the soul of Native Americans'. This language of trauma and group pain can be found in a number of statements on repatriation, in some cases linking it directly to socio-political problems as seen in this extract from the DCMS Working Group on Human Remains Report:

Until this wrong is redressed, there will be no closure in respect of past injustices and an arguable enduring violation of fundamental human rights. The physical and psychological health, and indeed the social advancement, of indigenous communities are in consequence impaired.

Report of the Working Group on Human Remains (DCMS 2003, 123)

Anthropologist Russell Thornton (2002, 20) uses the phrase the 'trauma of history' to describe 'events in the history of people which cause a trauma to that group much in the way that events in the lives of individuals may cause trauma to them'. In response to this it has been argued that repatriation, and particularly the cultural revival that the process can stimulate, is healing (Atkinson 2010, Alfred 2008, Hemming and Wilson 2010, Simpson 2008, Pullar 2008, Potts 2015, Weasel Head 2015). As Nika and Vince Collison write in relation to the impacts of repatriation on Haida Gwaii:

Many more people have begun to look towards and embrace tradition that until repatriation began, only a handful of people participated in on a regular basis. And perhaps most important, after each ceremony, one can feel that the air has been cleared, that spirits are resting, that our ancestors are at peace, and that healing is visible on the faces of the Haida community.

Nika Collison and Vince Collison 2002  
(as cited in Simpson 2008, 71)

In her review of repatriation within a UK context, Tiffany Jenkins (2011) argues that assertions that the issue was causing real harm were an important factor in making successful repatriation claims. However, Jenkins concludes that there is little evidence for this, citing the testimony of an Aboriginal Tasmanian group (DCMS 2003, 48) and the limited research done by Simpson (2005) and Batty (2005) as the only examples. In 1989 the American Committee

for the Preservation of Archaeological Collections questioned repatriation claims on similar grounds, stating that 'what is at the basis of these claims is merely a vague generalized feeling about 'spirituality of Indians' that is being effectively used in the political arena' (ACPAC 1989). Despite this critique, the argument for the therapeutic value of repatriation is well established. Jenkins argues the concept of repatriation as therapeutic gained broad cultural purchase due to the situating of the repatriation debates within the context of restitution culture and the politics of regret and recognition. An influential theory in the social sciences during the late 1980s and 1990s, the advocates of the politics of recognition argue that culture is as important as political representation as it deals with the individual's relationship to society and the need for affirmation or recognition of individual identity by the state and institutional bodies (Jenkins 2011, 62, Taylor 1992). For Nolan (1998) recognising and supporting the emotional needs of citizens has become an increasingly important role of governments and this development of a therapeutic state can be seen reflected within museum practice.

Is there then a valid argument for reparation 'healing the wounds of history' (after Besterman 2003)? Batty (2005), Nail (1994) and Foley (2003) have all suggested not, pointing to the repatriation of human remains as a distraction from the political and material solutions communities suffering poverty and declining health really need. Writing about the repatriation and reburial of ancestral remains from Ngarrindjeri Ruwe (country), Hemming and Wilson present a more complex picture. Although they assert that the theft of the Old People (ancestral remains) caused 'spiritual, social and cultural damage to the Ngarrindjeri nation', and that although repatriation has begun the process of healing, it is an ongoing process that requires planning, support and resources (Hemming and Wilson 2010, 195).

## **Politics, Power and Control**

The symbolic use of human remains and the body as a site of political struggle is a topic explored by historians, anthropologists and feminist thinkers (for example see Chamberlain and Pearson 2001, Hallam et al. 1999, Fuller 1998, Verdery 1999, Starr 1982, Foucault 1977, 1973). In her study of the political use of dead bodies in Eastern Europe, Katherine Verdery (1999, 27) gives various examples of the use of human remains to either question or reinforce authority, arguing this is effective because the materiality of the body means it can be used to physically represent ideas and values; 'a corpse can be moved around, displayed, and strategically located in specific places, their corporeality makes them important means of localizing a claims'. Building on Verdery's (1999) work, Fontein (2010) considers the dead body as a site of power struggle within the context of post-colonial Zimbabwe. Based on his research on the resurfacing of the dead from unknown graves, Fontein illustrates how dead bodies can become a material manifestation of the legacy of colonialism and are therefore active in making the post-colonial struggle apparent. Following this argument, the process of the collection, study and display of human remains can be constructed as a tangible symbol of the lack of political power of Indigenous peoples meaning that the repatriation process is 'as much about the return of authority over the remains and objects as it is the physical return of those remains or objects' (Pickering 2010, 171)

As Gabriel (2008) and Watkins (2008) point out, there is an awareness of the colonial legacy of collections and a connection made between loss of sovereignty and loss of cultural heritage. Seeking control over cultural heritage can therefore be understood as part of a broader moves by Indigenous communities to gain more control within economic, political, territorial and social spheres.

In relation to repatriation, Watkins (2008, 100) identifies that as well as the physical return of the remains, the process is also a metaphysical act of social, political and symbolic recognition, in that returning remains to a particular community or organisation is a de facto recognition of legal standing. However both Watkins(2008) and Nilsson Stutz (2013, 2008), voice concerns about the heritage of the past being caught up in present-day political conflict and warn that the recognition of one group could be at the detriment of others. Research into the politics of death and commemoration (Forest et al. 2004, Johnson 1995, Young and Light 2013, Marshall 2004, Clarke 2010, Cooke and van Riemsdijk 2014, Cooke 2000, Hay et al. 2004) has highlighted the relationship between sites of memorial and the construction of national identity. Yet in relation to the return of Indigenous remains, memorialising the site of their burial creates a place that can bring to consciousness events and people that wider population are inclined to forget (Wagner-Pacifini & Schwartz 1991, 382).

Just as the study of Indigenous human remains was undertaken within a colonial ideology, so repatriation is situated within a post-colonial political context in which neither side is immune from socio-political influence (Turnbull 2002, Gould 1981). For Peers (2004) the defensive reaction of some museums to repatriation requests goes beyond a concern about the loss of scientific data and is indicative of a fear of loss of control, power and cultural authority. This view positions repatriation as a relinquishing of power and return of control, as Burns-Coleman (2010, 90) states, 'repatriation recognises, and in some cases legally creates, a set of rights in terms of a specific class of objects, and redistributes power in relation to those objects'. Although this would suggest Burns-Coleman supports the view of repatriation as a return of control, she goes on to point out that repatriation is not just recognition of rights in relation to cultural heritage, but a process of value creation with regard to that cultural heritage. Therefore Burns-Coleman appears to be proposing that new meanings and values are created as part of the repatriation process which, following work on the shifting meanings

and values of heritage (Ryne 2000, Clavir 2002, Jones 2006) and Peter Ucko's (1983, 1985, 1994, 1997, 2000) consideration of the role of past in contemporary society, raises questions about what these new meanings and values are and how they relate to the reproduction and transformation of cultural traditions and identity.

In considering the political aspects of the repatriation of human remains, the importance of control and power over cultural heritage has emerged as a theme in the discourse but alongside, and in many respects tied to it, is the concept of identity. This can be observed in the Australian context, where the destruction of identity as part of state policy has been documented (see Miller 1985, Berndt 1977, Colbung 1979, Gilbert 1973). Returning to the example of Truganini, in 1976 Truganini's remains were returned to the Palawa people to be cremated and scattered as she had originally wished. For Cove (1995), this event marked an important advance for Aboriginal rights at both a local and national level, as the remains had come to symbolize the impact of colonization on all the Aboriginal people. In being labeled as the 'the last pure blood Tasmanian Aborigine', the return of Truganini's remains was a symbolic recognition of the rights of the Palawa people by a Government that previously denied their existence. The case of Truganini illustrates how complex and entangled the meanings of repatriation are. At a local level, the repatriation of ancestral remains is closely linked to concepts of continuity, connection to land and kinship. Yet, repatriation in post-colonial contexts is also part of a wider rights movement, in which cultural property is a medium for negotiating historical injustices, and also a means for Indigenous people to establish and take control of their identities at national and global scales.

### 3.4 Repatriation and Dead Body Geographies

Having reviewed the current literature on the meanings of repatriations and legacies of the process, what has emerged is a complex picture in which repatriation intersects with issues of identity, kinship, restitution, politics and cultural understandings of the dead and the dead body. Yet despite the entangled nature of the repatriation process there has been tendency to make a division between the political and the therapeutic meanings. Having argued that acknowledging the material foundation of the body allows us to deal with the ontological tensions created by the framing of human remains as either object or ancestor, I proposed engaging with materiality as a method for examining the fluid and often competing meanings the remains can hold. This is an approach that allows for what Krmpotich et al (2010, 373) describe as a 'comparison between a politics of bones and the very real, everyday ways remains enter and engage in the lives of people'.

Although the repatriation of human remains is often characterised as the 'journey home', little attention has been paid to the mobilities of the remains and the meanings created as they move through different spaces; in focusing on the symbolism of the remains, their physical presence has been ignored. Within human geography an interest in the living body as a site of identity and social experience (Butler 1993, Longhurst 2005) is part of a wider interdisciplinary turn to corporeality that Fontein and Harris (2013, 116) identify as part of (re)emergent theoretical concerns with questions of embodiment, materiality and material agency. More recently, this interest in the geographies of the body has been extended and a sub-field of cultural geography that engages with dying, death and the dead has emerged. One focus of this recent geographic enquiry has been the analysis of deathscapes (Cloke and Pawson 2008).

Having been developed in relation to informal memorials for road accidents (Kong 1999, Hartig and Dunn 1998), the concept of deathscapes is based on previous work that had used 'scapes' as a means of understanding social process (for example Appadurai 1990, Ballinger 2003, Rajaram and Grundy-Warr 2007). In developing the understanding of deathscape to invoke both the places associated with the dead and for the dead, Maddrell and Sidaway (2010) explore how these spaces are imbued with meanings and associations and show how deathscapes can be used as a focus for exploring emotion and affect.

As spaces for, or associated with the dead and that interact with other monuments and topographies, deathscapes provide a useful framework for exploring the liminal spaces of emotion and affect, and sites of social contest and power created by and related to repatriation. In their study of the mobility of the corpse of Dr Petru Groza, Young and Light (2013) develop the concept of deathscapes by analysing what dead bodies actually do within these landscapes. Bringing together the political symbolism of the corpse with its/his role as part of a complex assemblage of memories, representations and embodied performance, Young and Light (2013, 143) show how the materiality of Groza's corpse was central to its 'mobility and performances of death, remembrance and memory as part of complex emotional geographies'. Through considering what dead bodies do within deathscapes, Young and Light are challenging the conceptualisation of the dead body as neutral. Krmpotich et al. (2010, 372) suggest that within this reading of human remains, these parts of other people are sensed through the bodies of those that interact with them in 'a kind of double bodily engagement'. Therefore bringing this understanding together with a consideration of affect and embodied emotional engagements with human remains is what underpins my approach

to the RCS repatriations.<sup>34</sup>

Repatriation researchers such as Fforde (2004), have traced the journeys of human remains on their way into museum collections, mapping the spaces through which the remains moved and revealing their role within complex social networks. By applying the same approach to repatriated remains, my aim is to explore in depth the meanings and issues created by, and linked to, the RCS repatriations through considering three key areas:- firstly, the impact of repatriation on museum landscapes; secondly, the journey of the repatriated remains, the issues it creates and how it intersects with wider discussions about restitution, sovereignty, identity, relatedness, memory and memorial; and finally, the repatriation archives, how the institutions that hold them think about this information, and their future potential and meaning within a post-colonial context. In grounding my understating of the legacies of repatriation within a physical set of repatriated remains, I want to make clear that my aim is not to present a general survey of the process and the impacts of the repatriation of human remains, as each repatriation needs to be understood within its temporal and political context. However, using the RCS repatriations as case study to engage with grounded and situated research permits for an in-depth examination of the networks in which the remains sit, and for the common threads to be drawn out. This will then allow for an exploration of the connections between the return of ancestral remains from RCS and broader themes around the control of heritage, political landscapes, post-colonial politics, identity, belonging and memorialisation.

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<sup>34</sup> Whilst this thesis does not engage with the ongoing debates regarding the theoretical underpinnings of the geographies of emotion and geographies of affect (Pile 2010, Curti et al. 2011, Anderson 2006, Anderson and Harrison 2006, Anderson and Smith 2001, Tolia-Kelly 2006), the difference between understandings of emotions and affect are acknowledged and recognised as a site for further research in relation to human remains stores and repatriated ancestral remains.

## 4. Researching Repatriation: Methods, Approaches and Reflections



**Figure 4.1:** The author laying out the human remains during the installation of the St Martins in the Fields display at Museum of London

Photograph: Museum of London, May 2007

### 4.1 Encountering Human Remains

In December 2006, excavations at St-Martin-in-the-Fields Church in London unearthed a Roman limestone sarcophagus containing a human skeleton. As the intern in the Museum of London Archaeological Conservation Department given the responsibility for preparing the remains for display (Figure 4.1), before starting any treatment I attempted to take account of the views of the different stakeholders involved. This burial was important archaeologically as

it dated from the late 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> century AD, a poorly understood period of London's history. Yet the Church Council members who saw the sarcophagus in situ described the experience as deeply affecting and felt a connection between the remains and the present church community. What soon became apparent was that treating human remains with respect, as set out in the *Museum of London Human Remains Policy* was a problematic concept to apply in practice as what constitutes respectful treatment is subjective.

My reasons for opening with the St-Martins-in-the-Fields example are two-fold. Firstly, working with this set of remains raised many of the questions this thesis attempts to address. The remains were material and yet also a person deserving of respect; they represented the history of the church and also a particular period in the history of the city; and they were important and meaningful to the Church Council and the Museum of London archaeologists. On reviewing the project, I realised that I had initially thought of the views of the different stakeholder groups as homogenous, based on the idea that people from certain cultures or religious groups share certain ideas of what it means to treat human remains with proper respect. However, the meanings these remains held for the different stakeholders and how that impacted on their feelings about respectful treatment, proved to be more complex than I had originally envisaged. For example, although the majority of the Church Council agreed with displaying the remains so that visitors to the museum could view them and have the opportunity to make their own emotional connections, others felt so moved by the experience of seeing the remains that treating them with the utmost respect meant not putting them on public display.

The St-Martins-in-the-Fields project was the beginning of my interest in the connection between the physicality of human remains, the meanings they hold, and what they can come to represent. Since then I have worked with human remains collections in other UK museums,

an experience that has informed my approach to this research. This brings me to my second reason for beginning with the St Martins in the Fields project; it is an illustration of my positioning as a UK based museum professional who has experience of interacting with human remains collections. As I have indicated, this is a background that has shaped my own thoughts about the meanings and use of the dead body and my understanding of what it means to treat human remains with respect within a museum context. Having been exposed to views that conflict with or challenge my own, the position I have adopted in my own practice is that a respectful approach involves listening to and considering the views of others when making decisions. Therefore, in my personal view, consultation lies at the heart of any respectful approach to the treatment of human remains.

In this chapter I will set out how I planned the research into the RCS repatriations, the process of undertaking the fieldwork and my reflections on the research process. Building on the arguments made in the previous chapter, I suggest that applying a spatial lens and engaging with the materiality of the remains offers a different perspective to that of previous work on repatriation. Using the remains returned by RCS as a case study, presents a defined set of reparations that offer enough variation to draw out contrasts and similarities, yet a small enough sample size to take a more-than-representational approach that takes account of practice, performance and affect. In section 4.3 I discuss my approach to data collection and the three phases of my fieldwork: the research undertaken at RCS; the research done at other UK museums; and my research in Australia and New Zealand. Finally, I reflect on how the focus of my research shifted in response to the fieldwork process and particularly how issues of my own researcher positionality impacted on the data collection and interpretation. Having attempted to take a more-than-representational approach to my research, I also consider how this worked in practice and what it has added to my understanding of the repatriation process.

## 4.2 Planning the Research

Having reviewed the current literature that addresses the meanings of repatriations and legacies of the process, what has emerged is a complex picture in which repatriation intersects with issues of identity, kinship, restitution, politics and cultural understanding of the dead and the dead body. Yet although the repatriation of human remains is often characterised as the 'journey home', in focusing on the symbolism of the remains, their physical presence is often ignored and little attention has been paid to the mobilities of the remains and the meanings created as they move through different spaces.

By drawing from work on museum geographies and deathscapes, my aim has been to apply a spatial lens to the process of repatriation to consider the meanings, values and challenges created by the mobility of the remains and their physical presence, or absence.

Taking this approach to understanding the legacies of repatriation offers a different perspective, as instead of positioning repatriation as *either* political, *or* a kinship obligation that will have a therapeutic outcome, I foreground the agency of the remains to consider what they enable, constrain and provoke. Therefore, rather than apply an overarching methodology, the concepts of materiality and agency have been used to frame this research, and the methods used have been employed as tools to produce grounded, situated research that generates new insights into the process of the repatriation of human remains.

## RCS Repatriations Case Study

The case studies for this research are the four repatriations from The Royal College of Surgeons of England (RCS) to Tasmania, Australia, New Zealand and Hawaii:-

Repatriations of Human Remains by Royal College of Surgeons of England			
Exit Number	Sets of Remains	Repatriated to:	Date
82	7	Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre	27 <sup>th</sup> May 2002
91 (Loan)	2	Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research	7 <sup>th</sup> April 2003
92	53	Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research	7 <sup>th</sup> April 2003
173	20	Te Papa Tongarewa	15 <sup>th</sup> November 2007
208	1	Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre	16 <sup>th</sup> September 2009
259	1	Hui Malama I Na Kupuna O Hawai'i Nei	7 <sup>th</sup> September 2011

**Figure 4.2:** Abbreviated list of RCS repatriations (see Appendix 2 for full list)

Krmpotich et al. (2010, 373) have argued that to understand the emotive materiality and affective presence of human remains what needs to be pursued is 'ethnographic evidence for attitudes towards bodies and bones, living and dead', and the RCS repatriations provide a clearly defined set of remains in which to ground my research. As set out in the Chapter 1, I developed this research in collaboration with the Hunterian Museum at RCS and therefore the RCS repatriations as the central case study was a fixed aspect of the project. The advantage of this was that focusing on RCS provided a natural constraint for the research, with the four repatriations providing enough breadth to allow for contrast and comparison but also being limited enough in number for me to explore performance and practice in relation to the remains. So although there was the option of broadening the case study to include repatriated remains from other UK museums, I decided that focusing on the RCS repatriations would provide the right balance in terms of producing the range and depth of data required to address the research questions identified.

In considering issues of practice and performativity, I have drawn from the diverse body of work in cultural geography that has attempted to move beyond a focus on representation and explore the unconscious actions demonstrated through performance (Thrift 1996, Pile 1996). Non-representational theory (NRT) as proposed by Thrift (2008), aims to add practice and performativity to research by focusing on what people do, rather than what they think. Yet in conceptualising traditional representational methods as having an 'embalming obsession' that contains movement and flatten complex multiple meanings (Dewsbury et al. 2002, 483), Nash (2000) argues that NRT can limit the exploration of the intersections between representations, discourses, material things, spaces and practices. To address this issue, Lorimer (2005) proposes a more-than-representational approach in which a consideration of practice and performance can sit alongside more traditional representative methods. What a more-than-representational way of thinking foregrounds is an exploration of emotion, feeling and affect as experienced through the body. In taking a more-than-representational approach to researching the RCS repatriations, my aim has been to move away from analysing repatriation in relation to identity politics or as a therapeutic event, as by focusing on affective materiality of the remains I attempt to consider these meanings simultaneously.

By using more-than-representational methods, my research intersects with literature that deals the emotional potentialities of heritage, engages with experience and performance and explores heritage as a site of memory (Harrison 2013, Harvey 2001, Smith 2006, Macdonald 2013, Bagnall 2003) For as Emma Waterton (2014, 830) suggests, the key to an understanding of heritage that 'reimagines the body, memory and intersubjectivity' is 'giving weight to heritage spaces and being prepared for them to answer back':-

My observations of a more-than-representational rendering of heritage serve as a reminder that in addition to radiating a connection that might lend a person or given group their identity, status and access to resources, it may simultaneously resonate with alienation, nervousness and rage. What all this means for understanding the spaces of heritage is that there is a reinvigorated axis along which to consider and engage with the complex relations of power to which they are attached; the evocation of affect.

Emma Waterton (2014, 831)

Viewing the process of repatriation through this lens allows for an exploration of the complex relationships within which the remains play an active role. As I have traced the journey the remains repatriated by RCS had taken, I have continued be alive to the behaviour of others and my own reactions to being in the landscapes in which remains resided or had passed through, consciously applying an auto-ethnographic approach in which I recognise myself as a research participant (Shaw 2013, Butz and Besio 2009). Used in conjunction with interview data, this approach has allowed for a fuller understanding of what the experiences of repatriation and interaction with repatriated remains do in social and political life, drawing together the different threads of the repatriation literature discussed in the previous chapter and contrasting to approaches that focus on either the therapeutic or political dimensions.

### **4.3 Undertaking the Fieldwork**

When planning the research I separated my fieldwork into three distinct phases, although in practice these overlapped and informed each other. Firstly, there was the research undertaken at RCS which consisted of interacting with the collections and staff, archival research on the repatriations and a series of in-depth qualitative interviews. The second phase consisted of interviews with staff from other UK museums and the third was the fieldwork I conducted in Australia and New Zealand.

To undertake the research, I used an iterative combination of ethnographic observation, interviews, archival research and autoethnography. In describing the process as iterative I

mean to highlight that I learned things from participants and from my own interactions with human remains that had a significant bearing on how I approached the next stage of my research. This was particularly true of my time in Australia and New Zealand when I was working in an unfamiliar situation and each conversation and interaction informed how I handled the next interview and approached the next museum or community. Following the concept of taking a more-than-representational approach, I combined in-depth-qualitative interviews with archival research and ethnographic observation. In utilizing these different modes of data collection, my aim has been to maximise understanding, and gain deeper insight, rather than verify interpretations, as this would suggest there is an underlying assumption of a 'truth' or 'reality' to be identified, as McCracken (1988, 17) points out, 'qualitative research does not survey the terrain, it mines it'. Consequently the aim of this thesis is not to present an authoritative account of the legacies of repatriation but to explore in depth some of meanings created by the process.

In designing a methodology for the interviews, I adopted a semi-structured or unstructured interview style dependant on the participant and the space the interview took place in. This allowed the approach and questions to be adapted to the participants, optimising the likelihood of gaining in-depth insight by abandoning attempts to gather comparable data and allowing free flowing discussion (Healey and Rawlinson 1993, Irvine et al. 2013, Zuckerman 1972). I gained informed consent from all participants prior to the interviews taking place, recording (unless the interviewee requested notes be made instead) and transcribing each interview prior to coding and analysis. Participants were given the option of having their name associated with their data or having their contribution anonymised an approach that aimed to recognise that naming can be important in acknowledging an individual's contribution to knowledge (examples of the interview questions and copies of the consent forms used can be found in Appendix 3).

To record the data required for a more-than-representational approach, I kept rich and detailed field notes to record conversations and my observations, responses and interpretations. This approach did raise some ethical issues, particularly in relation to the open ended nature of research at RCS. Although the people involved were aware of the research I was undertaking and had consented to take part, it was not practical to provide them with the opportunity to review this data and I have therefore made the decision to anonymise the material from my research diary I have included in the following chapters.

### **Phase One: Research at RCS**

Over the three years of this research project, I worked for one day per week as an Assistant Curator in the Museums and Archives department at RCS. Due to my previous training and experience in museum work I was able to undertake collections care tasks in the museum offices, display areas and storage spaces. This meant that I was not just observing practices within the socio-cultural space of the museum work areas, but taking part in those practices, interacting with the collections and with the staff.

To explore how human remains are conceptualised within museum practice I wanted to investigate the relationship between practice and participant representations and therefore the data collected in my research diary is complimented by in-depth interviews with current staff and former members of staff and College Council who had been involved in the repatriation process (for list of interviews see Appendix 1). These interviews were an opportunity to explore in more depth the approaches to practice that had I had observed and to collect data that represented the interpretation of the subjective values, beliefs and thoughts of the individual respondents (O'Connell Davidson and Layder 1994, 125).



**Figure 4.3:** Museum store at Royal College of Surgeons of England

Photograph: S. Morton, August 2016

On starting work at RCS, I also undertook a period of archival research. The archival files relating to repatriation contained information on the repatriation requests, debates and discussions from the mid 1908s to the present. As I worked my way through the archival boxes, the history of the RCS repatriations were enlivened by people and the social networks in which the remains were situated emerged. This work therefore not only provided the background and context to the RCS repatriations, but also triggered my interest in the meanings and potential use of this information. Inspired by the RCS archives, the meanings and agency of the documentation produced, duplicated and made mobile as part of the repatriation process became an important area of my research.

### **Phase Two: Research at UK Museums**

To place the data from my research at RCS within a wider context, I carried out in-depth interviews with staff from four other UK museums that have experience of repatriation. Having included the Natural History Museum, as the majority of the remaining RCS race collections had been transferred there post WWII (see Chapter 2), I selected the other museums as they represent different types of collection, location and institutions, allowing

for a comparison of the data from each site. Staff from Manchester Museum, Oxford University Museum of Natural History and the British Museum agreed to participate. I had also hoped to include the Pitt Rivers Museum but unfortunately they did not respond to my invitation to contribute (for full list of participants see Appendix 1). Having recorded the interview, I provided the interviewee with a copy of the transcript to review and edit. This approach seemed to help interviewees relax and feel secure about participation and only one participant later decided they would prefer to withdraw their transcript and provide a series of written responses instead.

Work on mobile methodologies that emphasises materiality, embodiment and importance of place and movement (Jones et al. 2008, Carpiano 2009, Ricketts Hein et al. 2008, Sheller and Urry 2006, Sin 2003, Kusenbach 2003) influenced how the interviews were planned in relation to location. Studies by Elwood and Martin (2000), Hitchen and Jones (2004) and DeLeon and Choen (2005) have shown that location can be used to situate participants with respect to other actors, producing micro-geographies of relations and meaning and that space and objects can be used as probes within the interview process. Therefore, when undertaking interviews, I also asked to visit human remains stores and public galleries where human remains were on display, documenting in my research diary our interactions, the practice I observed, and my own reactions to these spaces. By undertaking these semi-structured interviews while also observing practice and being alive to affect, I have tried to bring together representational and more-than-representational approaches to allow for the observation of spatial practices in situ whilst still accessing the participant's experiences and interpretations.



**Figure 4.4:** Observing visitors in the Pre-historic Europe galleries at the British Museum as part of a visit with Daniel Antoine, Assistant Keeper, Institute of Bioarchaeology and Curator of Physical Anthropology, to discuss the human remains on public display.

Photograph: S. Morton, January 2016

Obvious limitations of this phase of the fieldwork are the limited number of UK museums represented and the variation of the number of staff that participated at each site. So, while three staff from the Natural History Museum and three from Manchester Museum took part, only a single member of staff from both the Oxford University Museum of Natural History and the British Museum participated. Observation of practice and visits to galleries and storage spaces was also uneven across the sites and the in-depth study of performance and practice in relation to human remains was not possible within the scope of this project. Yet despite these limitations, the data collected does offer an interesting counterpoint to that gathered

at RCS and framing the contributions as individual interpretations rather than representative of the institution as a whole, overcomes some of the unevenness in the data.

### **Phase Three: Fieldwork in Australia and New Zealand**

I undertook the third phase of my research as part of a five month Visiting Research Studentship at the National Centre for Indigenous Studies at Australian National University (ANU), Canberra. Having traced the journey the remains repatriated by RCS had taken (details of the current locations can be found in Appendix 2), my aim was to speak to staff working on repatriation in the museums through which the remains had moved, or were currently stored. Staff from National Museum Australia, Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand, Museums Victoria and the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery participated in the research. The only museum that currently holds remains repatriated from RCS that did not respond to the invitation to participate was the South Australian Museum. Following the same more-than-representational approach taken in the UK, I combined in-depth interviews with informal conversations and observations from visits to museum stores and galleries.

Assisted by the staff from the repatriation units at National Museum Australia and Te Papa Tongarewa, I identified the communities in Australia and New Zealand who have had remains repatriated by RCS returned to them. After discussions and meeting with community representatives and Elders, I carried out in-depth interviews with representatives from the Yorta Yorta Aboriginal Corporation, the Ngāti Te Ata, the Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority, the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre and members of the wider Tasmanian Aboriginal community, and a remote interview via Skype with a representative from the Hawaiian organisation Hui Mālama I Na Kupuna 'O Hawai'i (for full list of participants see Appendix 1). One of the communities identified as having had remains from RCS returned to them did not respond to

my invitation offer to take part and therefore in order to respect their right to privacy in relation to the return of their ancestral remains they have not been identified in this work.

Given the sensitive nature of repatriation and the burial of ancestral remains, I took guidance from museum staff and colleagues at ANU on how to approach communities and then from community Elders on who I should interview and where it was culturally appropriate for me to visit. I did encounter some difficulties in contacting communities but found that approaching Elders or repatriation officers through the contacts I had made was the most successful approach. For example after meeting with the repatriation unit staff at Museums Victoria they facilitated an invitation to the repatriation ceremony of an ancestral skull of the Wonnarua people, enabling me to experience the return of ancestral remains in person (see Figure 4.6) and meet Yorta Yorta Elder Henry Atkinson who was attending the event.

However, it is important to note that I spent more time with some communities than others, a morning with the Ngāti Te Ata in comparison to over a week with the Ngarrindjeri at Camp Coorong, creating unevenness in the data collected. In order to mitigate this, as with the UK based interviews, contributions have been analysed as individual experience rather representative of 'community'. Interviews with community representatives are therefore neither intended or presented as in-depth ethnographic studies, but are treated as individual narratives that allow a better understanding of some of the issues related to repatriation to be reached, without essentialising experiences or speaking for communities.



**Figure 4.5:** Talking about the repatriation of ancestral remains on country with members of the Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority, Coorong National Park, South Australia

Photograph: S. Morton July 2015

As I was based at the National Centre of Indigenous Studies at ANU, I was also able to take part in discussions and meetings related to the *Return, Reconcile, Renew* (RRR) project. The aim of this international Australian Research Council funded project is to bring together community organisations, government and cultural institutions, and universities to advance repatriation research. Speaking to those involved in the RRR project as well as attending project meetings and events, such as the repatriation course that I attended at Camp Coorong in July 2015, has been influential on my research, particularly in relation to the uses and meanings of information and digital archiving. During the fieldwork, I also had the opportunity to meet with staff from the Australian Ministry of Arts Repatriation Team, Sydney University and the Victorian Aboriginal Council, which helped to broaden my understanding of the repatriation process in Australia and the role of government at international, national and state levels. Following the process of consent applied to the interview transcripts, prior to agreeing to the use of their data in my research I provided the participants from these meetings with copies of my notes for them to review and edit if necessary.

#### **4.4 Reflecting on the Research Process**

In framing this project as ‘following the journey’ of the remains repatriated by RCS, it was important to leave space for the unknown and unexpected. Following the journey of a particular set of remains meant being open to the research leading me in different and unexpected directions. Allowing a degree of flexibility in methods and approach has enabled me to draw on different theoretical concepts as the research has shifted.

When originally planning the research, I had presumed that many of the remains repatriated to RCS would have been returned to communities and so anticipated that the majority of my time in Australia and New Zealand would be spent undertaking community based research. In reality, this proved not to be the case, but the realisation that museums were still storing many of the remains returned by RCS raised new issues I had not previously considered and opened up new avenues of research related to understanding why this was the case and the meanings it has created. Other issues that came into view during the fieldwork were the discussions around how to deal with unprovenanced remains (see Chapter 7) and the ongoing link between museums and communities created by documentation (Chapter 8).

While following the RCS repatriations has opened up my understanding of the repatriation process and allowed me to engage with issues not well represented in the current literature, this approach does have its limitations. In the third phase of the research, the location of the remains themselves dictated the selection of the museums and communities invited to participate in the research, and although broader issues and practices were part of the discussions, this has framed my research in a particular way. Having not been able to spend time in Hawaii, it was not possible to follow the more-than-representation approach taken in Australia and New Zealand and although this repatriation was limited to a single skull, more data about this return and the wider context of repatriation in Hawaii would have allowed

further similarities and contrasts to be drawn out, especially in relation to the political meanings and use of the remains. Following the journey of all of the remains also impacted on the amount of time I could spend in each community members or museum. Longer term observation and participating in practice as undertaken at RCS was not possible within the scope of this part of the project, which has an obvious impact on the type and depth of data collected.

Undertaking more detailed observation of performance and practice in a community setting would require an in-depth ethnographic approach, such as that taken by Cara Krmpotich (2014) in her study of the meanings of repatriation to the Haida people. However, what came out of my conversations with Indigenous people were questions around who should be documenting and relating the narratives of repatriation, with some people feeling that it should be Indigenous people that research, interpret and tell Indigenous stories. Although my focus has been on the process of repatriation rather than the Indigenous experience of it, as a researcher these questions around representation did foreground the significance of my own positionality, hence my reason for opening this chapter with an example that made apparent my background and training, for despite undertaking defined periods of fieldwork, in some respects the fieldwork phase of this research has continued throughout the project. As a museum professional, I have combined undertaking this research with my work as an archaeological conservator as well my role at RCS, both of which have allowed me to have continued interactions with human remains in museum spaces and discussions with museum staff that have informed and influenced as my research as it progressed.

### **Considering Positionality**

In setting out my own positioning, I am framing my research using an approach, central to which is the recognition that knowledge is not neutral, but 'situated' and partial. Within this

understanding, the primary research instrument is self and therefore the record produced is a product of the choices made by the researcher about what to observe and record and will depend on how the researcher conceptualizes the world and their place in it (Jones and Somekh 2011, 131, Cosgrove 2003). This acknowledgement is particularly important in relation to repatriation, as study of the return of ancestral remains to Indigenous communities raises critical questions around representation. The issues in engaging in research with subordinated groups have been the focus of much discussion in feminist and post-colonial studies (for example Said 1993, Bhabha 1994, hooks 1990, Smith 2012) with the concern being that in conducting and presenting research, the researcher risks 'continuing the imperialist project' of speaking for others (Spivak 1988, 288).

Feminist work on epistemology frequently stress the importance of recognising that knowledge is produced in specific circumstances and is therefore partial, situated and socially produced (Harraway 1991, Harding 1991, Rose 1997). Therefore, to situate knowledge, the researcher must practice transparent reflexivity to consider how their own position affects the production of that knowledge (Rose 1997). Whilst acknowledging the importance of self-reflexivity, I also agree with Gibson-Graham's (1994, 206) view that the researcher is not a centred, certain self that can be fully understood by a process of self-reflection. Adopting a similar position, Rose (1997) has highlighted the impossibility of the demand for transparent reflexivity, arguing that knowledge is negotiated through the research encounter, with the researcher's influence being partly constructed in relation to others in the research process; knowledge meaning and values are not static and will change. For me, this understanding of situated knowledge suggests that although self-reflexivity still has an important role to play, the researcher must also be prepared to acknowledge the gaps in meaning and allow contradictions and uncertainties in their interpretations (Larner 1996, Miles and Crush 1993).

As already stated, the aim of this research has not been to uncover universal truths or present an authoritative account of the repatriation process, but rather to explore in depth the legacies of the repatriation of human remains from RCS. Yet in reflecting on my own positionality as a researcher I would suggest my work needs to be understood as being interpreted through the lens of a UK academic and museum professional. As such, my intention is not to attempt to speak for Indigenous peoples on the subject of repatriation but, through a better understanding of meanings, issues and challenges created by the return of ancestral remains from RCS, contribute to the current debates around repatriation, restitution and the uses of bio information and to inform future developments in policy and practice.

### **Being More than Representational**

Having stated that I attempted to take a more-than-representational approach to this research, I think it is important to note that this did raise some practical challenges. With the interviews in museums, although staff agreed to be interviewed I initially found they were reluctant let me visit storage areas. Meeting with museum staff and explaining my own background seemed to reassure them that as a fellow professional I understood the challenges and issues with working with museum collections and specifically human remains. Based on this experience, I would suggest my position as a colleague rather than outside observer, impacted on the spaces I was able to gain access to and the interactions that took place in those spaces. It is also important to note that my background and identity was also sometimes a bar to accessing some museum spaces. I first encountered this in the Australian Museum in Sydney when staff explained to me that it would not be appropriate for me to enter the ancestral remains store as I had no connection the remains. Yet rather than having a negative impact on the data collected, gaining first-hand experience of which spaces I could and could not access has informed my analysis of the agency of the remains themselves and

their impact on museum spaces and practice. For me, these experiences also affirmed the importance of acknowledging my own positionality and the impact this has on data production and interpretation.



**Figure 4.6:** The space at Melbourne Museum in which outdoor repatriation ceremonies take place. The repatriation I attended was the return of an ancestral skull labelled as Jim Crow to the Wonnarua people. Attending the ceremony was an opportunity to repatriation practice in this context and document the emotions the event evoked for me as both participant and researcher.

Photograph: S. Morton, May 2015

As the research progressed, I found that documenting my own reactions and emotions produced interesting and useful data, especially in relation to exploring the agency of the remains. A notable example being the emotional impact of seeing the boxes of remains repatriated by RCS in the storage facility at Camp Coorong in South Australia. These were ancestral remains the Ngarrindjeri had as yet, been unable to rebury on country due to the issues around land and cost (see Chapter 6). Having heard from community members about the challenges of repatriation and the meanings the return of ancestral remains held for them I was invited see inside the storage building. In many respects the store was similar to those I had visited in museums, the remains packed in boxes and organised by geographical location, but on moving to towards the far end of the store I recognised the RCS logo on some of the

boxes and realised that these were remains repatriated in 2003. Afterwards I documented my unexpected reaction to seeing these boxes of remains and how their physical presence had made the challenges faced by the Ngarrindjeri in relation to returning their ancestors to country affecting:-

Encouraged by Uncle Moogy to look round the store, I move towards the furthest wall as even from the other side of the room I had recognised the RCS logo on some of the boxes. As I read the labels I realised that these were the remains that repatriated to the Ngarrindjeri in 2003, until now a line in the database of RCS repatriations. Having spent the last few days hearing about the importance to the Ngarrindjeri of returning the Old People to country, coming across these remains in the store was confronting and I suddenly felt very emotional and overwhelmed by the need to apologise, not to those with me in the store but to the remains themselves. Having worked with human remains in museums stores for many years, I found my response surprising and unexpected. Rather than just feeling disappointed or sad that the Ngarrindjeri had been unable to bury these remains, I felt upset and a genuine connection to these remains whose journey I had been following for over a year.

Noticing I looked upset, Uncle Moogy came over and before I could explain told me the Old People often made their presence felt and that sitting in the store and talking with them was sometimes comforting and at others upsetting, confronting or frustrating. He then asked everyone to gather together in the centre of the room for a ceremonial smoking ceremony to cleanse us before leaving and as the sight and smell of smoke permeated the store what had initially felt like a familiar storage space became a place of unfamiliar cultural practice and performance.

Extract from Research Diary 10<sup>th</sup> July 2015

Although sometimes challenging to apply in practice, over the course of the research I found that paying attention to space and practice, documenting conversations in these spaces and recording my own reactions, feelings and emotions, informed the development of my research, illuminated aspects of the interview data, and allowed me to get at aspects of repatriation that are not reflected within the current literature and debates. The following four empirical chapters have therefore been shaped by my fieldwork experiences starting with the impacts of repatriation on the UK museums before following the journey of the remains repatriated by RCS and the related documentation.

## 5. The Impact of Repatriation in UK Museums



**Figure 5.1:** Edward Ayau from Hui Mālama I Nā Kūpuna O Hawai'i Nei (left) with representatives from RCS at the repatriation of the Hawaiian ancestral skull.  
Image: Royal College of Surgeons, September 2011

### 5.1 Introduction

In September 2011, Edward Ayau from the Hawaiian group Hui Mālama I Nā Kūpuna O Hawai'i Nei visited the Royal College of Surgeons of England (RCS) to collect an ancestral skull (Figure 5.1). Having removed the skull from the store, Head of Conservation Martyn Cooke repacked it in a new box and placed it in the room where the handover ceremony would take place. Yet once Edward Ayau arrived, it became clear to Cooke that it would now be inappropriate for him to continue handling the box. One reading of this event would be that the prior to the ceremony the skull, once part of a living person was objectified and dissociated; in the process of becoming a specimen, identity and personhood had been

stripped away (Alberti 2011, Lock 2002a). Then through the process of repatriation, the skull once again became 'social' and thought of as an ancestor. However, what this linear biography does not allow us to take into account is that for Edward Ayau, and the other members of Hui Mālama, the skull was always an ancestor, a person whose remains had been taken against their wishes, and the wishes of their relations. Conversely, for Martyn Cooke not handling the skull during the repatriation ceremony was not due to a change in how he conceptualised the skull itself, but came from an understanding and desire to respect alternative views and beliefs. The skull had different meanings for the actors involved within the same space and at the same time, indicating that the meanings the skull embodies are not linear, but multiple and shifting; the skull is not ontologically indeterminate but ontologically unstable (Edwards 2001, 5, Parry 2008, Peers 2009). What this also highlights is the physical presence of the skull itself. That it is material is central to its mobility and ability to physically represent ideas and values (see Verdery 1999, Sofaer 2006). Viewed through this lens it is the materiality of the skull that allowed Martyn Cooke to demonstrate his respect for Edward Ayau's views, foregrounding the connection between the materiality of the remains, respect and performance.

With any attempt to understand what the impacts of repatriation have been on museums, there is a need to consider the wider socio-cultural shifts around the conceptualisation of the dead body and the development of new theoretical approaches to museum practice. In recent work on the ways human remains are conceptualised by different museums, the examination has mainly been through the lens of institutional policies on human remains and repatriation and how they have been applied to claims for return. Examples include Di Domenico's (2015) textual analysis of museum policy, White's (2013) consideration of the impact of *The Human Tissue Act 2004* and Department of Culture Media and Sport guidance, and Harris's (2015) comparison of the application of repatriation policy at the British Museum

and Natural History Museum. While building on this work, in this chapter I also want to try to move past the focus on policy to explore the impact of repatriation on the conceptualisation of human remains within UK museums and the practices of those who work with them. My starting place is therefore Tiffany Jenkins' (2011) proposal that repatriation has been partly responsible for the sensitisation of human remains collections within UK museums. Through taking into account local context and recognising the role of people, place and collections, as well as the social contexts in which they operate, I argue that there is a need to understand museums as heterogeneous. This means rather than considering repatriation to have had a homogenous effect on museum practice, a more nuanced approach that is alive to local difference is required.

Building on the understanding of respectful treatment as an ambiguous and culturally constructed concept, I then turn to consider the concept of respectful treatment of human remains, exploring the connection between the activities and behaviours that are considered acceptable, and the idea of treating human remains in UK museums with respect. Beginning with public display spaces, I then move behind the scenes to explore how museum staff work with human remains collections and the impacts of repatriation on how human remains are stored and cared for. In their study of the storerooms at the Science Museum, Geoghegan and Hess (2014) draw on Sharon MacDonald's (2002) work on the affective nature of museum store rooms to suggest the bond between curators and objects can be understood in terms of object-love. Based on my examination of practice and performance within human remains stores, I suggest that in relation to human remains collections a more nuanced understanding is required. In order to explore what remains do, constrain and enable within museum spaces. The approach I have taken is to consider human remains collections as deathscapes (Maddrell and Sidaway 2010b, Kong 1999) and examine the tensions between human remains being viewed as in, or out of place (Cresswell 1996).

Writing about deathscapes, Maddrell and Sidway (2010b, 2) describe death and bereavement as intensified at certain sites, such as the hospital, cemetery and mortuary, but also as affective and unfolding in many others. (for example see Hartig and Dunn 1998, Kong 1999, Cloke and Pawson 2008, Maddrell 2010, Wylie 2009). In this chapter I argue that museums with human remains collections are one of those spaces and therefore an approach that considers the material, representational and more-than-representational can offer a new perspective in which the connection between the materiality of the remains, respect and performance that I noted in my opening example, can be explored.

## **5.2 Problematised and Sensitive**

As part of my role as an Assistant Curator at RCS, I was asked to prepare a briefing document on the Vedda remains held in the College collections. As discussed in Chapter 2, the Vedda people are the Indigenous inhabitants of Sri Lanka and William Charles Osman Hill collected the remains now held in the RCS collections while he was Professor of Anatomy at Ceylon Medical College in 1933. RCS had not received a request for the repatriation of these remains so asking me to research their history and recommend organisations the museum could contact to discuss the meanings of this material to the Vedda people, was an indication of the impact of the previous repatriations on how the museum staff thought about the remains of non-European Indigenous peoples.<sup>35</sup>

Although this could be read as an example of the proposition that repatriation has resulted in a sensitisation of human remains collections, having been involved in the practice, I would argue that the 'crisis of cultural authority' identified by Jenkins (2011) was not evident in this

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<sup>35</sup> The conclusion of the review of the Vedda remains held by RCS was that the displacement and vulnerable status of the Vedda communities in Sri Lanka means that any offer of repatriation should be undertaken with great care. It was recommended that any offers of repatriation should ensure that all the relevant stakeholders were consulted and that the relevant Vedda communities were well represented in any discussions (Morton 2014).

case. Instead, this experience highlighted the importance of taking context into account; if we are to understand the relationship between repatriation and the sensitisation of human remains collections it is necessary to acknowledge the heterogeneous nature of museums.

### **Sensitivity in Context**

In the *Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums* document published by the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) in 2005, human remains are framed as having 'unique status' within museum collections. The fact the remains were once part of a living person is what makes them categorically different to other objects; a point expressed by a number of the museum staff that I interviewed:-

...I believe yes, humans always are different. [...] The facilities that we provide for people, they're different. We just treat it differently.

Interview with Norman MacLeod, Natural History Museum, 17<sup>th</sup> March 2015

...because they're human remains, human tissue....they are treated in a way and thought about in a way that's different from say objects

Interview with Sarah Pearson, Royal College of Surgeons of England,  
18<sup>th</sup> January 2015

...they were human remains and weren't simply archaeological remains in the way that [...] an arrow head or a pot or...some other kind of archaeological discovery is.

Interview with Bryan Sitch, Manchester Museum, 6<sup>th</sup> January 2015

This conceptualisation is reflected in the development of human remains policies and the changes to policies on deaccessioning that allowed for repatriation (for example see RCS 2011, British Museum 2013, Manchester Museum 2013). However, closer examination of policies relating to the repatriation of human remains reveals that although the sensitivity of all human remains is acknowledged, museums may categorise remains in ways that mean only certain parts of the collection are eligible for return. It has been argued that the differences in how human remains are categorised within museum policies is dependent on the type of collection and whether the individual institution is pro or anti-repatriation

(Cassman et al. 2006, 21). Yet I would suggest the reality is more complex and any understanding of repatriation policy and practice must take into account the wider socio-spatial context of that institution and its collections.

At RCS, isolating the impact that repatriation has had on how the rest of the collection is thought about is complex because it is entangled with the impacts of the questioning of medical ethics that occurred after the public scandal caused by the retention of children's body parts by hospitals and the ongoing relationship the museum has with the Human Tissue Authority. So although positioning *all* human remains as unique and different from other objects, museums may regard some as culturally more sensitive than others. As medical collections, the museums within the Royal College of Surgeons of England (RCS) are particularly interesting places to explore cultural sensitivity of human remains further. Rather than forming only a small part of a wider collection, at RCS human bodies and body parts are the main focus and make up a large proportion of the museum collections. Furthermore, non-European human remains are not the only parts of the collection considered as being particularly culturally sensitive.

When asked about sensitive parts of the RCS collections, all the current and previous staff members interviewed mentioned the foetal specimens. Curator Carina Philips explained that even within the context of the teaching collection, foetal material is thought of as sensitive and at one stage had been removed from display, although since the development of a paediatric surgery course, part of the collection has been made available for use and study. For Philips, there was a concern that while the foetal and infant material fascinated some of the medical trainees using the collections, others were sensitive to it and found it upsetting. The museum staff therefore decided it was not appropriate to display the foetal specimens unless they were serving an educational purpose. As Philips explains, 'I think it's that fine line

between fascination and sensitivity' (C. Philips, Interview 14<sup>th</sup> November 2014). In the Hunterian museum, which is accessible to the public, there has been an attempt to balance fascination and sensitivity by positioning the remains so they are not immediately visible from the front entrance. The curator who worked on the current display also explained that some specimens had not been redisplayed although the reasoning for this was not just that some visitors would find the display upsetting, but conversely due to the popularity of this type of specimen, they may have become what the museum was best known for:

...so in the old museum the foetal remains were on the right hand side as you came in the door, they were one of the first things you could see so it became the centre of attention. They were deliberately repositioned so that they weren't immediately visible from the front entrance, although they still attract a huge amount of interest surprisingly. There were a few foetal species, or neo-natal specimens, that we decided not to redisplay....and I think they were mostly the, one or two pathological specimens, one or two wet tissue specimens of foetal teratology, so conjoined twins or other foetal abnormalities, and I think that decision was because we were conscious that they would, they could easily become the defining...images of the museum and we preferred not, we preferred for them not to be the things that the museum was most closely associated with.

Interview with Simon Chaplin, 7<sup>th</sup> April 2015

The reasons for the foetal and infant collections being thought of as more sensitive, are almost certainly linked to the public scandal caused by the retention of children's bodies and body parts as medical specimens at Alder Hey and Bristol Royal Infirmary, with the media reporting the funerals parents had for the body parts and tissue samples returned to them (Jenkins 2011, Swain 2013). Therefore, the current public display of the foetal remains can be read as reflecting the balance between the perceived public sensitivity at the time the displays were created, and the interest of the public in seeing these types of specimens. As curator Sarah Pearson pointed out, 'I think people expect to see human remains in a museum like ours, it is the Hunterian Collection, it is predominantly an anatomy collection, so people are expecting to see skeletons or wet preparations when they come into the museum' (S. Pearson, Interview 8<sup>th</sup> January 2015). This suggests that context not only impacts on how human remains are categorised within policy, but also on how the sensitivity of human

remains is gauged and what the staff in a particular institution may consider as appropriate. As former Keeper of Collections at RCS, Stella Mason explains 'some people might find the display of a face of child prepared in 18<sup>th</sup> Century disrespectful but it had an important place within a collection like the Hunterian. If the same specimen were on display at Museum of London for example that may be less respectful because of the different circumstances' (S. Mason, Interview 21<sup>st</sup> January 2015). However, what we also see from Simon Chaplin's recollection of the planning of the foetal display at RCS, is there is also a concern that the sensitivity of this material as perceived by the museum staff may not be recognised by some visitors.

### **People, Context and Collections**

In Stella Mason's suggestion that the type of institution influences what is felt to be appropriate in terms of the display of human remains, is an indication that the within the wider socio-cultural flux around the use of the dead body, more localised impacts can be identified. In the data collected from my time at RCS and from my interviews with staff at other museums, three clear threads emerged in relation to the impact of institutional surroundings on human remains collections and repatriation; context, people and collections.

At RCS, the museums are only a small part of an organisation whose main remit is 'enabling surgeons to achieve and maintain the highest standards of surgical practice and patient care' (RCS undated-a). Placing the museum collections in this context is therefore key to understanding the impact of events such as the Retained Organs enquiry and Human Tissue Act that influenced changes in practice right across the organisation. At Manchester Museum, the staff I spoke to felt that being part of the University of Manchester had been influential on the museum agreeing to repatriation requests and the subsequent consideration of the other

human remains in the collections. The other important influence mentioned, was the museum's physical location within a multi-cultural city. As the population of the city became more diverse, visitors who considered themselves as stakeholders in the heritage on display began questioning some of the museum's interpretations contributing to a shift practice in relation to the display of the ethnographic collections.

Apparent in the previous example from Manchester Museum is the influence of both context and people, with the views that contributed to a change in approach coming from outside the organisation. Yet it is also important to recognise the impact of individual human agency from within. Although we may speak of 'the views of the museum', as with all organisations, museums are made up of individuals who bring their own views, experiences and understanding of the world to bear on decision making and policy. This following extract from my interview with Sir Peter Morris relates to the discussions had by the College Council at RCS regarding a repatriation request from Australia, prior to the 2001 change in policy that allowed for return of the ancestral remains of Indigenous peoples. This was a change in policy that reflected a shift in how the Council considered the claimants' relationship to the remains, a shift Sir Peter Morris suggests his personal experiences of meeting and working with Aboriginal people in Australia allowed him to influence:

As I said my first reaction in Council when I heard these discussions, they'd talk about scientific value, which I thought was probably a load of rubbish, but anyway they were completely ignorant of the history of the Aboriginal Australians, how they were treated in the early days, how many of the specimens were probably obtained, yes particularly the heads.

Interview with Sir Peter Morris, 18<sup>th</sup> December 2014

In this example Sir Peter Morris is a social actor moving between the institution and outside society, which is explained by Di Domenico (2015, 301) as micro-level individual processes feeding into macro-level institutional processes, such as policy.

Having acknowledged the influence of people and context, the final strand is that of the collections. The impact of the wider collections on decision making is particularly apparent in the approach individual museums have taken to repatriation. At RCS, the 2001 Acquisitions and Disposals policy that allowed for repatriation, listed the geographical areas that requests would be considered from, as North America, Australia and New Zealand. Simon Chaplin, the Senior Curator at the time the policy was changed, explained that this was due to there being an 'established process and legislative framework' within those countries for managing repatriation (S. Chaplin, Interview 4<sup>th</sup> April 2015). Yet I would also suggest that these geographical limits demonstrate the recognition of the cultural sensitivities of other parts of the collection. For example, Sir Peter Morris recalled that during the repatriation discussions, the College Council wanted to make sure that any agreement to return remains to Indigenous communities would not impact on their ability to retain other contentious specimens, such as the skeleton of the Irish Giant, Charles Byrne (P. Morris, Interview 18<sup>th</sup> December 2014).<sup>36</sup> What is seen in the 2001 RCS Acquisitions and Disposals policy can therefore be understood as categorisation that on the one hand, recognises the socially sensitive nature of certain remains and allows for repatriation, and on the other, provides protection from potential claims on other parts of the collections.

Another notable example is the statement in the British Museum's policy on human remains that 'the Trustees consider that the public interest is strongly in favour of the retention in the Collection of human remains that have been modified for a purpose other than mortuary practice' (British Museum 2013, 5.13). Under this policy the British Museum has returned some human remains, such as the ash bundles repatriated to Tasmania (British Museum

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<sup>36</sup> The remains of Charles Byrne, also known as the Irish Giant, have become contentious due to Byrne reportedly having requested that his remains were buried at sea. However on Byrne's death in 1783 John Hunter managed to secure the remains for his collection. The display of the remains in the Hunterian Museum has been the subject of media attention (for example Dalrymple 2011) and ongoing requests for Byrne's reported wish to be buried at sea to be honoured (for further discussion see Chapter 1).

2006), but has refused other requests, like those made for the return of seven Toi moko (tattooed and mummified heads) to New Zealand and two human skulls to Tasmania (British Museum 2012, 2008). In the Torres Strait case, the 'Trustees implied that the active participation of the Islanders in exchanges with the collector, Haddon, may have influenced their decision against repatriation' (McKinney 2014, 41). While McKinney (2014) suggests that the British Museum tried to balance the collectors' accounts of exchanges with the customary practices of the time, the meanings that the remains may hold for the present community appear to have been outweighed by the meanings they supposedly held in the past. The British Museum's refusal to return human remains it categorises as 'modified' can be seen as an attempt to protect the other areas of its collection from claims for return, the most high profile case being the request from the Greek Government for the return of the Parthenon Marbles (Fouseki 2014, Jenkins 2016). This suggests that the categorisation of human remains collections within museum policies is partially due to museums thinking politically about threats to their wider collections, illustrating the link between the repatriation of human remains and wider discussions around the restitution of cultural heritage, and the role other parts of the museum collection can play within repatriation debates.

So rather than being symptomatic of the 'problematization' of human remains collections, as argued by Jenkins (2011), I would suggest a more nuanced approach is needed. Collections, institutional setting and individual actors are all influential and therefore local context is critical in understanding the differences in approach taken by museums. A point Simon Chaplin made when I asked him about the museum collections at Royal College of Surgeons; 'when we looked at the human remains in our collection and were deciding whether they were of value for research or teaching, or had other historical reasons for retention there was an understanding that they shouldn't be a guide to other institutions because they would

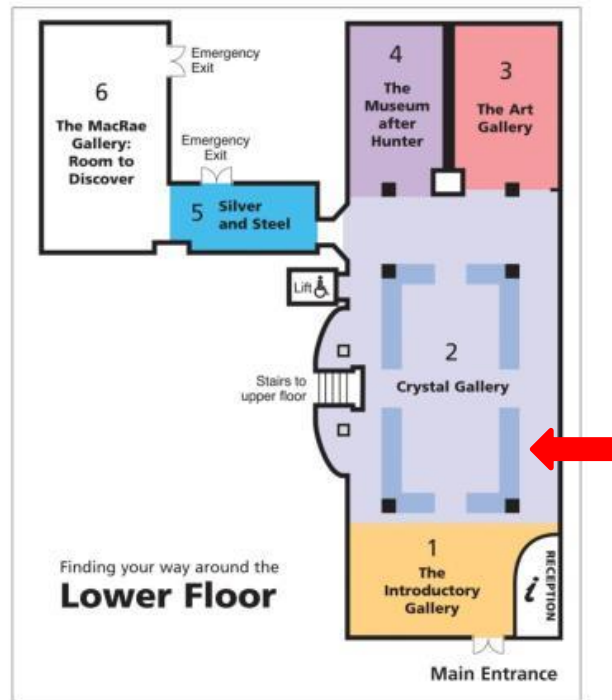
need to make their own assessment of the value of remains for those purposes' (S. Chaplin, Interview 7<sup>th</sup> April 2015).

Museums are idiosyncratic, complex institutions with changing, multiple and competing identities, so while agreeing to repatriate remains may confirm a commitment to act ethically and respect diversity of belief, at the same time it can be a threat to the articulation of the museum as custodian and educator (Nilsson Stutz 2013, Di Domenico 2015). The approach taken to repatriation and categorising of human remains collections can therefore be seen as a reflection of an institutions' attempt to balance different identities, a concept I will return to, but for Bryan Sitch, Curator of Archaeology at Manchester Museum, this has not made human remains collections problematic but 'just part of the collection you have to think about and think about making provision for' (B. Sitch, Interview 6<sup>th</sup> January 2015). Based on my own experience of working with human remains an important part of this provision is the idea of respectful treatment and it is this concept and how it impacts on practice that I want to consider next.

### **5.3 Treating Human Remains with Respect**

The discussion of the concept of respectful treatment in Chapter 3 concluded that it was an ambiguous and culturally constructed concept. In arguing that museums are heterogeneous and that any exploration of the approach to human remains needs to take local context into account, rather than move towards an understanding of what is meant by respectful treatment, the term has become even more indistinct. To try and get at how repatriation has impacted on the concept of respectful treatment and what this term actually means in practice, I will therefore start by returning to the display of foetal remains at RCS.

Although there are foetal and infant remains on display in several places in the Hunterian Museum, the display that caused the most concern when planning the redisplay was the Human Section in the Products of Generation display. When speaking to staff about this display, I was told that they wanted to avoid becoming known as ‘the museum with the two-headed babies’ as this did not align with their identity as ethical institution. This concern influenced the selection of specimens and their position in the gallery. All the specimens are complete; none have obvious abnormalities or signs of dissection. Suspended in their jars, their eyes closed, their heads tilted down and appearing peaceful. The approach to the interpretation and arrangement of the foetal remains as part of series with animal specimens creates a degree of distance between the remains and the visitor, and when context to the specimens is given, it is through the lens of the medical professional, which further encourages a medical gaze. The placement of this display within the gallery is also important, as the path visitors naturally take around the museum means it comes towards the end of the visit for most people; a deliberate choice made during the refurbishment of the galleries (see Figure 5.2). By this point, most visitors will have been exposed to many other preserved bodies and body parts, a desensitising process that allows material that is perhaps more distressing to be presented.



**Figure 5.2:** Map of the lower floor of the Hunterian Museum at Royal College of Surgeons of England. The red arrow marks the location of case 24 that contains human foetuses arranged to show development from the 9<sup>th</sup> week of gestation through till full term.

Plan: Royal College of Surgeons of England

In attempting to address potential visitor sensibilities to the Products of Generation display, the museum has taken an approach that John Jackson from the Natural History Museum described as ‘curating visitor reactions’ (J. Jackson, Interview 18<sup>th</sup> March 2015). In writing about the 1998 *London Bodies* exhibition at Museum of London, Jack Lohman (2006, 23) states that ‘the exhibition at least tackled two of the worst aspects of the display of human remains: a lack of awareness of visitor sensibilities, and a lack of respect in terms of how remains were presented and how their audience behaved around them’. The issue of audience behaviour highlighted by Lohman is also apparent in Simon Chaplin’s concern that some visitors to RCS may not recognise the sensitivity of the foetal remains on display. Along with the worry the display of the remains might cause some visitors to feel the museum was

acting unethically, there was the concern that disrespectful behaviour by visitors may undermine the assertion that the museum treats human remains with respect

### **Behaving Respectfully**

The connection between the types of activities and behaviours considered as acceptable and the respectful treatment of human remains is evident in how the museums request visitors to behave, or the types of events that they allow in the galleries. For example at RCS there is a sign at the entrance to the Hunterian Museum that requests visitors not to take photographs or use video recording equipment. This rule is partly in place so RCS can retain some control over how images of the collection are used and ensure that correct procedures are followed in relation to copyright, but as illustrated in the following extract, the issue of respectful behaviour is also a factor:

As the couple approached the display case [containing the skeleton of Charles Byrne] the man already had a small camera out and stopped some distance away whilst the woman posed in front of the case. Just as the man raised the camera a museum volunteer approached and told him that taking pictures in the gallery was not allowed, the man apologised and replied he had not seen the signs. The women then joined them looking disappointed but nodding and apologising when the gallery assistant repeated that photography was not allowed. The couple then walked away to look at objects displayed in other cases. I approached the gallery assistant and asked if visitors taking pictures was a common thing. He replied that it was and they frequently had to ask people not to take images. He added that it was a particular problem with Charles Byrne as people tended to pose in front of the case which he felt was not very respectful and created the wrong atmosphere in the gallery.

Extract from research diary, 11<sup>th</sup> December 2014

Respectful behaviour within the galleries is also discussed also when the Hunterian Museum is hired for events, and on a number of occasions I heard staff debating if a proposed event was appropriate for a space that contained human remains. In these cases, what the staff were actively trying to avoid, was allowing an event to take place that would leave them, and consequently RCS, open to accusations of not treating the human remains in their care with the respect they deserved.



**Figure 5.3:** An evening event in the Hunterian Museum. No food or drink is allowed in the museum during public opening hours but for evening events drinks are often served in the main gallery.

Image: Royal College of Surgeons of England

An issue frequently raised by the museum staff during my time at RCS, was the events programme at Barts Pathology Museum and the concern that using human remains as a backdrop for certain types of events might cause a public backlash that would impact all medical collections. The collections at Barts are similar to those at RCS, in that it is an anatomy and pathology collection that consists of historic and modern specimens, the modern specimens being those of less than 100 years old and therefore covered by the *Human Tissue Act*. Like RCS, the specimens within the museum were primarily collected for teaching and study purposes and museum itself is a small part of a larger medical institution, in this case St Bartholomew's Hospital, Queen Mary University of London. However as medical teaching moved away from the use of potted specimens, Barts stopped investing in the collections and it is only within the last few years that the museum has received funding for renovation, conservation and cataloguing work. In order to promote the collection and raise funds, the museum has been holding events, such as death café's and taxidermy workshops aimed at engaging the public with anatomy and capitalising on the 'vogue for events discussing death' (Valentine 2015). Despite the concerns of some of the RCS staff, the

events programme at Barts have received widespread media interest and public support, leading Technical Curator Carla Valentine to suggest that the public attitude and climate created around anatomy and pathology specimens by the Human Tissue Act is changing (Valentine 2015).

Despite the shift in public thinking suggested by Valentine, all of the staff I spoke to at RCS thought that despite having a comparable collection, it would be inappropriate to hold similar events in the Hunterian Museum. This once again highlights the influence of local context, for as Curator Carina Phillips explained the Hunterian museum is 'very much a part of the Royal College of Surgeons [and] that's always at the back of our minds when we're planning any sort of event' (C.Phillips, Interview 14<sup>th</sup> November 2014). So although museum visitors or people attending events may not consider that certain activities or behaviours are an issue, there appears to be a concern that if the media or wider public feel the sensitivity of the remains on display is not recognised, or permitted behaviours are disrespectful, then this could be damaging to the museum's reputation. In framing certain types of behaviour as inappropriate, it can be argued that the museum is publically seen to be treating human remains with respect, establishing a link between the presence of human remains and the behaviours expected within public spaces in the museum. The tensions that emerge around what are considered acceptable and transgressive activities being similar to those documented at cemetery sites (Christopher 1995, Kong 1999, Deering 2010).

### **Balancing Identities**

In Chapter 2, I suggested that repatriation had contributed to the shift towards a more inclusive, participatory and consultative form of museological practice. A shift that Di Domecio (2015, 307) identifies as having created a new role for museums as 'ethical mediators'; an identity that can conflict with their remit to engage visitors through

entertainment and information (Rectanus 2002, 210). Having drawn attention to the links made between respectful treatment and visitor behaviour, I now want to explore how museums balance these different aspects of their identities in relation to the display of human remains.

On display at the British Museum between May 2014 and July 2015, the *Ancient Lives, New Discoveries* exhibition used CT scanning to virtually unwrap eight mummies from different historical periods and reveal different aspects of their lives and deaths. The repeated statement, both in the exhibition and the accompanying publication, was that the techniques used were non-invasive and that the museum was committed to caring for human remains with 'respect and dignity' (Taylor and Antoine 2014, 12). In his review of the exhibition, Smart (2014) suggests that with this statement the museum is making an implicit contrast between 'politically correct practice today and the gothic Victorian fondness for cracking open a mummy at a dinner party' but that 'with the scroll of a touchscreen or press of a button, one can also zoom in on the bread in one man's digestive tract and the tattoo of St Michael on the inner thigh of a woman in Christianised Sudan'. So whilst the British Museum is recognising the cultural sensitivities of human remains they also recognise a continued public interest in mummies and desire to 'see beneath the bandages'.

But some of things we took into account as we discussed it is [...] I thought we are displaying the remains of a child who has died and for the two mummies of children we asked the designers to create a more intimate space, to lower the light level, maybe create a certain amount of austerity so that the visitor as they entered maybe you would, maybe would contemplate more but also would have more appropriate behaviour.

Interview with Daniel Antoine, The British Museum, 12<sup>th</sup> January 2016

Like the display of the foetal remains at RCS, in *Ancient Lives New Discoveries* the museum attempts to balance its role in engaging, informing and entertaining the visitor with that of ethical mediator. That is not to say that these roles are mutually exclusive, but as Di Domenico (2015) points out, the entertainer identity of the museum incorporates economic

opportunities and it is this commercial value of human remains for the museum that creates tensions. This was something I observed directly as I emerged from the final section of the *Ancient Lives* exhibition, a space designed to encourage visitors to reflect on the humanity of the remains they had been looking at, directly into the museum shop (Figure 5.4). Walking between the displays of mummy themed gifts and toys made manifest the conflict between asking visitors to behave with respect within the exhibition and then encouraging them to participate in the commodification of a particular cultural burial practice.



**Figure 5.4:** One of the displays in the British Museum gift shop during the *Ancient Lives New Discoveries* exhibition  
Image: S. Morton March 2015

The tensions that human remains create between different parts of a museum's identity are similar to those found in the repatriation debate, where the museum's role in curating and preserving data can come into conflict with its emerging identity as a post-colonial institution that aims to incorporate other perspectives into its practice (Nilsson Stutz 2013, Rectanus

2002, Di Domenico 2015). I therefore suggest that what can be seen in the *Ancient Lives* exhibition, can be understood as the British Museum trying to resolve the tensions between its different identities through the statement of their commitment to care for human remains with respect and dignity.

At Manchester Museum, an institution that had repatriated Aboriginal remains to Australia in 2003, it was felt that in light of changed public perceptions and understanding, the ethical approaches to all human remains in the collection should be examined (Besterman 2004, 14). Having taken a consultative and poly-vocal approach to the display of Lindow Man in the 2008 temporary exhibition *A Bog Body Mystery* (Sitch 2010), it was felt that the Museum should take the same approach to the human remains on permanent display. As Curator Bryan Stich explained 'one of the spin offs from our approach to Lindow Man was a question was asked. If you're trying to be sensitive about this loan specimen from the British Museum, Lindow Man, what's the knock-on effect then for your ancient Egyptian mummies, and it was at that point the museum began thinking about an approach to Egyptian human remains' (B. Sitch, Interview 6<sup>th</sup> January 2015). The approach the museum took, was to try and open up the debate around ethical and sensitive display to the public by partially covering some of the mummies on display in the Egyptian gallery and asking visitors for their opinions:-

...we then became mired in this, this terrible controversy about...covering up our Egyptian mummies unilaterally and actually we, we weren't doing that. We are often presented as having decided almost ourselves for reasons of what, what were deemed to be political correctness to have covered up our Egyptian mummies, because it suited us as Curators and we were being very kind of politically correct about this and actually what we were doing was testing the water, in that in itself it wasn't a *fait accompli* it was asking people about their responses to...three different ways of presenting material; completely uncovered, partly covered...and completely covered so...it was actually part of a consultation but it wasn't presented as such in the media. We took an awful lot of stick for that, I think unfairly and all you're doing is asking people.

Interview with Bryan Stich 6<sup>th</sup> January 2015

The public reaction to 'covering the mummies' was overwhelmingly negative, as evidenced by the *Egypt at the Manchester Museum* blog. The theme that runs through the comments is that the museum was not respecting the views of their visitors who wished to see the remains uncovered. As one contributor states; 'I could only imagine that the visitors of the Manchester Museum in the future will only be tremendously disappointed when they realized that they could have the opportunity to see the face of the mummies but were not able to due to some foolish policies' (Egypt at the Manchester Museum 2008). Rather than an attempt to be consultative in the face increasing sensitivities, 'covering the mummies' became a symbol for 'political correctness gone mad' that had been fuelled by engaging with alternative discourses (The Telegraph 2008, Kennedy 2008, Jenkins 2011).

Ironically, given what the museum was trying to do, one of the complaints was that the museum should not have taken the decision to cover the mummies without consultation (*The Telegraph* 2008). Yet despite the public backlash faced by Manchester Museum on this occasion, consultation with stakeholder groups and visitors around the display of human remains has continued to be the approach the museum takes (Sitch 2010) and is also proclaimed as good practice by other institutions including the British Museum (Mays 2014) and English Heritage (Wallis & Blain 2011). Therefore, by recognising human remains as culturally sensitive and consulting with different stakeholder groups a museum can attempt to mitigate the tensions created by its roles as both educator and ethical institution (Nilsson Stutz 2013, Di Domenico 2015).

I think if there is the need for a consultation, for example we had the Australia show<sup>37</sup> last year and we had a mask, a crocodile mask on display which had human remains and I think the curators involved in the exhibition did liaise with the community of origin and they requested that the human remains on the mask should not be visible so the mask could go on display. So actually we, so I didn't, but the curators created a display that actually disguised the lower half of the crocodile where human mandibles

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<sup>37</sup> The *Indigenous Australia* exhibition ran at the British Museum 23<sup>rd</sup> April to 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2015 and was organised in partnership with National Museum Australia.

are attached. [...] So when possible and when appropriate we do try and liaise so that the decisions are informed decisions that are culturally sensitive.

Interview with Daniel Antoine, The British Museum, 12<sup>th</sup> January 2016

In the above extract, Daniel Antoine, Curator of Physical Anthropology at the British Museum reveals how consultation about the display and interpretation of human remains has become a way for museum to show respect to the living, whether that be consultation with descendant community, external stakeholders or with colleagues in the museum. A consultative approach provides the museum with a way to defend its decisions; the post-colonial museum is inclusive and consultative, an identity that can be projected through their approach to human remains.

#### **5.4 Working with Human Remains**

Having considered what respectful treatment means within public display spaces and the connections between the presence of human remains and the behaviours and practice considered as appropriate, I now move into the behind the scenes areas to explore the impacts of repatriation on the geographies of the museum store.

The human remains in the museum collections at RCS are primarily anatomy and pathology specimens; body parts that have been stripped of personhood to allow them to become medical objects (Alberti 2011, Lock 2002a). A large proportion of the work the conservators at RCS do is on wet specimens, removing them from their glass or Perspex 'pot' to replace the discoloured fluid or suspend them so they can be seen or studied (Figure 5.5). This is every day work and animal specimens are, on a practical level, treated the same way as the way as the fragmented human body parts. The conservators mostly talk about the remains they deal with as specimens and the focus is on the practical issues, such as how to remove a tricky lid or identify a historic preservation fluid. Yet sometimes within this practice, the scientific and

clinical approach gives way to something else; interacting with material remains can sometimes bring forward the immaterial meanings they embody.



**Figure 5.5:** Conservator Martyn Cooke in the conservation lab at RCS working on wet specimens mounted in Perspex containers

Image: Royal College of Surgeons of England

As I entered the conservation lab I noticed a large specimen on the desk covered with a white sheet. When I asked this [the conservator] told me she was working on is a pair of conjoined twins from Hunter's collections. [...] [The conservator] explained the jar had been covered as some people found it upsetting to see and her desk was visible from the door which is usually open when people are working in the lab. She also mentioned that although she has worked on a wide range of material she felt that this specimen had 'got to her' and that during treatment she found she 'had to take a moment' although she also stated she 'didn't know why' this might be. [The conservator] described one of the most difficult moments of treating the specimen as being when the twins were removed the jar as she had to hold them the 'same way you would hold a living baby'.

Extract from Research Diary, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2014

That foetal and infant specimens are considered as being a sensitive and affecting part of the collection has already been discussed, however it should not be assumed that the meanings they hold are stable. Two of the staff at RCS revealed that although they had previously had no issues with the display of foetal pathology in the Wellcome teaching collection, they had

found it unsettling to look at whilst pregnant; although both said they no longer felt the same once their babies had been born. As one of them explained, 'it was like a display of everything that could go wrong, so I just closed my eyes when I had to walk past it' (Research Diary 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2014). So the meanings these remains embody are not static. Even for an individual, they can shift based on their feelings and circumstances at a particular time. Not only can human remains embody multiple meanings, and therefore mean different things to different people and within different contexts, those meanings are in flux with personal experience and current circumstances foregrounding different aspects.

This is a concept also seen in the preparation of a donated body for display in the Wellcome teaching collection at RCS. The donor, a patient with fibrodysplasia ossificans progressive (FOP), had consented for their skeletonised remains to be displayed for medical training purposes, a process undertaken by the Head of Conservation Martyn Cooke. Unusually, Cooke met with the donor's family during the preparation of their relative's body for display and in his description of this meeting he notes being cautious of the language he used. The family wanted to understand the process but 'without wanting to see or hear too much unpleasantness', highlighting the tension between the dead body becoming a medical specimen and the continued treatment of the body as social by the family:

...we will write, will read a description, a clinical description but it never quite comes across as really detailed and you can't get much out of it but when you're talking to people and they're saying how their sister or whatever, was in this awfully difficult predicament but they carried on regardless and they didn't let their disability overcome their life.'

'the live human element [...] made the process so much more personal perhaps than even doing a post mortem of somebody, and that is quite personal, but [there's] still detachment from the project'

Interview with Martyn Cooke, Royal College of Surgeons of England, 11<sup>th</sup> December 2014

Cooke also notes that the connection to the social has continued for him with these particular remains. They have continued to hold particular meanings for him created by a combination of the practical work on the body being technically challenging but also by the introduction of the social aspects. With this set of remains, at the same time the dead body was becoming specimen it was also becoming social and revealing multiplicity with various versions interfering and cohering (Law 2002). Here we see the meanings of the material body for the same actor not only as being in flux between object and person, but coexisting and sometimes conflicting. For Cooke, the remains are a medical specimen representative of a particular condition, a testament to his technical skills *and* a person he sometimes refers to by name. However in this, these remains are different, the personhood Cooke attaches to them is due to his particular experience and although it has impacted on how he might approach similar projects in the future, it does not appear to have changed the way he thinks or feels about the other specimens in the collection. It is the combination of the physical interaction with the body and the social network in which these remains are situated that gives these remains a particular meaning to Cooke.

At Manchester Museum, the Curator of Egyptology, Campbell Price, explained how he would refer to the mummy Asru, who is displayed in the Ancient Worlds Gallery, by name. Yet, he also recognised the materiality of Asru and pointed out that in Ancient Egypt mummification was about turning the body into an object; 'the idea is that you turn the human body into something divine, that you turn it into a statue' (C. Price, Interview 6<sup>th</sup> January 2015). Asru is both a person, and a material body that is source of data. Depending on the situation the meanings Asru embodies fluctuate between the material and the immaterial. So, as argued in Chapter 2, acknowledging the materiality of human remains fosters an understanding of the remains' meaning and status as being constantly constituted and negotiated, with categories forms and states being neither permanent, nor exclusive (Krpmotich et al. 2010, 372).

In some cases there is a direct link between repatriation and the meanings remains hold for those working with them. Speaking about her work on repatriation at the Natural History Museum, Margaret Clegg, former Head of the Repatriation Programme, stated that visiting Aboriginal communities in Australia and working with Aboriginal researchers and interns, had impacted on how she reacted to certain human remains within the collections:-

I came across a set of remains that when I opened the box and looked at the label I was outraged that they should be in the collection. [...] I was outraged and I put the lid back on the box and I sat down, took a deep breath and thought oh my God these people aren't even related to me and I'm outraged about this

Interview with Margaret Clegg, 30<sup>th</sup> January 2015

Although Margaret Clegg did not want to elaborate further on the reason for her outrage, it is clear that when she encountered these particular remains, her personal experiences foregrounded new and different meanings. The combination of the material presence of the remains and the space was affective but the emotional response that Margaret Clegg spoke of was grounded in her own subjectivity (Rose et al. 2010, Pile 2010). The presence of remains that she may have once considered as being in place within the Natural History Museum store was troubling, as for Clegg these remains were now out of place.

Many of the staff I spoke to in UK museums felt that repatriation and the wider socio-cultural shift that it was part of had made them think differently about human remains within the museum collections. For some, engaging with different world views had made them see all human remains as human beings rather than objects, while others felt it had not changed the way they conceptualised remains but that repatriation claims had brought ethical standards to the fore. However, it was the need to respect alternative views and beliefs that was the most consistently articulated post repatriation impact cited. As Margaret Cleg explained, in her opinion, 'different cultures have different ideas, but for most in Western culture the idea is you can't really do harm to the dead, but you can do harm to the living through the dead

[...] if they're treated in a disrespectful fashion it is actually being disrespectful to the people who are alive today' (M. Clegg, Interview 30<sup>th</sup> January 2015).

### **In the Human Remains Store**

When asked to define respectful treatment, the museum staff I interviewed all admitted it was a difficult and elusive concept, but was demonstrated in practice through high standards of collections care, both for those remains on display and the often much larger collections of remains held in store.<sup>38</sup> In policies which set out standards of care, the most notable being the *Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums* (DCMS 2005), the concept of respect is linked with a set of particular professional practices. Yet since the publication of this guidance, there actually appears to have been minimal change in most areas of practice. As Margaret Clegg states: 'although, we've obviously changed the way we speak about it the way in which you actually work with human remains actually hasn't changed, I mean I've been doing this over twenty years, it hasn't really changed, the [things] we write have changed but the way we handle the remains, all of those things have not markedly changed over the years' (M. Clegg, Interview 30<sup>th</sup> January 2015). However one noticeable impact from the introduction of the new guidelines has been the physical separation of human remains from other parts of museum collections becoming acknowledged as best practice (DCMS 2005, 18). The conceptualisation of human remains as different and special has meant that human remains previously spread across different parts of the collection, have become considered as a category in and of themselves and given privileged status. Yet the application of this concept in practice varies between institutions, as once again we see the importance of local context.

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<sup>38</sup> This should not be taken to mean that there have been major changes in the care of human remains, or that high standards of care are not applied to other parts of the collection, as many museums have rolling work programmes to improve standards of storage and packing.

At the Natural History Museum, the human remains collections had always been separate due to the way the collection is categorised, while at Manchester Museum and the Oxford University Museum of Natural History, the separation of the human remains was a reaction to the sensitisation of the collection. As Bryan Sitch explained when asked about the storage at Manchester Museum, 'because of demands on storage space I think [...] institutions have to find their own pragmatic way of dealing with this. I think [human remains] should be together, whether it's always possible to separate them off in their own separate room is going to be difficult for some institutions, so sometimes simply having them in the same set of shelving in a room, that can be sufficient' (B. Sitch, Interview 6<sup>th</sup> January 2015). As this comment makes clear, it is not always possible for museums to have a separate storage space for human remains collection, but as a minimum they should be kept on 'designated shelves away from the main activity of the store' (DCMS 2005, 17). This indicates that the positioning of human remains away from general activities or busy areas of the store has become understood as a physical demonstration of respectful treatment. For Jenkins (2011) this separation is a consequence of human remains collections becoming problematised, but this suggests that the separation of certain parts of the collection is problematic for museums rather than a standard approach. For example, the separation and storage of archaeological metalwork in particular environmental conditions, is considered best practice within UK museums. In separating this part of the collection, the aim is to slow corrosion of the objects through control of the environment; the driver for the separation is chemical. With human remains, their separation from other parts of the collection may be due to environmental, classification or cultural reasons, and based on my own experience I would suggest is often a combination of all three. Yet as has already been discussed, cultural sensitivities are not fixed and can be context dependant as becomes apparent when the issue of storing animal and human remains together is considered.



**Figure 5.6:** Storage of human and animal remains together at RCS as part of the comparative anatomy series.

Image: S. Morton August 2016

A concern for staff at Royal College of Surgeons of England has been that the original Hunterian collection is based on comparative anatomy, so some specimens consist of human and animal tissue mounted together in order to demonstrate difference (see Figure 5.6). However former Curator Simon Chaplin argued that this storage should not be considered disrespectful within this particular context, stating that, 'the idea that you'd impose some kind of arbitrary separation given that the collection was arranged as such that in many cases human and animal remains were part of a series, would have actually diminished the value of seeing the collection as a whole' (S. Chaplin, Interview 7<sup>th</sup> April 2015). Another example of the influence of the wider collections on what is considered to be respectful treatment of human remains.

Another important point to consider is that the separation of human remains collections has made it easier to restrict access and in some cases increase the level of security. Paul Smith, Director of the University of Oxford Museum of Natural History, highlights that while security and limiting access are common practice for all type of museum collections, for human

remains it also connected to recognising and respecting particular cultural sensitivities; 'so they're in separate storage cabinets to which only me and the collections person responsible have keys and so access is strictly limited [...] it's just part of the internal security but obviously with human remains it takes on an added sensitivity' (P. Smith, Interview 20<sup>th</sup> March 2015). Limiting admittance and security also appears to be an important factor with only certain staff members having access and external researchers only allowed entry after careful vetting. Having separated human remains, limiting access to them, or to the area they are stored, is another way of demonstrating respect. As Kåks suggests (1998, 10), respect is 'not just a question of showing the objects in a solemn setting, but perhaps of not showing them at all, or not allowing them to be handled except by very few and relevant persons'.

Not only is respectful practice linked to who can have access to the stored remains, as seen in the previous examples of public display, behaviour is an important factor. In an example from her work at the Pitt Rivers Museum, Laura Peers explains that at the request from tribal members in North America she speaks to the spirits and offers tobacco when working with remains from those communities (Peers 2009, 94). In respecting these cultural practices Peers is demonstrating a respect for the living and the meanings that the remains have for them. However based on her experience at the Natural History Museum, Margaret Clegg suggests that unless, as in the case of the Pitt Rivers, communities have made specific requests, then all human remains in the collection should receive the same level of care. As she explains, 'we should treat all remains with the same reverence; yes I don't think that's too strong a word' (M. Clegg, Interview 30<sup>th</sup> January 2015). In her use of the word 'reverence', Clegg indicates an emotional element to the practice of working with human remains. Working with all types of museum collections is different to handling objects in everyday life, we apply a set of particular handling practice and take greater care, but this physical interaction with human remains appears to be particularly affective, with museum staff talking about feelings of

responsibility, care, privilege and respect. As Norman MacLeod from the Natural History Museum told me, ‘the people here that work with the remains are quite serious when they do it, and part of that seriousness comes from, not only the awareness that they are handling human materials but also because of their inherent respect for that aspect of the collection’ (N. MacLeod, Interview 17<sup>th</sup> March 2015). However, this does not mean that the standards of collections care in relation to human remains are uniformly high. As a museum professional I have seen examples of poorly stored or documented human remains collections, although in all cases, the staff have been aware of the issues and actively attempting to make improvements. While ongoing work to improve the standards of collections care of museum collections is common practice, what is noticeable is that since the publication of the DCMS guidelines, human remains collections have become a priority.

What also emerged was that in creating separate areas for human remains within museum stores, people can develop particular relationships with those spaces. As Margaret Clegg, explains in regards to the human remains store at the Natural History Museum, having the remains in a separate store makes it obvious to people that they are going into a ‘different space’, a space that is not only affective, but also in which certain behaviours have become expected (M. Clegg 2015, Interview 30<sup>th</sup> January 2015). In relation to respectful treatment, it is also important to note that the practice expected of staff is extended to everyone accessing the collections. This includes researchers, volunteers and visitors, with the expected standards being explained to them prior to allowing any interaction with remains and behaviour deemed as unacceptable being grounds for withdrawal of access, as occurred in this case from the Wellcome Museum of Anatomy and Pathology at Royal College of Surgeons which resulted in a student being barred from accessing the teaching collections:-

We've only had one incident of inappropriate behaviour that I know of when [a post-graduate student] took a photograph of a face of a man that had a carcinoma. I think it's like a rodent carcinoma so it's quite horrific, but also the face would have been quite identifiable to somebody that knew him, and they put that image on Facebook.  
Interview with Carina Philips, Royal College of Surgeons of England, 14<sup>th</sup> November 2014

As with public display, respectful treatment of human remains within museum stores is associated with performance of certain behaviours during the interactions between the remains, people and space. In their exploration of the stores at the Science Museum, Geoghegan and Hess (2014, 16) examine how museum professionals are affected by the collections they care for, concluding that it is this emotional bond between people and things that makes the museum store room an emotional, evocative and affective space. Unlike displays, storerooms are not purposely designed to produce emotion or be affective, and position and organisation are often dictated by available space or need (Alberti 2009). Yet entering museum stores can create the same sense of wonder as visiting the public displays; 'the value and significance of the objects is impressed on you before you enter the stores. This permeates the atmosphere of the building, eliciting wonder and confronting the visitor uncomfortably with the sheer stretch of time behind us' (Geoghegan and Hess 2014, 13). Geoghegan and Hess also acknowledge the affective nature of museum storage spaces for those that work in them, building on Sharon Macdonald's (2002) description of the affective relationship curators have with their collections and their passion for the artefacts they curated as 'object-love'. Geoghegan and Hess develop this concept arguing that 'geographies of love, specifically the need felt by individuals (and nations) to care for objects and material heritage, underpin the form and function of the storeroom' (Geoghegan and Hess 2014, 8). While the concept of the emotional connection between museum staff and their collections is useful in understanding the defensive reaction of some researchers and museum professionals to repatriation (for example see Mulvaney 1991, 1989, Stringer 2003, Foley

2004, Brothwell 2004), the affective nature of the human remains store appears to come from a complex mixture of relationships, interactions and engagements with people as well as the remains themselves. In narrowing the field of focus to the human remains collections what has emerged are complex geographies that I suggest cannot be understood through the concept of object-love alone.

## **5.5 A Proper Place for the Dead?**

One of the advantages of thinking about museums as deathscapes, is that it encourages consideration of what the human remains do within those spaces. As Geoghegan and Hess have argued, museums and storerooms are not a 'blank canvas on which social interactions take place' but are 'enlivened by complex assemblages' of people and things (Geoghegan and Hess 2014, 8). So rather than viewing the dead body in the museum as having fallen outside of social relations (Hallam et al. 1999, 92), human remains within museum collections need to be thought about as being nodes within many different entangled social relationships. This returns us to thinking about human remains as being agents in social networks, having agency in terms of their capacity to have effects and be affective (Hockey et al. 2010), and actively participating in the making and holding together of social relations (Pels et al. 2002).

As illustrated in Chapter 2, human remains, just like all museum objects, are embedded in the historical social networks that created museum collections. The connection of specimens with a particular collector, surgeon or medical institution, reveals the web of social relations that created the collections. Yet the social networks in which the specimens sit are not just historical. As Alberti argues, museums are not mausoleums for objects and should be seen instead as conduits for relationships involving those objects (Alberti 2005, 571). Museum collections are both created and embedded within networks of social meanings and relations

and store rooms as 'affective spaces are not only shaped by the collections they house and object love of the curators and conservators' (Geoghegan and Hess 2014, 4) but also by engagements with people.

The presence of Indigenous ancestral remains within UK museums can impact on the meaning of those spaces. This was illustrated in my interview with Rodney Dillion, a Palawa Elder and former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commissioner for Tasmania who, when asked about visiting museums in the UK that held ancestral remains explained that:- 'if I go to London I try and get to the museum to pay my respects and sit with the people and tell them [...] when I do a welcome to country it's one of my things I say and I hope that all my people that are overseas can come home in my lifetime' (R.Dillion, Interview 5<sup>th</sup> August 2015). What comes out of Rodney Dillion's description is that not only can remains hold multiple and competing meanings but their corporeal presence within the museum creates a deathscape that can have divergent and multiple uses and effects. This fits with Kong's (1999) writing on deathscapes that uses work by Yeoh and Tan to highlight how conflicts between the sacred and secular can be played out through graveyards. An argument Petersson builds on to suggest that cemeteries are the materialisation of deathscapes that 'institutionalise a consciousness' of what a 'proper place for the dead' should be (Petersson 2010, 141).

The ongoing popularity of museums such as the Hunterian, exhibitions such as *Ancient Lives New Discoveries* and the public reaction to covering the mummies at Manchester Museum indicate that that many museum visitors not only want to see human remains in museums but expect to. I therefore suggest that within a Western tradition, we think of museums as an appropriate place for the dead. However, this view is not universal, as seen through repatriation discussions that bring together those who feel the museum is a proper place for the dead, and those who think it is not:-

...it's nice to have kōiwi returned to their rightful place [...] it's coming home, and it's home now and hopefully he's, I was told it was a man, resting in peace. But if I died I would not like my head to be carted off anywhere. I don't care how scientific the scientist is, it's just totally inappropriate.

...what kind of person would go to another Country and remove such things as skeletal remains in whatever form? And I don't know, certainly not in Ngāti Te Ata that the idea of chopping off someone's head was not our custom.

Interview with Nganeko Minhinnick, Ngāti Te Ata, 18<sup>th</sup> June 2015

As the previous extracts indicate, for Ngāti Te Ata Elder Nganeko Minhinnick, death is out of place within a museum context. Give this, what the corporeal presence of Māori remains in museums highlights, is their absence in the landscape that Minhinnick considers their proper place. Yet, as the previous discussions have shown, views around the dead body are complex and socially situated. So although an individual may view the museum as an appropriate space for some of the dead, other dead bodies may be out of place, with the line between the two being diffuse and fluctuating.

### **Extending Social Ties**

The repatriation of the ancestral skull from RCS to Hui Mālama with which I opened this chapter, is an example of the relationships that can form around remains. For Laura Peers, one of the meanings human remains in museums can embody is the political and social relations between one people and another. Yet while recognising the potential of repatriation to create new relationships, she questions if this has really occurred suggesting most repatriations 'have simply been symbolic, only briefly social acts' (Peers 2009, 92). In terms of post-repatriation relationships between community groups and UK institutions, this may be true, especially if like RCS, the museum holds no other objects from that community.

However there are examples of ongoing relationships between the individuals who were involved in particular repatriations, such as the relationship that has developed between Edward Ayau from Hui Mālama and Margaret Clegg at the Natural History Museum:-

...one of the upsides of repatriation is that it makes the world smaller and so now, like Margaret knows that she can come to Molokai and she has a place to stay with my family and she can come to our home in Hilo with her family. She has a place to stay with our family and vice versa because we were able to connect on a very significant level.

Interview with Edward Ayau, Hui Mālama, 15<sup>th</sup> May 2015

Also, as has already been discussed, repatriation requests are entangled with wider shifts in museum practice and therefore can be seen as contributing to changing practice in terms of consultations and ongoing relationships as these two examples from the Natural History

Museum and British Museum demonstrate:-

When we did the Torres Strait return, when the trustees agreed to the return they, they actually also said they would offer a fellowship to a Torres Strait Islander to come to the museum for six months and basically they would learn about what we did and we would learn about their traditional knowledge about remains and why they were important, all of the surrounding aspects of it...and then the Australian Government thought this was such a good idea that they also said that they would....fund a further Fellowship. So we had two people, It worked very well the people we had were fantastic, absolutely fantastic.

Interview with Margaret Clegg, Natural History Museum 30<sup>th</sup> January 2015

The stakeholders in Sudan donated the collection [of mummies] to the British Museum [...] and what we're doing now is actually working on training, for the last few years, what will be the first physical anthropologist in Sudan, so they can have more information on which to base those decisions on and we're also hoping to help them develop appropriate storage for the human remains in Khartoum so that there will be space available if such collections are...excavated again in the near future.

Interview with Daniel Antione, The British Museum, 12<sup>th</sup> January 2016

What these examples illustrate is that in thinking about the impacts of repatriation we should not limit our scope to non-European human remains, or even the social act of repatriation itself. The recognition of the ontological instability of human remains, sensitisation of the collections and need to mitigate tensions between different museum identities has created new forms of social networks and relationships in which human remains have agency within a nexus (Gell 1998). This even occurs between museums for as Margaret Clegg pointed out, many smaller institutions with human remains collections do not have specialists in this area on staff which has led to the creation of the Human Remains Subject Specialist Network

through which museum staff from smaller organisations can get specialist advice and support in relation to the human remains they care for (M. Clegg Interview 30<sup>th</sup> January 2015).

Following Gell's model of agency, what the examples in this chapter illustrate is the way human remains act as social agents. In this model the remains are positioned as secondary actors in that they are not endowed with will or intention but are essential to the 'formation, appearance or manifestation of intentional actions' (Gell 1998, 36). The role of remains as secondary agents is evident in the recent return of a Māori Toi moko (preserved tattooed head) from Warrington Museum, England to the repatriation programme at Te Papa Tongarewa. Having contacted Te Papa for guidance about the Toi moko in their collection, the staff at Warrington worked with the Karanga Aotearoa Reparation Programme to arrange the return, with a delegation from New Zealand coming to Warrington to collect the Toi moko in October 2013. As part of the repatriation, the delegation from Te Papa gave a Māori cultural demonstration at the museum and then a seminar on the importance of returning Māori and Moriori remains to their homelands in Aotearoa New Zealand, an event I was able to attend:-

The public event was attended by about forty people who listened with interest to the presentation given by the speakers from Te Papa. The mood was welcoming and the staff from Te Papa were happy to answer questions relating to the aspects of Maori culture about which they had been speaking. The two Māori kaumātau (elders) in attendance added a gravitas to the proceedings and spoke with feeling about the importance of the ancestor being returned and their thanks to the museum and the people of Warrington. What came across was that the Maori delegation wanted to use the repatriation to promote greater cultural understanding. Opening his talk Te Arikirangi Mamaku, pointed out that what most people associate with New Zealand is rugby and therefore the Haka is often the only thing they know about Maori culture. This ancestor had therefore given them the opportunity to share their culture with the people of Warrington. At the end of the presentation they Maori delegation sang a traditional song which moved a member of the audience to sing an English traditional song in response, a poignant sharing of tradition with which to end the event.

Extract from research diary, 29<sup>th</sup> October 2013

The Toi moko in this example was not passive, just as Gell describes, it was an essential agent in the manifestation of intentional actions. Yet speaking to Te Arikirangi Mamaku and Te

Herekiele Herewini, from the Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation programme after the event, they explained to me that for them the Toi moko was not an object, it was an ancestor and as such had the capacity to act. In this example the Toi moko has agency as a non-human actant but for Mamaku and Herewini it also has an agency that derives from its intentionality as a human spirit. In being both an extension of an ancestor and an unconscious object the Toi Moko exhibits an ambivalent agency that does not fit neatly into either the primary or secondary categories proposed by Gell (1998), or the alternatives of conscious and effective (Robb 2004) or sentient, non-sentient (Tung 2014).

## **5.6 Conclusions**

By opening out historical narratives and revealing the multiple, cohering and competing meanings human remains can hold, repatriation can be seen as having a direct influence on the re-articulation of museum ethics that saw all human remains become unique and sensitive parts of museum collections and as contributing to current practices within UK museums that attempt to treat all human remains with respect through recognition of cultural sensitivities, application of professional standards and consideration of the alternative views. Therefore rather than being responsible for the problematisation of human remains, as argued by Jenkins (2011), I would suggest that repatriation can be seen as contributing to a range of new relations that have formed around human remains collections in museums.

In their review of recent work on corpse geographies, Young and Light (2013, 138) explored the way that corpses continue to interact with the living, listing different types of spaces in which this occurs. In this chapter I have suggested that museums can also be considered as sites that connect the living to the dead, albeit often the long dead rather than recently

deceased family members or loved ones, and museum staff and researchers who work with human remains are therefore also engaged in spatial deathwork practices. What museums have in common with spaces such as cemeteries, memorials and crematoria is the interplay between place, practice and meanings. So, following Young and Light's argument that within deathscapes the living undertake various forms of performance and embodied practice in relation to the dead, I have proposed that it is helpful to consider spaces containing human remains in museums in this way.

With any attempt to understand what the impacts of repatriation have been on museum practice in the United Kingdom, there is a need to consider the wider socio-cultural shift around the conceptualisation of the dead body and the development of new theoretical approaches to museum practice in which repatriation is entangled. Having recognised that repatriation claims were influential in the re-examination of museum ethics, I have tried to move past reviewing policy and repatriation decisions to consider the connections between the concept of respectful treatment, practice and performance. Just as repatriation needs to be understood within broader socio-cultural context, I have argued that an understanding of the sensitivity of human remains collections and what is considered as respectful treatment needs to take into account local context, with people, place and the wider collections all being influential. Although this has not brought me any closer to a definition of respectful treatment, applying a spatial lens to museum practice has allowed me explore the relations between people, things, practices and buildings and draw out the commonalities between my case studies.

Within the museums in the UK that took part in this research there is a connection between controlling, encouraging and attempting to prevent certain behaviours in public spaces where human remains are present, the concept of respectful treatment, and the museums identity

as an ethical institution. Yet the activities and behaviour considered as respectful appears to be negotiable, even within the same organisation. As discussed in relation to RCS, the cultural sensitivities of human remains are not homogenous and therefore rather than discussing the 'sensitising' of human remains collections it is more productive to consider repatriation as having played a part in making those who work with human remains within museums more alive to the different meanings they hold and alternative understandings of the dead body. Examples from RCS have shown that physically interacting with human remains can be affective but that the meanings they hold are not fixed or static and the physical presence of the remains can foreground unexpected meanings and emotions. Unlike cemeteries and memorials, museums are perhaps not usually associated with loss, mourning and grief. However through repatriation claims, museums have not only become spaces of contested power but for some people, places of pain and grief with enactments such as protest or communing with the ancestors, creating liminal zones that impact on the emotional geographies of museum practice.

So while to some extent agreeing that repatriation has contributed to the problematisation of human remains in the UK, in that human remains collections have become regarded as culturally sensitive parts of the collection that require particular consideration in relation to ethics and practice, I would argue that this is not symptomatic of the 'crisis of cultural authority' that Jenkins (2011) suggests. As seen in the British Museum's refusal to repatriate the Toi moko to New Zealand, under the current system museums still retain the authority to make decisions regarding the human remains in their collections. However in challenging and problematising that authority, repatriation has contributed to a re-articulation of museum ethics, the development of new consultative approaches, and the formation of new relationships. So while it is difficult, if not impossible, to untangle exactly what impacts repatriation has had on each individual institution, the Indigenous agency of repatriation

claims and the influence they have had within the UK should be recognised and also used to continue questioning, challenging and developing policies and approaches to human remains collections in UK museums.

## 6. Returning Ancestors to Country

I was disappointed post repatriation where I sort of always thought, good or bad we've made a decision, we're doing it and what I'm seeing is that this group of people went on this very long journey to collect and cleanse and relocate all this stuff. They looked really pleased and happy and we've made some friends and it's all good. And then I hear little snippets of feedback saying, well actually they didn't take them back and rebury them in their sacred ground, they are stuck in a museum in such and such a city whilst they think about what they're going to do next. And I'm sort of thinking well that's not quite how we expected it and it's not quite how it was sort of sold to us and I'm sure that it was just sort of a one off, but that was a little bit disappointing. Just somehow that the agreement didn't quite work as we hoped and we wanted them to feel really good about the transfer, really good about getting them home, really good about giving them reburial and giving all the things they wanted to do and those people, in their minds, would...be...at peace because they've got a head or whatever it is they were missing, so it seemed a bit, I'm slightly miffed that it didn't quite work.

Interview with Martyn Cooke, RCS 11<sup>th</sup> December 2014

### 6.1 Introduction

As explained in Chapter 4, when first planning my research I presumed that by the time of my fieldwork in Australia and New Zealand, the majority of remains repatriated by The Royal College of Surgeons of England (RCS) would be returned to communities. However, as I began speaking to those involved with repatriations in UK museums, it became apparent that repatriated remains were often still stored in museums many years after their return. Some of those I spoke to expressed resignation about this as they understood the process of return to be a complex one. Others, as the opening extract from my interview with Martyn Cooke illustrates, expressed their disappointment or frustration and wanted to know what had gone wrong. During the debates about the repatriation of ancestral remains to Australia, what had convinced Martyn Cooke that deaccessioning the remains from the RCS collections was the right thing to do, was the argument that taking and continuing to hold the remains was causing ongoing suffering to Indigenous people, and that their return would therefore have a therapeutic and healing effect. Although Cooke did not appear to be suggesting the

repatriation should not have taken place, he did express his disappointment that it had not had the benefits he hoped it would.

That communities have not yet had remains returned to them, in some cases many years after their repatriation, has been used to question the meanings of the repatriation and undermine claims for the return of ancestral remains (Jenkins 2011, Batty 2005, Nail 1994, Foley 2003). The suggestion being that the location of the remains in museums unmask the repatriation process as being politically symbolic rather than therapeutic. In Chapter 3 I set out the arguments relating to the ability of repatriated remains to 'heal the wounds of history' (Thornton 2002) and argued that a focus on materiality would allow the intersection of repatriated remains with issues around control of heritage, political landscape, post-colonial politics, identity, belonging, memory and memorial to be explored. Therefore, rather than try to assess therapeutic benefits for communities who have had remains returned, my aim in this chapter is to examine the complex repatriation process, find out why remains are held in museums and investigate the meanings created by the movement, presence and absence of repatriated remains.

Through exploring the materialities of the ancestral remains returned by RCS as they move through different political and cultural landscapes, I will illustrate the complex and entangled nature of repatriation and the complex meanings and issues Indigenous communities face. This mapping of the materialities of the remains is then used to argue that the overly simplistic framing of repatriation as a positive event that will have 'therapeutic benefits' needs to be replaced with a better understanding of the competing, conflicting and often distressing meanings of repatriation and how they intersect with wider social processes.

## 6.2 Repatriating Ancestral Remains

Since agreeing to the return of all human remains of Tasmanian origin in 2001, RCS has returned human remains to the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre in 2002 and 2009, the Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action in 2003, Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa in 2007 and Hui Mālama I Nā Kūpuna O Hawai'i Nei in 2011. However, before following the journeys those remains have taken since leaving RCS, I first want to consider the backgrounds to those repatriations and the people and organisations involved in more detail.

Michael Mansell, who had helped establish the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC) in the 1970s, first approached RCS regarding their attitude to repatriation in 1986. In March 1990, representatives from RCS met with Mansell, along with Bob Weatherall, a representative from the Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action (FAIRA), to discuss their requests for the repatriation of Aboriginal remains from the College collections. Following this meeting, in a letter to Terence English, then President of the College, Curators Caroline Grigson and Elizabeth Allen explained that FAIRA were requesting that tribal elders make repatriation claims rather than RCS handing over remains to the Australian Ambassador stating that 'it was clear [...] that they were incensed at the decision of the Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland to return the Aborigine head which they held to the Australian Ambassador'<sup>39</sup>. This request caused concern for the RCS Council, the body who had the final say on repatriation requests made to RCS, as they wanted to ensure that they returned ancestral remains to the right group.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Letter from Caroline Grigson and Elizabeth Allen to Terence English April 1990, Royal College of Surgeons of England Museum Archive, Exit File 92.

<sup>40</sup> Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Council 13<sup>th</sup> September 1990 (page 362). Royal College of Surgeons Archives, Minutes of Council 1987-1992.

There was then little activity until November 1997, when a delegation from the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC) visited RCS as part of a trip to collect ancestral remains from museums in Exeter, Sheffield and Stockholm as part of which they held meetings and participate in seminars relating to repatriation. While in Tasmania, I met with Caroline Spotswood, one of the members of that delegation and asked her what she recalled about the experience. She explained that prior to the trip her colleagues at the TAC researched the ancestral remains they were collecting, so overall the experience was positive as ‘you don’t have a bad experience when someone wants to give you something’ (C. Spotswood, Interview 7<sup>th</sup> August 2015). On the other hand, she described the negotiations and discussions with museums about returning ancestral remains as often being difficult and patronising and suggested that museum staff need to realise that museums may not feel like welcoming or safe spaces for Aboriginal people because of the history they represent; ‘as soon as you walk through the door, even through the gates, it’s emotional’ (C. Spotswood, Interview 7<sup>th</sup> August 2015).

Following the change to the Acquisitions and Disposal Policy that stated that requests for the return of human remains and artefacts of ‘Indigenous inhabitants of North America, Australia and New Zealand’ would be considered sympathetically (RCS 2001), the College received a letter from the TAC on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2001 requesting the return of all remains of Tasmanian Aboriginal origin.<sup>41</sup> RCS agreed to return these remains in December 2001. The correspondence that followed this decision gives the impression of a slightly tense relationship with both sides under pressure due to a lack of staff and funding.<sup>42</sup> The final

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<sup>41</sup> Letter from Heather Sculthorpe to Stella Mason 21<sup>st</sup> September 2001, Royal College of Surgeons Museum Archive, Exit File 82.

<sup>42</sup> The correspondence indicates that the TAC was pushing for a full list of holdings and further information on the two unprovenanced skulls, as they wanted to combine the trip to RCS with repatriation. The Curator’s response was that the museum was short staffed and there had not been time to check the archival records but time has been set aside in the coming months to undertake this work (Emails between Simon Chaplin and Heather Sculthorpe December 2001-March 2002).

report on the holdings of human remains from Tasmania, sent to the TAC in April 2002, listed one skull, five bones bound for traditional use and a slide of the hair and skin. One of the issues that the museum staff had been working to resolve was that of two skulls with uncertain provenance. The conclusion to this was that the first skull was no longer in the museum and that, based on the analysis undertaken, the second was highly unlikely to be Tasmanian, an outcome the TAC accepted.<sup>43</sup> The repatriation of the Tasmanian remains took place in May 2002. In 2009, auditing work on the collection revealed that a Tasmanian Aboriginal mandible previously listed as missing has in fact been miscataloged. As the 2001 agreement to return all Tasmanian Aboriginal material still applied Senior Curator Simon Chaplin initiated contact with the TAC and the repatriation eventually took place in September 2009.

While RCS was working on the Tasmanian repatriation they were also preparing to return remains from mainland Australia, a repatriation being co-ordinated by the Foundation for Aboriginal and Island Research (FAIRA). As a community organisation owned and managed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, like the TAC, FAIRA was supported and funded by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), the Commonwealth statutory authority responsible for administering many of the Australian Government's programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.<sup>44</sup> Shortly before the RCS agreed to the TAC repatriation request, museum staff met with ATSIC commissioners Rodney Dillion and Carl

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<sup>43</sup> Research by RCS museum staff found the details for the skull that could not be located (Paget/2085) were correct but the skull was either lost or had been transferred to the Natural History Museum after 1961. The second skull had been presented to the museum by J.F. Colyer in 1946 and recorded as 'Tasmanian Skull', but analysis carried out using CRANID 2 and CRANID 4 craniometric multivariate analysis software, suggested it was unlikely to be Tasmanian (Email from Simon Chaplin to Heather Sculthorpe 5<sup>th</sup> March 2002, Royal College of Surgeons Museum Archive, Exit File 82). This data was sent to the TAC who accepted this outcome (Email from Simon Chaplin to Milly Farrell 18<sup>th</sup> August 2009, Royal College of Surgeons Museum Archive, Exit File 208).

<sup>44</sup> ATSIC commenced operations in 1990 as a means by which to involve Indigenous people in government processes affecting their lives and consisted of 35 Regional Councils around Australia, and a National Board of Commissioners. On 16 March 2005 the Federal Parliament passed the *ATSIC Amendment Bill* abolishing ATSIC. The Office of Indigenous Policy Coordination (OIPC) then became responsible for the provision of programs and services to Indigenous Australians.

Currey. Given the concerns raised by the College Council regarding returning remains to the right group, the involvement of ATSIC was reassuring for RCS. Through ATSIC they were able to confirm that there was 'no confusion over representation' and the TAC and FAIRA were the officially recognised organisations they should be dealing with.<sup>45</sup> Yet Caroline Spotswood, who has represented the TAC at a number of repatriations, frames this government involvement as a barrier rather than an action that facilitated the process. When asked about the role of ATSIC, she explained that part of the issue was that Rodney Dillion, a Tasmanian Aboriginal man, was visiting museums in the UK in his role as an ATSIC commissioner prior to visits by the TAC and this lack of unity was divisive and symptomatic of a lack of communication and consultation with community (C. Spotswood, Interview 7<sup>th</sup> August 2015). Although Spotswood emphasised this was her personal opinion, what her comments draw attention to are the ongoing political tensions between the Australian government and Indigenous community organisations.

The repatriation to FAIRA finally took place in April 2003. The research undertaken by a FAIRA researcher and RCS staff identified the provenance for some the remains, however on their return to Australia, all the remains went to National Museum Australia in Canberra. The movement of those remains since 2003 will be examined in detail in the next section, but I first want to consider the other two RCS repatriations, drawing out the differences and common themes.

In June 2006, the Karanga Aotearoa repatriation programme run by Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa made a repatriation request for the return of the Māori and Moriori remains held by RCS. Established in 2003 when the Government mandated the museum to develop a formal programme for the repatriation of Māori and Moriori remains, the New

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<sup>45</sup> Letter from Simon Chaplin to Rodney Dillon 31<sup>st</sup> October 2002, Royal College of Surgeons of England Museum Archive, Exit File 92.

Zealand Government continue to fund the Karanga Aotearoa programme directly. Prior to the establishment of the programme, individual communities and organisations were making repatriation claims and it was decided it would be better if one organisation managed the process; an idea supported by the Māori tribes around the country (T. Herewini, Interview 5<sup>th</sup> June 2015). The archival records at RCS suggest less concern about the repatriation arrangements on both sides than appeared to have been the case for the previous two returns. This is perhaps because by 2006, the process of repatriation was more established in the UK, with many institutions returning remains and those on both sides having gained more experience of the process. In December 2007, RCS handed over twenty Māori and Moriori ancestral remains to the delegation from Te Papa Tongarewa

The most recent repatriation undertaken by RCS was the Native Hawaiian ancestral skull returned to Hui Mālama I Nā Kūpuna O Hawai'i Nei in September 2011 (Figure 5.1). The initial request for information about the skull came from David Meanwell, Director of Four Directions, a voluntary UK based organisation that was undertaking research on behalf of Hui Mālama, the Native Hawaiian organisation that had legal standing in the United States under the Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). The Office of Hawaiian Affairs and Hui Mālama then made a formal request for repatriation in June 2010. This set out the legal standing of Hui Mālama, their kuleana (duty, responsibility and privilege) to care for and protect the iwi kūpuna (ancestral bones) and due to the lack of documentary evidence that the skull had been lawfully acquired, that the ownership of the skull by RCS was not recognised.<sup>46</sup> Having acknowledged the repatriation claim, the RCS Museum and Archives Advisory Committee considered the request at their meeting on the 10th March 2011 and unanimously agreed on the return of the skull without precondition. The minutes of that meeting also note that the Committee wished to express their regret for the mode of

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<sup>46</sup> Letter from Clyde W. Nāmu`o and Edward Halealoha Ayau to Briony Hudson 1<sup>st</sup> June 2010, Royal College of Surgeons of England Museum Archive, Exit File 259.

acquisition of the remains and that the benefits of repatriation outweighed any possible benefits of retention for science or education.<sup>47</sup>

When I asked about his memories of this repatriation, Edward Ayau, the Director of Hui Mālama, commented that in comparison to some of the previous discussions he had been involved in, the process went smoothly and was both transparent, and respectful. He went on to say that the attitude of RCS had surprised him; ‘the interesting thing is that when we found out the remains were there and I consulted with people whose opinions I value, they all told me to get ready for the fight of your life, the last thing in the world that was going to happen was that The Royal College of Surgeons would repatriate human remains [...] and there was just completely the opposite of what everybody warned us about!’ (E. Ayau, Interview 15<sup>th</sup> May 2015). The reluctance to return remains that Edward Ayau expected to encounter appears to be based on his, and his colleagues previous experience of encountering staff at medical and natural history museums who, in Ayau’s words, considered ‘science as an absolute right’. Although, it important to note that this return was of a single skull by an institution that now had experience of repatriating ancestral remains, and that the RCS Museums and Archives committee agreed to the return less than six months after the formal request. This contrasts to the experience of the TAC and FAIRA, whose members had been discussing repatriation with RCS for over ten years before the agreement to return remains, highlighting the difference experiences of the return of ancestral remains from RCS for the individuals involved.

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<sup>47</sup> Royal College of Surgeons of England Briefing 7<sup>th</sup> July 2011, Royal College of Surgeons of England Museum Archive, Exit File 259.

## Repatriation, Reconciliation and Restitution

When speaking to those who have been involved in the repatriation of ancestral remains, be that in museums or community organisations, that each repatriation is different emerged as recurrent theme. Even if dealing with a familiar organisation, it is not a case of mapping what worked previously onto the next occurrence, as the actors, protocols and circumstances are not static. As Margaret Clegg explained to me:

...the problem with Australia, with the Government department is they move the goal posts. Not deliberately, I've always had a good relationship with them, but because they have a huge turnover in staff, I mean in the time I've been doing this, so nine years, I have dealt with four different people [...] and any number of the people lower down who you deal with when you're actually organising the logistics of the return they change all the time. But the person who has been given over all responsibility changes every two or three years you've got a new person and they got, not a majorly different view, but their focus is different and so that means that what they expect from you is different.

Interview with Margaret Clegg 30<sup>th</sup> January 2015

Margaret Clegg also draws attention to the involvement of government agencies in repatriation. In all four of the RCS repatriations, government agencies played a role, providing both funding and support for the return of ancestral remains, yet as seen in the issues around representation between the TAC and ATSIC, tensions are also evident. In her study of the use and meanings of dead bodies within post-Soviet Eastern Europe, Katherine Verdery (1999, 3) argues that to understand 'dead-body politics' requires 'attending to political symbolism' and 'the connections between the particular corpses being manipulated and the wider national and international context of their manipulation'. A broad sweep of the political landscapes in and through which the RCS repatriations took place was set out in Chapter 2, but if we are to attend to political symbolism in the way Verdery suggests, a closer examination of the political uses and meanings of the remains is required. However, rather than begin with the remains repatriated by RCS, I first want to illustrate the meaning remains can have in their absence through the example of the head of Pemulwuy.

## **The Absent Head of Pemulwuy**

Pemulwuy was an Aboriginal man thought to be of the Bidjigal clan of the Eora people and known for his resistance to the incursion of white settlers onto his peoples' traditional lands. After eluding capture for several years, in 1802 Pemulwuy was shot and killed. After his death, Pemulwuy's head was cut off, preserved in spirits was sent to Sir Joseph Banks in England. What then happened to the head is not clear, but Joseph Banks did have a connection to the Hunterian having transferred part of his collection to the museum in 1792. It is therefore a distinct possibility that on receiving Pemulwuy's head, Banks passed it into the care of the Company of Surgeons. The Royal College of Surgeons archives do record a gift of 'two heads' that came into the museum in 1802. Although initially listed as natives of Otaheite (Tahiti), the 1816 records corrected this to say Governor King had sent these heads and that they were from New Holland (New South Wales), However, although the data and donor match with Pemulwuy's death, there is no association of Pemulwuy's name with these remains and, according to the research done by Simon Chaplin, the last record of the either of these heads in the archive is 1818.<sup>48</sup> There is no evidence for what happened to either head after this date despite searches at RCS and of the collections transferred from RCS to the Natural History Museum after World War II. One explanation is that the two heads were destroyed when the College was bombed in 1941, although besides the absences of the heads themselves there is currently no evidence to support this conclusion.<sup>49</sup>

In Australia, Pemulwuy has become an increasingly important figure; an Aboriginal warrior and political leader whose 'daring leadership impressed enemies and comrades alike' (Mathew Trinca quoted in Maher 2015). As Pemulwuy has become an increasingly important

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<sup>48</sup> Email from Simon Chaplin to Margaret Clegg 20<sup>th</sup> January 2010, Royal College of Surgeons of England Museum Archive, Repatriation File.

<sup>49</sup> Email from Simon Chaplin to Margaret Clegg 20<sup>th</sup> January 2010, Royal College of Surgeons of England Museum Archive, Repatriation File.

and publicly recognised historical figure (see Figure 6.1) the campaign for the return of his remains to the Bidjigal people has become more high profile.



**Figure 6.1:** Pemulwuy's story on display at National Museum Australia  
Image S. Morton, May 2015

On a visit to Redfern, Sydney in 2010, Prince William was told the story of Pemulwuy and was 'profoundly impressed by the determination of the Aboriginal elders in their quest to right the wrongs done to this famous warrior in death, and to afford his remains a proper burial.'

(Malkin 2010). Christopher Pyne, Minister for Defence Industry and Leader of the House of Representatives in the Parliament of Australia, has also been active in attempts to locate Pemulwuy. In his speech to the House of Representatives on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2013 he stated; 'I say to members of the government here tonight that if they are unwilling to assist in returning a very important piece of Australia's history, then I can assure them that, should the coalition be fortunate to win the election [...], we will make every endeavour to expedite this matter and return Pemulwuy's remains to the Eora people' (Pyne 2013).

Despite repeated statements that Pemulwuy's head is not in the RCS collections, the College continues to receive letters from the public requesting they return the head to Australia.

While in Australia in 2015, I met with Wendy Dalitz from the Museums and Repatriation

Section at the Ministry of Arts, who explained that locating Pemulwuy's head has continued to be an issue for her department due the level of publicity and political interest.<sup>50</sup> As a recent research project commissioned by the Ministry of Arts had not been successful in locating the head, the repatriation team were working on a joint statement between the Australian Government, RCS and the Natural History Museum. This is a statement meant for the wider public, as the Ministry of Arts has already informed the Bidjigal community about the results of the search for the head of Pemulwuy and consulted with them regarding the joint statement. This suggests this statement is not just to provide the various stakeholders with information, but will also act as a public demonstration of the government's commitment to repatriation.

Discussing the involvement of the Australian Government in the search for Pemulwuy's head, draws me back to the framing of repatriation as part of a wider social trend for making reparations. The *Native America Graves Protection and Repatriation Act 1990* (NAGPRA) in the United States and the *Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protection Act 1984* are evidence of those nation states recognising the rights of their Indigenous communities. In New Zealand, one of the explicit aims of the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, which was established in 1992, was to 'be a partnership between Tangata Whenua (Māori, the indigenous people of New Zealand) and Tangata Tiriti (people in New Zealand by right of the Treaty of Waitangi)' (Te Papa Tongarewa undated-b). In her critical review of the arguments driving the repatriation of cultural heritage, Liv Nilsson Stutz draws attention to

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<sup>50</sup> At the time of the RCS repatriation in 2003 repatriation came under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and was managed by the Indigenous rights organisation the Foundation for Aboriginal and Strait Islander Research Action (FAIRA). However, following the abolishment of ATSIC in 2005 responsibility for overseeing international repatriation was transferred to the Office of Indigenous Policy Co-ordination. By 2009 repatriation was the responsibility Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs who established an International Repatriation Advisory Committee. In 2013 the current Advisory Committee for Indigenous Repatriation was established which, at the time of writing, sits within the Department of Communication and the Arts. The funding for overseas repatriation and for the domestic repatriation programmes run in eight museums comes directly from the Department of Communication and the Arts.

the use of archaeology to project ideals as part of the state building process in 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe (Nilsson Stutz 2013 also see , Olsen 2001, Anico and Peralta 2009). A point that emphasises the parallel between the use of ancestral remains collected during that period to project Western ideas about, science, race and Indigenous identity (Fforde 2002a, Turnbull 1991, Zimmerman 1989b), and the contemporary use of those same remains to materially demonstrate national narratives of reconciliation.



**Figure 6.2:** Image from Closing the Gap Report 2017. The image shows Ngarrindjeri Elder Major Sumner performing a smoking ceremony at a repatriation event in London. The caption reads 'The repatriation of ancestors continues the story of cultural heritage, spirit and pride, and heralds the beginning of a healing process for communities as remains are returned to country'

(Commonwealth of Australia 2017, 14)

In the US NAGPRA has been framed as human rights legislation that represents a 'fundamental change in the basic social attitudes towards Native peoples (Trope and Echo-Hawk 2000, 123, Goldstein and Kintigh 2000). Yet, as already established (see Chapter 2), human remains can embody multiple meanings and therefore can be utilised within identity politics in different ways. Therefore, we should not read state support for repatriation as a simple recognition of Indigenous rights. For example, governments have been accused of supporting repatriation as it is less costly than providing healthcare and education for Indigenous communities (Nilsson Stutz 2013, 187). Nor is the support for repatriation always accepted as being enough to meet the responsibilities some Indigenous people feel that government has. As Yorta Yorta Elder Henry Atkinson states: 'what really makes it especially hard to comprehend is that [taking ancestral remains] occurred in the 200 years and more since colonisation, and no government has made any conscientious and sustained effort to bring my people home' (Atkinson 2010, 17).

Repatriation needs to be understood as part of a wider narrative of restitution and reconciliation; it is a process that can have an 'ameliorative effect' politically, as well as culturally (Klesert and Powell 2000, 205). For Jenkins (2011, 62), this means that repatriation should be understood as a change in the power relationship between Indigenous people and nation states; repatriation represents the positive affirmation of identity by state and institutional bodies (also see Taylor 1992, Young 1990). So, in supporting the Bidjigal peoples' claim to the remains of Pemulwuy the Australian Government is recognising that community as traditional owners. Yet Pemulwuy has also come to represent Aboriginal resistance, and the inclusion of his story at sites such as National Museum Australia (see Figure 6.1) indicate the recognition of a wider Aboriginal identity. Yet in focusing on repatriation at international and national scales and framing it terms of recognition by the state there is a risk of overlooking the materialities of repatriated ancestral remains at local levels. Pemulwuy is a

political figure and his biography has given the absence of his remains political agency at a national scale. In contrast, the majority of remains repatriated are physically present but have lost their identity and it is to following the journey of these remains that I now turn.

### **6.3 Following the Journey**

When asked about the remains repatriated to Tasmania in 2002, Caroline Spotswood informed me they had either been reburied, or if their provenance was unknown, cremated and scattered at Oyster Cove (C. Spotswood, Interview 7<sup>th</sup> August 2015). The ancestral skull that RCS returned to Hui Mālama in 2011 was handed over to the appropriate community for burial soon after its return to Hawaii (E. Ayau, Interview 15<sup>th</sup> May 2015). Of the remains repatriated by RCS to New Zealand, one skull had been returned to the Ngāti Te Ata, with two further ancestral remains due to be returned to the Chatham Islands in a repatriation planned for late 2015 (A. Aranui, Interview 5<sup>th</sup> June 2015). Having established that National Museum Australia had taken receipt of all the remains repatriated to mainland Australia via FAIRA in 2003, working with staff there I was eventually able to establish what had happened to those remains since (see Figure 6.3).

Sets of Remains	Destination listed in RCS Records)	Location in September 2015
<b>Tasmanian Repatriations 2002 (exit no. 82) and 2009 (exit no. 208)</b>		
8	Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre	Returned to Tasmania by TAC
<b>Mainland Australia Repatriation 2003 (exit no. 91-92)</b>		
5	North West Nations Clans, Victoria	Melbourne Museum (Not in database)
10	Yorta Yorta People, Victoria	Returned to Yorta Yorta Nation
5	Victoria	Returned to Community
2	Victoria	National Museum Australia, Canberra
5	South Australia	Returned to Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority
10	South Australia	National Museum Australia, Canberra
2	South Australia	South Australian Museum, Adelaide
4	Northern Territory	National Museum Australia, Canberra
1	Australian Museum, Sydney	Australian Museum, Sydney
11	National Museum Australia, Canberra	National Museum Australia, Canberra
Dental Casts	National Museum Australia, Canberra	National Museum Australia, Canberra
<b>New Zealand Repatriation 2007 (exit no. 173)</b>		
1	Te Papa Tongarewa	Returned to Ngāti Te Ata for burial
2	Te Papa Tongarewa	Te papa: To be returned to Chatham Islands late 2015
17	Te Papa Tongarewa	Te Papa Tongarewa
<b>Hawaii Repatriation 2011 (exit no. 259)</b>		
1	Hui Malama I Na Kupuna O Hawai'i Nei	Returned to community for burial

**Figure 6.3:** Table summarising the location of the remains repatriated by RCS. The information given here is done so with the consent of the communities named and the locations are correct as of September 2015 (for a more detailed list of the RCS returns and current locations see Appendix 2).

What this survey of the RCS repatriations indicates is that as of 2015 many of the remains returned to mainland Australia and New Zealand are in museums. One of the key reasons for this became evident on my first visit to the ancestral remains store at National Museum Australia (NMA). When I enquired about the remains returned by RCS, the Manager of the Repatriation Unit, David Kaus explained that he was currently working on returning a set of remains had come from RCS to their community. In talking about this return, Kaus emphasised the time it could take communities to be ready to receive remains but also spoke

about the complex and time-consuming research often required to establish provenance. He then suggested that to see some of the issues they faced first hand I should observe the work they were undertaking on remains returned from the University of Edinburgh:

David [Kaus] and Lee [Burgess] started to open the boxes and remove the remains which were wrapped in bubble wrap and acid free tissue. Some of the teeth and fragmentary remains were inside old tins and boxes and David mentioned that it was quite common for remains just to 'be stuck in any old box, which is quite disrespectful'. [...] The remains were very fragmentary and not well packed, Cressida [Fforde], who had worked on packing up the Edinburgh collection, explained that the remains had been in canvas bags which had decayed, so when packing them prior to return, the aim had been to keep what was in one bag together so it could be related to the documentation. The information from Edinburgh was written on the outside of the box, and on the opposite end, a National Museum Australia label had been applied. Some of the bones were marked with ink and others had old brown labels attached, which in some cases had decayed and fallen apart.

Extract from Research Diary 12<sup>th</sup> May 2015

My experience in the NMA stores highlighted that one reason some of the remains repatriated from RCS had not been returned to communities was that their provenance is unknown. This is an issue I will return to in Chapter 7, as my focus in this chapter are the remains with a known provenance that are still in museums, and what meanings museums continuing to hold them creates.

### **An Interrupted Journey Home**

In researching the journeys of the remains repatriated by RCS, one set proved particularly difficult to track down. The research done prior to the 2003 repatriation to Australia identified one group of remains for return to the North West Nations Clans in Victoria. Transferred to the Australian Museum shortly after arriving at National Museum Australia in 2003, this set of remains were then moved to Museums Victoria, labelled as in transit to the North West Nations Clans, yet the remains were never collected.



**Figure 6.4:** Map showing the movement of the remains between three museums in Australia since the repatriation from Royal College of Surgeons in 2003.

When the remains arrived at the museum, the community were not ready to take them and since then, the registration system for Aboriginal groups in Victoria has undergone a major restructure. The staff at Museums Victoria explained that in the 1980s and 90s Aboriginal co-operations and trusts in Victoria did not necessarily correspond with traditional boundaries. In the 2000s this began to change and the museum was asked to repatriate to traditional owners rather than constructed groups. The *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* introduced a system of only repatriating remains to Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs), yet as of 2015, RAPs cover only half of the state, with many communities still working towards RAP status (L. Allen, R. McWilliams, Personal Communication 27<sup>th</sup> May 2015). As part of this process the North West Nations Clans group, for which Museums Victoria is holding ancestral remains, was dissolved and the different communities it represented are not yet RAP's, leaving the museum holding remains on behalf of an organisation that no longer exists. Although it should be noted the circumstances that have left these remains in limbo appear to be an unusual rather than common occurrence, this example does provide an interesting insight

into the power relations, politics and agency involved in repatriation and impact they have on the movement, or lack of movement, of ancestral remains.

One of the key points raised by the North West Nations Clans example is that when the remains were initially transferred to Museums Victoria the community were not ready to collect them. Of the remains repatriated from RCS to Australia, the communities that have had remains returned are all experienced in repatriation and have appointed officers to manage the process. For other communities, repatriation is a new experience. At the time of my visit to Te Papa Tongewra Museum of New Zealand the return of one ancestral remain had occurred, the repatriation of a single skull to the Ngāti Te Ata in 2010. Tribal Elder Nagenko Minhinik had taken responsibility for the repatriation and recalled the questions it raised for her:

Well as I said it was a newbie for us to receive the information in the first place, and secondly, the question of the why and how, and then we come up with our own answers. Kind of like why would somebody go to another Country and remove things that are nothing to do with them, none of their business? So we've been used as (pause) we, as nation of people, clearly have been used and abused over the years and when these things come to light then, rather than be merry about the return, more questions come into play.

Interview with Nagenko Minhinik, Ngāti Te Ata 18<sup>th</sup> June 2015

For Repatriation Researcher Amber Aranui, this illustrates the importance of undertaking careful research prior to contacting communities (A. Aranui, Interview 5<sup>th</sup> June 2015). The handover of physical ancestral remains can be a distressing and emotional process, so it is important to have all the information together and not inform a community prematurely. For some communities the first time they learn that their ancestral remains were taken is when they are contacted by a museum regarding the repatriation of those ancestors. As Rob McWilliams, Collections Manager, Indigenous Restricted Collections at Museums Victoria explained, it is the role of the museum to provide information, encouragement, opportunity and some logistical support, but what they cannot do is tell a community when they are ready

to receive remains (R. McWilliams, Interview 26<sup>th</sup> June 2015). The repatriation staff at NMA reiterated this view, stressing how slow the process could be and that it was the community rather than the museum that drives the return. As Repatriation Officer Lee Burges made clear, 'if communities feel they're not ready to receive remains then we don't force remains that they don't want or they're not ready for' (L. Burges, Interview 20<sup>th</sup> May 2015). For the museums, being led by the community means that the process is often not continuous, making it difficult to estimate when a repatriation will be completed, but according to Mike Pickering at NMA, it is often the case that during the process community members will want to visit the remains; 'they come down and have a look at them and have a talk and introduce themselves to the remains because that's a tradition, speaking to the spirits before you enter a new place' (M. Pickering, Interview 12<sup>th</sup> May 2015).

The descriptions of the visits made by community members to ancestral remains stores combined with the practice I observed in the stores at NMA and Museums Victoria, does not paint a picture of remains left gathering dust on museum shelves, their political symbolism drained away on completion of their international journey. These remains were active in social networks. Their presence had the agency to affect the experiences and actions of the living, forcing discussions about repatriation and bringing people into museum spaces, in some cases for the first time. In the previous chapter, I explored the relationships that can form around human remains. What the accounts of repatriation from staff at NMA suggest is that that returns to community can be briefly social acts (Peers 2009) but that it is also common for the process of repatriating remains to be a lengthy one with the remains extending social ties between the community and museum staff over a number of months or even years.

At Museums Victoria, although the museum has returned many of the Aboriginal ancestral remains in their own collections, the numbers stored at the museum has increased due to returns from overseas and the transfer of remains from other domestic collections. As they receive government funding to run their repatriation programme, Museum Victoria are obligated to report the number of remains repatriated each year. In discussing this with Senior Curator Lindy Allen, it emerged that these reporting figures did not take into account repatriated remains that continued to be stored in the museum on behalf of a community. The category of 'transferred but stored at the museum' represents a transfer of custodianship not accompanied by the physical movement of the remains; part of the repatriation process not reflected in the wider repatriation literature. As the example from Museums Victoria highlights, in terms of government figures it is to some extent also a hidden issue within Australia. This raises questions around why communities want museums to continue to store remains and the impact this has had on museum space.

#### **6.4 Inside the Ancestral Remains Store**

As previously discussed, in Australia and New Zealand, the repatriation of Indigenous human remains has been part of wider campaigns for recognition, reconciliation and restitution, and as such has been part of museum practice much longer than in the UK. As Lindy Allen from Museum Victoria explained to me, 'I think it's always been on the agenda as long as I've worked in museums, repatriation has always been a lively issue in Australia since the 60s and 70s and when I started in the late 70s at the Anthropology Museum it was absolutely on the agenda of museums. So really it's always been in the scope and embedded in everything that, that I've done' (L. Allen, Interview 27<sup>th</sup> May 2015).

Rather than being situated in the socio-cultural shifts on the acceptable retention, use and display of the dead body, in Australia and New Zealand repatriation is part of the changing

relationships between Indigenous peoples and non-indigenous communities. As Mike Pickering (2012, 259) from National Museum Australia suggests, any major Australian museum that now openly opposed repatriation would most likely be marginalised by the others, but unlike in the UK, non-indigenous European remains 'really haven't been thought about much [...] apart from treating them with respect' (M. Pickering, Interview 12<sup>th</sup> May 2015). This lack of consideration of non-indigenous remains was echoed by staff at the Australian Museum, Museums Victoria and Te Papa Tongarewa, Museum of New Zealand; the display of non-indigenous remains has not been publically challenged and therefore has not become an issue for these museums (Pickering 2006, 43). Although it should be noted that at both Museums Victoria and Te Papa Tongarewa more consideration is now being given to non-indigenous human remains. As Amber Aranui, Repatriation Researcher at Te Papa Tongarewa explained 'there's things like the mummy, that is not part of our collection but that's, I guess that's a bit of an internal discussion that needs to be had. I guess it depends what your definition of human remains are. I know that mummies aren't necessarily seen as being human remains because they are seen as being modified and I think that's really semantics' (A. Aranui, Interview 5<sup>th</sup> June 2015).

For Museums in Australia and New Zealand, best practice is for Indigenous ancestral remains to be kept in a separate store and repatriation has therefore created distinct spaces as Indigenous human remains are separated and placed within their own storage space (Museums Australia 2005). The previously mentioned store for Indigenous remains at National Museum Australia is within a larger offsite storage building in Canberra. The store consists of a workroom that contains tables, shelving and a computer terminal, off which there is a storeroom accessed through a set of double doors. This arrangement allows members of the repatriation team to carry out provenancing work on remains in a separate

and contained space. This was an arrangement echoed at the other museums I visited, including the stores at Melbourne Museum:

I was shown a small store that contained large green cabinets which held ancestral remains and boxes of remains packed ready for return to communities. All the cabinets had boxes on top and the feeling was of a lack of space. Rob [McWilliams] confirmed this, explaining that a larger store was needed but they managed as best they could and always tried to avoid putting boxes on the floor, as this was disrespectful. The appearance of this ancestral remains store was similar to the human remains stores I visited in the UK with respectful treatment being expressed through the approach taken to collections care. The fundamental difference between the ancestral remains stores and the human remains stores was the purpose. The human remains store in the UK is an area to store the human remains collections, collections that are viewed as a resource and source of information about the past. What was clear from the evidence of practice within this store was that it was a space to keep human remains that will ideally be returned to their community of origin and the focus of the work that is undertaken in this space is to enable that return.

Extract from Research Diary, 27<sup>th</sup> May 2015

At The Australia Museum and Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, although the repatriation staff explained the layout of the store to me and the activities that took place, it was not appropriate for me to access the space. As Repatriation Researcher Amber Aranui explained, only the Kaihautū can grant access to the ancestral remains store and that 'unless you can prove that you're related to one of those ancestors you won't get in' (A. Aranui 2015, Interview 5<sup>th</sup> June). The Kaihautū is the highest Māori position at Te Papa and sits alongside the CEO, demonstrating the level at which the decision to allow access to the store is taken. Just as in the UK, levels of security and the limiting of access have become ways of showing respect; space has become active in the making of meaning (Geoghegan 2010, 1466) and the physical presence of the remains impacts on who can access certain spaces in the museum.

In the museums I visited in Australia and New Zealand, respectful treatment of human remains was closely linked to respecting the views of both the community of origin and the local traditional owners, and this is achieved through consultation and collaborative relationships:

Well the, the museum certainly is,...as you're probably aware looking at the various policies from Museums Australia, they view themselves as being custodians of this material for Aboriginal people, and over the years we've had many programmes and for about 15 years we had an extensive outreach programme where we....loaned the material to Aboriginal community museums and supported them and trained them.

Interview with Phil Gordon, The Australian Museum, 8<sup>th</sup> May 2015

In Australia and New Zealand, the museums involved in repatriation also tend to hold collections of Indigenous objects and in the museums visited, repatriation has become one part of a wider social relationship and continuing dialogue with Indigenous communities.

Within these museums repatriation is not a briefly symbolic event, but an ongoing commitment and part of core practice (Pickering and Gordon undated, Pickering 2010, Pickering 2006). It can therefore be argued that repatriation brings a particular type of deathscape into being in the form of the ancestral remains store.

In his exploration of segregation in South African cemeteries, A.J. Christopher (1995) highlights how the political desires of the dominant community can be expressed within deathscapes. Applying this spatial lens to museums initially reveals a similar picture with the very presence of the Indigenous dead body within museums being indicative of the imposition of the will of the dominant community. However, the creation of ancestral remains stores linked to the practice of repatriation has created new local geographies within those spaces foregrounding the meaning of the remains as a site for identity (Foltyn 2008) and remembrance (Hallam and Hockey 2001). Building on the understanding of mourning as inherently spatial (Maddrell 2010), Maddrell and Sidway (2010b, 3) describe deathscapes as having the 'potential to assault the bereaved with a sense of loss'. Based on my interviews with museum staff working on repatriation in Australia and New Zealand, I would suggest this is an apt description for the ancestral remains store. The repatriation staff recognise the ancestral remains store as an emotionally fraught place in which the public and personal intersect and therefore try to provide a 'relaxing, comfortable atmosphere' for visitors (L.

Burgess, Interview 20<sup>th</sup> May 2015). However, as seen in the previous chapter, interacting with human remains can bring forward the immaterial meanings they embody, even for those who consider them to be objects or specimens rather than ancestors. In considering the affective nature of the ancestral remains store what rapidly becomes evident is that the divide between museum staff and 'community' is far more blurred than my discussion thus far perhaps indicates.

### **Blurring the Divide, Issues of Identity**

When speaking to Lee Burgess at National Museum Australia, he described one of the fundamental parts of his role within the repatriation team as 'keeping the channels of contact open between communities and museum' (L. Burgess, Interview 20<sup>th</sup> May 2015). Yet the division between community and museum that this statement implies became less distinct as he went on to speak about his own Aboriginal identity, telling me about his family and showing me designs for a community flag he had been working on. Nor was this an isolated example. At Museums Victoria, Jamie Thomas, who had been the Community Liaison Officer for the repatriation team, explained how drawing on his own cultural knowledge and experience of community work had allowed him to facilitate the return of ancestral remains. Phil Gordon, Aboriginal Heritage Officer at the Australian Museum, is an Aboriginal man from the Central Queensland Goreng Goreng people and explained that he had started at the museum under an Aboriginal traineeship. As with the analysis of the repatriation discussions at RCS, the museum staff working on repatriation are not somehow separate from the communities they work with. They are social actors who move between the institution and outside society and whose own micro-level experiences can influence macro-level processes (Di Domenico 2015, 301). For example when asked about his approach to managing the Karanga Aotearoa repatriation programme at Te Papa Tongrewa, Te Herekiele Herewini spoke about the influence of his upbringing within a Māori community:

So I was brought up in a Māori community. So in many ways that's unusual for, it's not unusual for my family but for I suppose for other Māori it could be unusual because most of them live in the cities, but I was brought up in a small rural community of 99.9 percent of the people were Māori and so initially my first years at school was with other, was a Māori school with other Māori students and in the end we moved to Wellington when I was about seven. Why I say that I was brought up in a Māori community, because if you're brought up in a Māori community the world that I knew was reflective of the Māori ideas, Māori perspectives, Māori ways of doing things and so the...an understanding of I suppose our customs our rituals our ceremonies related to the dead, I learned from a very young age and we actively participated as a community in those ceremonies.

Interview with Te Herekiele Herewini , Te Papa Tongarewa, 5<sup>th</sup> June 2015

As evident in the extract above, Te Herekiele Herewini's two identity positions as an Indigenous person and as museum professional appear to inform each other. The result being the connection of the respectful treatment of ancestral remains within museum spaces not only to collections care, but also to culturally related performances. Notable examples being smoking ceremonies to cleanse the space, provision for ritual washing and communing with the ancestral remains:

there are things we do before we go into the wāhi tapu where all the remains are kept. We do karakia, or prayers...and we might sing a song to them, something old that they would recognise perhaps. And then at the end we do a karakia and we will always wash our hands, or pour water over us as a cleansing.

Interview with Amber Aranui, Te papa Tongarewa, 5<sup>th</sup> June 2015

In becoming accepted, and even expected, these cultural practices demonstrate a respect for the views of the living and an acknowledgement of the human remains or ancestral remains store as an emotional, affective and particular type of cultural space. Unlike the human remains stores I visited in the UK, the role of the ancestral remains store is to house ancestral remains until their return to community and the work undertaken in these spaces is to that end. Returning to the idea of remains being in or out of place (Pettersson 2010, Cresswell 1996), my impression of the ancestral remains stores in the museums I visited was of a liminal space, one in which the corporal remains are still not in their proper place, yet not completely

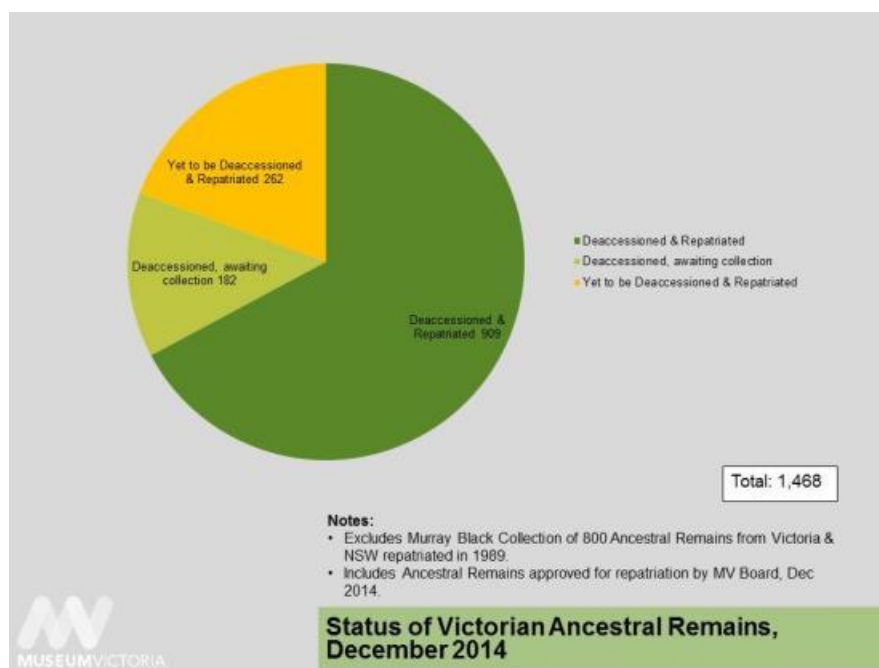
out of place either as evidenced by communities requesting museums continuing to hold remains for them.

## 6.5 All Things Are Connected

As I looked around the store, I noticed a number of large white Corex boxes on top of the cabinets and along one wall. Rob [McWilliams] explained that the boxes contained remains that had been deaccessioned, but that communities were not ready to collect. Due to the space constraints, they did not remove remains from the cabinets until the community were ready to collect them. There were two small Jiffy foam covered tables opposite the shelves and I asked if communities used the space to prepare remains for burial. Lindy said that they sometimes did for small repatriations but for most, the remains would be moved to the lab, which was a better place to work.

Extract from Research Diary, 27<sup>th</sup> May 2015

The preceding extract from my research diary refers to my visit to the ancestral remains store at Melbourne Museum. One of the key things to emerge from this visit was the continued storage of remains already repatriated to communities, as those communities were not yet ready or able to collect them. This distinction of communities not being ready or able to take physical possession of their ancestral remains, as opposed to not wanting to or not being interested, was one Rob McWilliams, Collections Manager of Indigenous Restricted Collections at Museums Victoria, was keen to make. This process of transferring ownership but continuing to hold remains for communities also occurs at the Australian Museum and National Museum Australia. The procedure across all three of these sites was similar, with the continued storage of the remains on shelves in the ancestral remains store. When I asked if these remains were treated or thought about differently, the answer was always no, but that the right to give permission for access to the remains resided with the traditional custodians.



**Figure 6.5:** Slide from the presentation *Repatriation Programme Status Report to ACHAC* showing that as of December 2014, 182 sets of the ancestral remains stored by Museums Victoria had been deaccessioned and were being held on behalf of the relevant communities.

Image: Lindy Allen, Museums Victoria March 2015

When asked if holding remains for communities had occurred at Te Papa Tongewra Museum of New Zealand, Te Herekiele Herewini, the Manager of the repatriation programme informed me he could not recall this ever having happened. It was not something he considered there to be a need for, as the community decided the timescale for the return of remains. However, in the Australian context Mike Pickering suggested that transfer of ownership gave the power back to communities; ‘museums are subject to government policy and the whims of directors, if remains are transferred into the ownership of the custodians then that’s their property and [...] no-one can stop them from claiming their property in the event of a legal challenge’ (M. Pickering, Interview 12<sup>th</sup> May 2015). What Pickering highlights, is a concern about the reduction or complete withdrawal of governmental support for repatriation. Having spoken to other museum staff in Australia about this issue, the consensus seemed to be that although repatriation was a powerful demonstration of the governmental commitment to making reparations to Indigenous communities, the ongoing cost of

transporting, storing, researching and returning remains might at some point outweigh their meaning as political symbols and what this uncertainty about the funding for repatriation in Australia makes evident, are the costs of the process in terms of both money and time. As discussed in Chapter 2, it is the materiality of the body that allows it to represent ideas and values (Verdery 1999, Fontein 2010, Watkins 2008, Nilsson Stutz 2013) however there is a need to take into account the practical issues it presents if we are to fully understand the reasons preventing communities from taking possession of ancestral remains.

### **Land, money and time**

Shortly after the ancestral remains repatriated by RCS arrived at National Museum Australia, the Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority collected five sets of remains and took them back to the Ngarrindjeri cultural centre at Camp Coorong, South Australia. Despite the return of these remains to the Ngarrindjeri they are, as of September 2015, stored at Camp Coorong alongside many other ancestral remains awaiting burial on country.

When asked about the decision to store their Old People (ancestral remains) on country rather than at the museum, Ngarrindjeri Elder Major Sumner explained it is important for him because 'at least they're home [...] we can go and visit them, go there and talk to them, we can sit down with them and do a smoking ceremony' (M. Sumner, Interview 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2015). So although the remains repatriated from RCS are recorded as having been returned to the Ngarrindjeri (see Figure 5.3), not all of those remains have yet been buried despite the desire to do so (Hemming and Wilson 2010, Wilson 2006), raising questions as to why the Ngarrindjeri have been unable or have chosen not to bury their Old People.



**Figure 6.6:** The storage facility for ancestral remains at Camp Coorong  
Photograph: S. Morton, June 2015

Since the first reburials at Warnung and Parnka in 2006 (Hemming and Wilson 2010), the Ngarrindjeri have reburied the remains of 30-40 Old People on Ngarrindjeri Ruwe (country) but there are still currently over 300 in storage at Camp Coorong. While at Camp Coorong Major Sumner invited me to go into the store and take part in a smoking ceremony. Inside the store, there were boxes placed around the edge of the space and worktables in the centre, an arrangement similar to the museum store spaces I had visited. However, hearing Major Sumner speak about coming into the store to be with the Old People and his pain at not being able to bury them on country, foregrounded the emotional meanings of the space and the tensions between the store as a place of comfort, sadness, confrontation and threat. At one end of the store were boxes with labels from RCS. Although repatriated in 2003 and returned to the Ngarrindjeri shortly after, these remains had not yet been buried on country and coming across these boxes was an experience I found to be unexpectedly emotional (see Research Diary extract in Chapter 4). Just in front of these boxes was a table on which there were plastic bags holding recently excavated remains. Major Sumner explained that these were recently exposed ancestral remains. The use of the Coorong for activities over which the

Ngarrindjeri have no control means remains of the Old People are constantly being uncovered and if they cannot be safely reburied, they are excavated by the Ngarrindjeri Cultural Heritage Team who then take them to Camp Coorong to be kept safe until they can be returned to country.



**Figure 6.7:** On country with Major Sumner and Tim Hartman of the Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority

Photograph: S. Morton July 2015

As we looked out over the Coorong, Major Sumner and Tim Hartman talked about the reburial ceremonies that had taken place. Although we were some distance away from the reburial sites they did not appear to be marked or different from the other areas of country; these were not demarcated areas or easily recognisable places of burial, such as cemeteries. Luke Trevorrow who manages the heritage team explained that burials are found in many areas of the Coorong and that the number of burials in the landscape show how long the area has been occupied by the Ngarrindjeri.

Extract from Research Diary 8<sup>th</sup> July 2015



**Figure 6.8:** View across the Coorong, South Australia to the sand dunes where the Old People are buried

Photograph: S. Morton July 2015

At another site we visited, Luke [Trevorrow] talked about the work of the heritage team who are called out when remains are exposed or uncovered, so they can be removed and reburied as soon as possible. He pointed out the sand dunes on the opposite side of the Coorong and said that the burials there are under threat from the off road vehicles that have been using the area so the heritage team are taking steps to remove or protect them.

Extract from research diary 8<sup>th</sup> July 2015

For the Ngarrindjeri, finding burial space is a continual problem. The Coorong is a highly agricultural region with many private holdings so as well as not having the available land to rebury repatriated remains, new uses of the landscape continue to threaten Ngarrindjeri burials. The uncovering of ancestral remains is a constant reminder that the Ngarrindjeri are still unable to protect the burial sites of their Old People, creating a constant stress for the Elders and the Cultural Heritage Team who are dealing with the physical remains. For the 2006 reburials at Warnung and Parnka, complex negotiations were required with local and state government agencies and the preparation coordinated by the Ngarrindjeri Heritage Committee took several months. The experience of these reburials led Hemming and Wilson to argue that funding needs to be made available to communities to support the research,

community meetings, administration of the community organisations taking responsibility for repatriations, management of reburial sites, community training, and settling community disputes that arise as part of the repatriation process (Hemming and Wilson 2010, Wilson 2006). Therefore for the Ngarrindjeri, repatriation is a long-term process that has the potential to be healing, but also to be damaging, both emotionally and financially. In 2007 Steve Hemming estimated that if four ceremonies were held annually, to rebury the repatriated Old People would take ten years and cost approximately \$250,000 (AUS) per year (Hemming and Wilson 2010, 194). Having participated in discussions with the heritage team what came across was the frustration, and in some cases resentment and anger that the Ngarrindjeri have been left to bear the cost for something that is not their fault. The return of the remains is not just symbolic; their materiality creates practical issues of reburial and communities are having to deal with this burden

Prior to the repatriation of ancestral remains to Australia in 2003, the remains identified as being Yorta Yorta were marked for collection by the Yorta Yorta Aboriginal Corporation. However, rather than store ancestral remains on country, the Yorta Yorta decided that National Museum Australia should continue to hold the remains until they were ready to carry out the burial ceremony. Although the burial of these ancestral remains occurred only a few months after being returned to Australia, in my conversations with Ray Ahmat and Wade Morgan from the Yorta Yorta Cultural Heritage Team, similar issues to those faced by the Ngarrindjeri emerged. In talking about the problems the Yorta Yorta faced in reburying ancestral remains, Wade Morgan described the continued exposure of Yorta Yorta burials, giving the example of sand that had been taken from a known burial site: 'people had taken sands and spread it out for a festival and someone went for a walk over it and found bones, so we were sent out, and I think there was about six of us walking along transects picking up bones' (W. Morgan, Interview 29<sup>th</sup> July 2015). As on the Coorong, ancestral remains continue

to be exposed and the private ownership of land means complex negotiations with landowners are required to both bury remains and protect existing burials. If landowners agree a burial can take place, then under Victorian law a burial permit is required. There are also other practical issues such as the classification of dug graves as worksites once they reach a certain depth, which brings another set of regulations into play. Nor does the burial mark the end of potential issues as there is the risk of the exposure of the remains or, as had occurred previously, landowners running tours and charging people to visit the burial site; a development that Ray Ahmat described as the remains being once again 'appropriated and used to benefit the non-Aboriginal interest' (R. Ahmat, Interview 29<sup>th</sup> June 2015).

The issues around access to privately owned land have led to the burial of some ancestral remains in Aboriginal owned cemeteries, including the burial of unprovenanced remains at Weeroona cemetery in 2012, an event I will discuss in more detail in the next chapter. Under the *Cemeteries and Crematoria Act 2003*, sites such as Weeroona are classified as private cemeteries meaning the Aboriginal organisations that manage them are unable to access public funds, raising concerns about maintenance, record keeping and protection (Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council 2014). Another option is for burial on National Parks Land, which Ray Ahmat suggested can be a better choice than private land as it offers longer-term security. Yet even this approach can be complex, leading the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council (2014) to call for the development of a statewide framework. Yet even burial on National Parks Land does not allay fears that burial sites will be vandalised or remains taken:

...and that's why, that's the reason why some of our ancestral remains are sitting in containers today, because I can't...ensure that they're one hundred percent protected, and the elders keep telling me to hurry up and I say I can't until that place is managed and protected appropriately, I can't, I'm not comfortable with doing it.

Interview with Ray Ahmat, 29<sup>th</sup> July 2015

According to Ahmat, the approach taken to protecting burial sites is therefore closely linked to Yorta Yorta Land resource management programmes with sites being fenced off and replanted in advance of reburials to discourage public traffic.

Since 1975, the Yorta Yorta have made seventeen separate attempts to have a say in the management of their traditional lands (Yorta Yorta Traditional Owner Land Management Board 2015, 9) and in 2004, the State of Victoria entered into a cooperative management agreement with the Yorta Yorta. The aim of this agreement was to reconcile Indigenous and non-Indigenous interests through joint land management with the Yorta Yorta Traditional Owner and Land Management Board being an equal partner in the decision making process (Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation 2010). One of the key issues the Yorta Yorta have faced, is that government agencies have tended to approach the different aspects of land management separately; a structure which the Yorta Yorta reject in favour of a holistic methodology (Yorta Yorta Clans Group Inc 2003, 7). This resonates with what members of the Ngarrindjeri had told me during my stay with them at Camp Coorong. In response to government planning regimes, in 2006 the Ngarrindjeri Nation published the *Ngarrindjeri Nation Yarluwar-Ruwe Plan: Caring for Ngarrindjeri Sea Country and Culture*. One of the priorities set out in this document is to secure burial grounds for the repatriated Old People and work with the South Australian Government to determine the appropriate methods of ongoing protection (Ngarrindjeri Tendi et al. 2006, 28). So like the Yorta Yorta Aboriginal Corporation, the Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority advocates for a holistic and integrated approach in which issues of environmental management, heritage protection and health are co-dependant.

## 6.6 Returning the ancestors

For the remains repatriated from RCS, the ideal outcome for the Yorta Yorta would have been the return of those ancestors to the area they had been taken from. However, as already discussed, this is not always possible, meaning that individual communities have decisions to make on how to proceed. As Ray Ahmat explained, 'people might be disgruntled that they're not in the right place, but then they're comfortable that they're not in a museum or in a box' (R. Ahmat, Interview 29<sup>th</sup> July 2015). Wade Morgan, expressed his frustration that, what he felt should be a straightforward process to return the ancestors, was often held up by red tape and that the delay could cause tensions within communities:

...some traditional owners in communities, when they do their reburials they'll rebury everything they get back in one place because I think it's kind of a peace of mind that they know they're not going to be disturbed again and people have actually tried to start and get them as close to provenance as we can. But there's been some mixed views from within the communities, especially now the Elders are starting to get restless about them sitting there, like just take them back to our main burial place where our stuff has been buried. So just trying to work around in house politics as well as other politics, yeah it gets strenuous sometimes.

Interview with Wade Morgan, 29<sup>th</sup> July 2015

Up to this point, I have considered the political agency of repatriated remains at international, national and state scales. What the previous extract foregrounds is the need to consider the political agency of the remains at a community level. When asked about issues within communities in relation to returning ancestral remains, Phil Gordon, Aboriginal Heritage Project Officer at the Australia Museum, suggested that there were no community politics around repatriation as it was a process that 'everybody acknowledges needs to happen and needs to happen appropriately' (P. Gordon, Interview 8<sup>th</sup> May 2015). However, he then went on to state that repatriation is like a funeral, and as can often be the case with funerals, there will be politics and family rivalry. What Gordon seemed to be suggesting was that tensions within communities arose around not *if* ancestral remains should be returned, but *how*, by *whom* and to *where*. When asked about the issues repatriation can raise for communities,

Ngarrindjeri Elder Major Sumner explained that the Ngarrindjeri leadership were under pressure from the wider community to reburial the Old People that are currently at Camp Coorong, but at a community meeting in 2015, a decision was made to call off a forthcoming reburial as there was not enough agreement. For Sumner, this is an example of how repatriation feeds into other tensions within the community: 'you've got people very angry, not just with the people that took the remains, but with the people who brought them back, like myself' (M. Sumner, Interview 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2015).

The role that repatriated ancestral remains can play in creating and exacerbating community tensions became evident as I attempted to follow the journey of the remains returned to Tasmania. In Tasmania, the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC) manages the funding the Australian Government provides for repatriation. When asked about the reasons for this, Caroline Spotswood explained that for the TAC, repatriation was about self-determination; the involvement of government and museums 'muddies the waters' and should therefore be kept to a minimum (C. Spotswood, Interview 7<sup>th</sup> August 2015). Tony Brown, former Senior Curator of Indigenous Cultures at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG), expressed his frustrations about the TAC continuing to take a combative approach to relations with the museum, stating that 'we've got a record of, of talking to people that don't want to talk to us! I'm talking about the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre because they've got a habit of not talking to people, or not responding to people so we always make sure we've got a record' (T. Brown, Interview 6<sup>th</sup> August 2015).

In attempting to understand the current tensions around repatriation in Tasmania, it is important to set the current issues within their historical context, which brings me back to the political confrontation over the return of Truganini's remains. As discussed in Chapter 2, while also being representative of the treatment of all Indigenous peoples, the remains of Truganini

became an important symbol for the legitimacy for Tasmania Aboriginal status. However Cove (1995, 153) suggests Truganini's remains also functioned as a foundation around which a Tasmanian Aboriginal community that had a sense of common origins and identity could form; a community that was increasingly being recognised by the wider public. After the return of Truganini, the TAC began to campaign for the return of other ancestral remains held by the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, specifically the Crowther collection. Although the TAC had gained widespread public support, the State attorney-general repeatedly queried if they reflected the wishes of the wider community. Yet in asserting a consensus, Cove (1995, 157) suggests the TAC were left vulnerable to possible differences of opinion within the Aboriginal community. This history perhaps explains why Caroline Spotswood was keen to stress that with regards to repatriation, the TAC provided the voice for the Tasmanian Aboriginal community; evidence of disagreement may jeopardise future repatriations.

Considering this, it is worth reflecting on the concerns raised by RCS prior to their agreement to repatriation requests that they were returning remains to the right group. Would RCS have agreed to return remains if there were signs of disagreement within the Tasmanian Aboriginal community? Although Caroline Spotswood argues that communities have the right to disagree and have political differences, this does not appear to be reflected in the one-voice approach the TAC takes to international repatriation. Nilsson-Stutz (2013, 187) has suggested that the concept of past-present continuity as the foundation of repatriation claims may encourage 'recapitulation of the cultural and biological essentialism that underlies nationalist and colonialist archaeologies' and is a principle that excludes other groups. Given the concerns of the TAC that evidence of community divisions may prevent overseas institutions from returning ancestral remains, there is arguably a need to be aware that in satisfying themselves they are returning remains to the right people and for the right reasons, museums are requiring a type of cultural essentialism. An issue that can be compounded if

the delay in returning remains to communities or in communities reburying remains is read as a lack of interest on the communities' part in returning ancestral remains to country.

### **Obligation, confrontation and loss**

In the previous section I argued that in framing repatriation as a political exercise in which the remains are viewed as political symbols, the practical issues presented by the return of ancestral remains can get neglected. Having set out some of the issues faced by the communities who have had remains repatriated by RCS returned to them, I now turn to another aspect of repatriation at risk of being obscured when the process is framed as either political or therapeutic; the repatriation of ancestral remains as an obligation. Yorta Yorta Elder Henry Atkinson (2010, 19) writes of this responsibility stating: 'our people, the living and the deceased, have profound obligations to ensure our ancestors are returned to their country and not just thrown in the ground anywhere'.

In her study of the repatriation on Haida Gwaii, Cara Krmpotich found that understanding repatriation amongst the Haida required viewing the process through the lens of kinship. While not suggesting that Krmpotich's context-specific study should be used in a way that essentialises individual experiences of repatriation, her observation that 'time does not minimise Haidas' sense of family' is a useful way of understanding expressions of obligation towards ancestral remains (Krmpotich 2014, 6). For example when speaking to Rodney Dillon about his role in repatriation, he articulated how the location of his ancestors remains impacted on his identity as an Tasmanian Aboriginal man:

Rodney: The most powerful thing, most powerful thing you can do as an Aboriginal person is bring your remains, your families or your peoples remains, back home. When you're on planes, you're coming home and it's about three or four o'clock, it might be five o'clock in the morning and it might be just breaking daylight and the first thing you see is the beach down Broom, that's one of things when you're coming home and you think, these Old People, you know when they went away they was...they had their land and they had all of these things and now they're coming

home and they've got very little [...] no place even to bury some people, so trying to get places to do that is important as bringing the remains home so they're rested in the Country. When those Old People passed, they always thought they'd die and go back to the land that they'd come from and that's not the case with some of these people, and I think some of the trauma that all Aboriginal people carry is not being strong enough to hold our people.

Sarah: So it's actually, there's that continual reminder that you weren't able to protect...those people.

Rodney: Yeah, yeah...I feel less of a person for not having our people home you know, and the way, the arrogance of museums [claiming it's] for the good of mankind, that's bullshit you know. This is for the, we've got people dying twenty-five years less than anyone else, this is about healing and the spiritual belief to bring these remains home and rest them where they belong in an appropriate way.

Sarah: It sounds like it's quite a responsibility you feel, doing that work.

Rodney: It is...it's a very big responsibility and you're a lesser person if you don't, and the more you do it, the more important you become to yourself, physically I think, and mentally, you're fulfilling part of what those people couldn't do.

Interview with Rodney Dillion, 5<sup>th</sup> August 201

For Rodney Dillion there is a connection between the repatriation of the Old People and the health and wellbeing of the Tasmanian Aboriginal people as well as his own identity. What came across in our interview was a sense of his sadness and guilt in being unable to care for his ancestral remains and the importance he attached to doing the repatriation process properly, a sentiment that resonates with Krmpotich's description of the kinship relationships between the Haida and their ancestral remains. In speaking of the trauma carried by Aboriginal people due to not being able to protect their ancestral remains, Dillion's personal testimony appears to align with Thornton's (2002, 22) argument that repatriation can help Indigenous communities achieve some closure on traumatic events of their history. Yet, as already discussed, the return of ancestral remains can feed into community tensions and issues of land, protecting cultural heritage and monetary concerns. This suggests that repatriation cannot be understood as simply a therapeutic process anymore that it can be understand as a purely political one.

Alongside the feelings of obligation and responsibility towards ancestral remains expressed by many of the Indigenous people I spoke to and interviewed as part of my research, a narrative of repatriation as a burden in relation to the pressure it puts on individuals, communities and future generations emerged. In my initial interactions with Edward Ayau of Hui Mālama, I sent him a copy of my research proposal that set out my interest in the meanings and values created by the repatriation process. In a written response, Ayau stated that as 'the intent was to restore the ancestors to their role in the Hawaiian family by returning the bones to their rightful place in the ground,' the meanings and values were not new but 'as old as our culture' (E. Ayau, Personal Communication 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2015). In going on to list the new challenges repatriation has presented, Ayau includes having to 'survive the psychological harm of learning that more iwi were taken, and overcome the pressure and enormity of being successful in bringing them home, as there is no room for failure'. In pointing to the psychological harm caused by the repatriation process, Ayau highlights the distressing nature of ancestral remains, in that they can be a physical reminder of a painful history and loss. As part of a repatriation workshop held at Camp Coorong, one of the Ngarrindjeri representatives explained that the return of the Old People brought up a history of loss and displacement and required the Ngarrindjeri to engage with their traditional culture, which for some, was a painful and frightening process. A delegate working on repatriation in the Northern Territories revealed that he had struggled to engage with the oldest generation of Elders who did not want to talk about the past and viewed cultural traditions as 'a nasty gift'. As Phil Gordon at the Australian Museum explained in relation to returning ancestral remains to communities in the Northern Territories, 'there needed to be a lot of thinking about what ceremonies were appropriate [...] so the community, the culture had to evolve an appropriate mechanism for dealing with that' (P. Gordon, Interview 8<sup>th</sup> May 2015).

Recognition that the return of ancestral remains can be distressing, challenging and difficult for communities was also evident in some of the practice I heard about while in Australia and New Zealand. For example repeated approaches to a community about ancestral remains can create extra strain, with each revelation that ancestral remains have been taken causing fresh anger, grief and sense of loss (Cubillo 2010, 24). This means that some communities prefer a single return of their remains rather than multiple repatriations. This is the case with the remains returned by RCS that originated from the Chatham Islands. At the time of my visit to Te Papa Tongarewa in June 2015, the remains had not been returned, but as Repatriation Manager Te Herekiele Herewini explained, the reason for this is that the community wanted all Moriori remains held by the museum returned together, 'because otherwise they are going to have maybe two or three ceremonies over the next few years [...] people want their ancestors home but they would rather have one ceremony and it all done at once' (T. Herewini, Interview with, 5<sup>th</sup> June 2015).

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the Old People returned to the Ngarrindjeri from RCS, along with many others, are currently stored in the keeping place at Camp Coorong. When speaking about the painful history the return of the Old People has made present, Major Sumner also mentioned that just their physical presence was also problematic for some community members as it made Camp Coorong a threatening place that they no longer wanted to visit:

With people that's holding them at...the keeping place. You got them there, but people, to the extent that people won't go and visit there anymore because they are afraid of the spirits of the Old People and as I said they won't harm you, that's our people, they're not here to harm us, there're home in their own country, even though they're sitting in that there. It's better being there, then sitting in a...in a dark place in...London somewhere, or in another country that's got nothing to do with them. These are the things that are still happening too, the people are very superstitious, very, and Ngarrindjeri people, Aboriginal people of old are very superstitious people around...around old peoples remains.

Interview with Major Sumner, Ngarrindjeri Elder 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2015

As in the example of the repatriation of the Toi moko from Warrington Museum in the previous chapter, the remains stored at Camp Coorong are not passive or neutral (Sørensen 2010). For some people, the presence of the ancestral remains has made Camp Coorong an unsafe place due to the capacity of the ancestors to act and potentially cause harm. Another example of the ancestors having will and intention comes from my interview with Wade Morgan, Repatriation Officer for the Yorta Yorta Aboriginal Corporation, when he described his feelings about burials being big celebrations, such as the one the Yorta Yorta had when the Murray Black collection was returned:

My last big one they had it all planned out. We'll bring the remains back, we'll camp with them out there and there's going to be a marque set up and we'd do the repatriation and then speeches and so forth and, yeah...rains had come and flood waters cut us off from access. That's fair enough, that's just the way the, the spirits telling us that that wasn't the way to go about it.

Interview with Wade Morgan, 29<sup>th</sup> July 2015

What both these examples illustrate is the affective presence of the physical remains and the agency that derives from the intentionality of the ancestors, even in the absence of personhood. Once again it becomes clear that the divisions between primary and secondary agents created by Gell (1998) in relation to understanding the agency of art, are not so easily mapped onto the complex set of relationships within which human remains are situated. While other suggested terms, such as conscious and effective (Robb 2004) and sentient, non-sentient (Tung 2014) are more sensitive to ontological difference, I would suggest the key point is the need to recognise and incorporate ontological pluralism into our discussions about repatriation and the agency of ancestral remains.

### **Culture, Identity and Self Determination**

Although the repatriation of ancestral remains can be challenging for communities both practically and emotionally, there is evidence that it can be a unifying process that brings

connection to family (for example Simpson 2008, Palm Island 2002, Krmpotich 2014, Weasel Head 2015, Fforde 2004); the key to which, Yorta Yorta Elder Henry Atkinson suggests is the role of ceremony (Atkinson 2010, 18). After I found out about the cancellation of the forthcoming repatriation due to lack of community agreement, I had the opportunity to talk to Ngarrindjeri Elder Major Sumer about the role of ceremony. He explained that just as it could take time to arrange where to bury the Old People, it was as important to take the time to decide on the appropriate ceremonies. These are ceremonies that involve utilising complex Indigenous knowledge, expertise and skills and so the physical presence of Old People at Camp Coorong, whilst challenging and even threatening for some, has created an opportunity for the younger community members to learn more about Ngarrindjeri culture. Writing about the Haida, Krmpotich (2011, 2010) discusses the role of material culture within constructions and maintenance of kinship relations and the reciprocal relationships between objects, kinship, memory and respect. An example from Haida Gwaii being the button blankets made for wrapping the ancestral remains before burial as for the Haida this was an important way of showing respect for their ancestors. While staying at Camp Coorong Ngarrindjeri Elder and senior weaver Auntie Ellen Trevorrow demonstrated Ngarrindjeri weaving and explained that one of her roles in the repatriation of the Old People had been the production of woven burial mats (Figure 6.9). As with the Haida button blankets the production of woven burial mats honours the Old People and creates a connection to the past and cultural practice; a cultural practice threatened by the break in the family kinship system caused by governmental assimilation and integration policies. The weaving of the burial mats has become an embodied memory of the burials, but more broadly, cultural weaving functions in the construction of individual and collective identities showing how 'materials created for repatriation overlap with a range of practices and spaces that are already laden with existing memories' (Krmpotich 2011, 157).



**Figure 6.9:** Auntie Ellen Trevorrow teaching traditional Ngarrindjeri weaving at Camp Coorong  
Photograph: S. Morton, July 2015

When I began to teach and share the weaving my mother took me back to the River Murray near Wellington and places around Lake Alexandrina and showed me where my grandmother and Aunties used to pick the rushes to do their weaving. This was a special time for me, as I reminisced of the past and thinking of the present – here I was with my children picking the rushes where my great-great grandmother, great-grandmother, grandmother and mother had picked rushes to weave many items.

Ellen Trevorrow, Ngarrindjeri Elder (as cited in Ngarrindjeri Lakun 2013, 41-42)

Just as Auntie Ellen Trevorrow speaks of teaching and sharing weaving skills with younger generations, Wade Morgan spoke of the Yorta Yorta Elders, such as Henry Atkinson, passing on their knowledge of repatriation to younger members of the community like himself who had been ‘tapped on the shoulder’ to work in repatriation (W. Morgan, Interview 29<sup>th</sup> July 2015). It is not only the materials created for repatriation that overlap with cultural practices, but also the actual process of repatriation itself. For communities like the Yorta Yorta and

Ngarrindjeri repatriation has become an established cultural practice that interacts with a range of other practices that construct and affirm identity (Fforde 2002a, Wilson 2008).

Having problematised the idea of the therapeutic benefits of repatriation by revealing a more complex picture in which the return of remains can be distressing, feed into community tensions and be threatening as well as having positive effects on health and well-being and constructing and affirming individual and collective identity, I now want try and draw together these meanings with the political symbolism of ancestral remains. Liv Nilsson Stutz (2013, 186) positions repatriation at the nexus of contemporary identity politics, suggesting that it both resonates with the theoretical discussions about post-colonial identity politics and transcends them by constituting a 'practical transaction with concrete consequences'. It is because of these consequences that Stutz suggests there is a need to clarify the difference between nationalist projects and the right to cultural aspirations, as repatriation can become used as a component of post-colonial nation building in which claims to culture replace the struggle for other rights abandoned due to lack of political progress (Nilsson Stutz 2013, 2008, Fraser 1997, Forsman 1997, Friedman 1994). During my fieldwork in Australia and New Zealand, several of the people I spoke with mentioned issues of native title and self-determination in relation to repatriation, but it was when staying with the Ngarrindjeri at Camp Coorong that I began engage with the concepts of nation building and sovereignty.

For the reburial ceremonies that took place in 2006, the Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority invited students from the Flinders Archaeology Field School to assist and allowed the public to attend the reburials; the view being that the reburials were an opportunity to educate the wider public about this aspect of history (Wilson 2008, 254). This approach to the reburials reflects the idea of repatriation being part of a wider programme, all the strands of which are about the ability to identify, organise and act as a nation. On a visit to the Aboriginal

community at Raukkan (Figure 6.10), Ngarrindjeri Elder Major Sumner spoke of growing up on the mission there, recalling an early childhood memory of queuing for rations with his grandmother. For Sumner, the separation of service delivery and support to Indigenous communities continues the pattern of colonial control in which he grew up; in his view, Aboriginal people are still collecting rations.



**Figure 6.10:** Visiting the Aboriginal Community at Raukkan, South Australia. An important meeting place for Ngarrindjeri lakalinyeri (clans), in 1860 the Aboriginal Friends Association established a mission on this site, which had been renamed Point McLeay 1837. Administered by Ngarrindjeri people since 1974, the community is now known as Raukkan, which means meeting place in the Ngarrindjeri language.

Photograph: S. Morton, July 2015

The Ngarrindjeri response to this situation has been to try and bring projects together to build capacity and work collectively, an example being the *Ngarrindjeri Nation Yarlumar-Ruwe Plan* (Ngarrindjeri Tendi et al. 2006) which is a strategic response to environmental management plans written from a Western perspective. This reflects a wider issue in land management agreements in which there is a failure to recognise and incorporate ontological pluralism, and Indigenous priorities are disregarded (Coombes et al. 2012, Stevenson 2006). Booth and Skelton (2011) suggest that requiring Indigenous peoples to conform to non-native management structures perpetuates submission to a dominant culture, while Rigney and

Hemming (2014) take this further and argue that state structures and interests do not support Indigenous nation building, as this is a concept that disrupts ideologies of singular state sovereignty:-

The historical Ngarrindjeri political agenda of nation building, self-determination, sovereignty, land and water justice, the protection of Ngarrindjeri cultural heritage and property; the protection of natural resources and sustainable eco conscious economic development via caring for country, and the governance structures that guide Ngarrindjeri well-being are denied recognition in the public Australian context (Rigney & Hemming 2014, 540)

In Australia, the movement towards sovereignty for Indigenous peoples is less established than in other countries, particularly the US (Biolsi 2005), and prior to the 1992 Mabo decision, it was not recognised as part of Native Title.<sup>51</sup> Allan Ardiff (2013) points to a lack of discussion about sovereignty by non-indigenous Australians who instead speak of reconciliation, rights and native title. Addressing non-indigenous scholars, of whom he is one, Ardiff suggests that assuming that sovereignty is not central to the lives of Aboriginal people and writing instead about postcolonial theory, citizenship, rights, equality, reconciliation and social justice, continues to mute the views of those who have been marginalised by colonisation.

In the earlier discussion about Pemuluy's remains, I cited the *Closing the Gap* report (see Figure 6.2) that advocates for practical reconciliation based on statistical measures of the gap between Indigenous and non-indigenous people in Australia. Support for the repatriation of ancestral remains is one of the ways in which the Australian Government is making reparations, leading me to argue that the movement of remains is a material demonstration of a national narrative of reconciliation. Yet Rigney and Hemming's view is that in defining the

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<sup>51</sup> The Mabo Case was a significant legal case in Australia that recognised the land rights of the Meriam people, as the traditional owners of the Murray Islands in the Torres Strait. The case challenged the assumption that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples had no concept of land ownership before the arrival of British colonisers in 1788 and that sovereignty delivered complete ownership of all land in the new Colony to the Crown. The Mabo decision and the legal uncertainty that followed prompted the passing of the 1993 *Native Title Act* (AIATSIS undated).

'Aboriginal problem' *Closing the Gap* marginalises other Indigenous interests. In their view, practical reconciliation policies dislodge the Ngarrindjeri political agenda and reconciliation becomes a site of struggle. According to Rigney and Hemming, for the Ngarrindjeri positioning repatriation as part of enacting nationhood is an act of resistance that aims to decentre the colonizer and develop a Ngarrindjeri centred position linking the return of Old People to work in cultural heritage, health, education and natural resources that aim to restore healthy flows and allow Ngarrindjeri to be healthy (Rigney and Hemming 2014, 540-541)

Listening to Ngarrindjeri people talk about the link between repatriation and nationhood draws me back to the importance of the considering the materiality of the remains. In discussing how repatriation can become used as a component of nation building, Nilsson Stutz (2013) appears to be suggesting that political symbolism and use of ancestral remains and claims of obligation and kinship can be separated. What this proposition does not take into account are the materialities of the remains, their agency within complex relationships at local, national and international scales and the entanglement of the process of repatriation with broader issues of political identity, cultural practice, kinship and sovereignty. In their review of repatriation and reburial in Ngarrindjeri Ruwe (country), Hemming and Wilson (2010) consider the social, cultural, political and economic implications of repatriating the Old People. Their argument that it is only through the provision of resources to support culturally appropriate funeral ceremonies that the healing can begin, suggesting that for the Ngarrindjeri, repatriation can cause anger, grief and a sense of loss and although a process of healing can follow, this does not occur in isolation. Repatriation is inextricably connected to politics and power; who has the power to decide if remains should be returned, who has the power to fund the physical movement of the remains and who has the power to protect their final resting place.

What also emerged from conversations with the Ngarrindjeri was that considering repatriation as being a post-colonial act, or through the lens of post-colonial identity politics, is also problematic. As Trees and Nyoongah (1993, unpagiated) point out, 'for whom is it post? Surely not for Indigenous peoples.' For the Ngarrindjeri, once the Old People are returned, reburials have to be organised within a landscape mapped and managed by regional government; a process Hemming and Wilson (2010) describe as a new form of colonialism and invasion of Ngarrindjeri Ruwe (also see Hattam et al. 2007, Hemming et al. 2007). What I therefore propose is a reframing of repatriation as part of a process of decolonisation, in which there is space for communities to discuss, debate and disagree on how to proceed. Neither the process of repatriation nor the meanings of the remains themselves can be understood in isolation and this is an approach in which the effect of the return of ancestral remains and their affective agency can be interpreted within context as part of wider social processes that encompass and recognise the interaction between the political and the therapeutic.

## **6.7 Conclusions**

When I interviewed Norman MacLeod, former Keeper of Palaeontology at the Natural History Museum, he suggested that although the initial returns of ancestral remains have a symbolism to communities, after that they can just become another an administrative burden. In MacLeod's view, 'once the repatriation...takes place, that symbolism gets drained away [...] because the problems that lead to the conferral of this symbolism in the first place have not gone away with the repatriation' (N. Macleod, Interview 17<sup>th</sup> March 2015). For MacLeod, communities have used the physicality of the remains as a way of opening dialogues and conversations, and the return of the remains is something offered to communities 'in lieu of the things they are actually interested in'. While MacLeod's argument

is one that recognises the materiality of the remains, it appears to position that materiality as a tangible basis on which to start dialogues about intangible issues rather than seeing the remains themselves as having agency in relation to those issues. However, what the journey of the ancestral remains repatriated by RCS suggests is that the remains have agency as social actors beyond their use as political symbols of Indigenous legitimacy and that therefore there is a need to move away from framing repatriation as political or therapeutic towards a more nuanced understanding in which we can consider multiple meanings simultaneously.

Through the return of the RCS remains, I have explored how the repatriation of ancestral remains is a process entangled with issues of land management, cultural heritage management and representation at a state level. While it needs to be made clear that the experiences and challenges of repatriation will not be the same for every Indigenous community, issues relating to protecting burial grounds, native title and sustainable funding for land, and cultural heritage management projects were a common factor for all the community representatives spoken to as part of this research. The narrative of reconciliation within which national repatriation programmes operates places the therapeutic values of the process at the centre. In this iteration repatriated remains have the agency to heal the 'trauma of history' (Thornton 2002, 23). However, by being alive to the materialities of the remains themselves, what emerges is that the remains are nodes in a complex set of relationships in which they have the agency to be distressing, unsettling and the focus of community tensions. Just as the materiality of ancestral remains allows them to become political symbols of recognition and reconciliation, for communities they can also come to represent a loss of authority, security, opportunity, respect and responsibility. The very presence of the remains can reinforce loss and absence; the powerlessness to protect the dead in the past being compounded by a continuing lack of control over land and cultural heritage in the present.

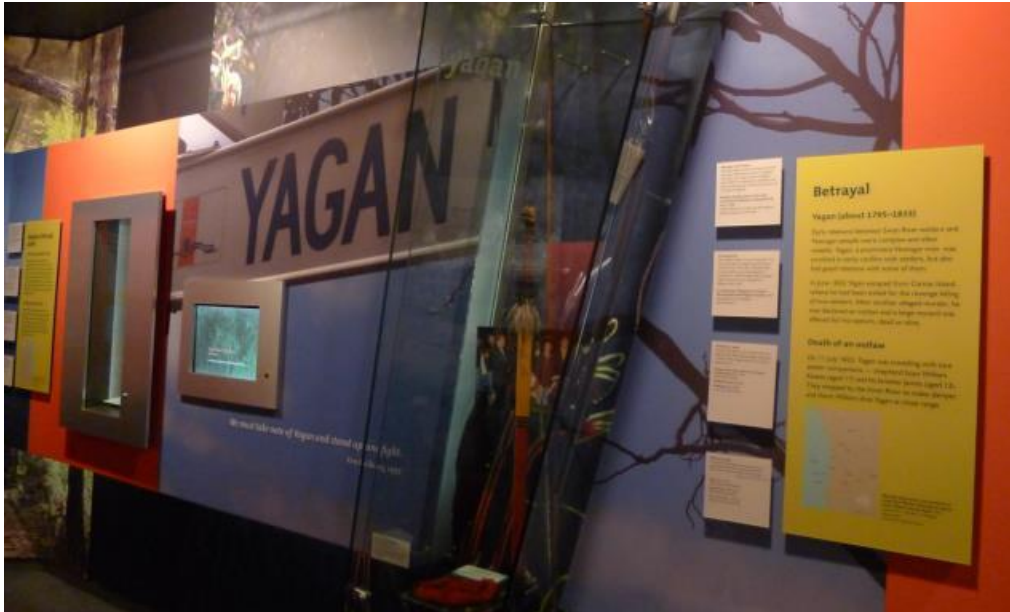
What it is important to make clear, is that in exposing this agency my aim is not to undermine Indigenous people's claims for the return of their ancestral remains, or suggest the process should be considered as harmful. Rather, I argue for a reframing of repatriation as part of a wider process of decolonisation, as opposed to the undoing of a colonial practice, and a better understanding of the issues it presents. For as Cubillo (2010, 25) argues, although they are not responsible, Indigenous communities are having to carry 'the cultural, spiritual and financial burdens' of the return of their ancestors remains.

Following the journey of the RCS remains has also highlighted the role that museums play in the process of returning ancestral remains to communities. In the previous chapter, I argued that considering museum spaces that contained human remains as deathscapes was a useful lens through which to examine what the remains themselves do within those spaces. Having noted that in UK museums repatriation has brought loss and grief into museums; in Australia and New Zealand, the creation of separate ancestral remains stores has created a particular type of cultural space that is associated with loss and mourning. The ancestral remains store is a liminal space in which although not considered as being in their proper place, the presence of the remains in that space is not necessarily inappropriate or disrespectful. Based on the stores I visited and the descriptions from museum staff, the storage, materials and handling practices in these spaces are comparable to those in UK museums. Yet how the ancestral remains store differs to the human remains stores in the UK, appears to be the practice and performance of both staff and visitors, creating a set of emotional geographies that sit at the intersection of museological and deathwork practices.

In considering the materialities of the remains it is important to remain cognisant of their material properties and the issues their material presence creates. For, as I have illustrated in this chapter, a fundamental part of repatriation is the bodily engagement with material

remains as they are packed, transported, stored and eventually returned to country. Thinking about this in terms of the agency suggests that the remains not only have agency as ancestors but also as material objects, a theory I will explore further in the next chapter as I consider the meanings and issues created by the repatriation of unprovenanced remains.

# 7. The Lost People: Dealing with Unprovenanced Ancestral Remains



**Figure 7.1:** The story of Yagan's life and the search for his remains told as part of the Indigenous Resistance section in the First Australians Gallery, National Museum Australia

Photograph S. Morton May2015

## 7.1 Introduction

In August 1997 the skull of Yagan, an Aboriginal man killed by white settlers in 1833 was repatriated to Australia. Like Pemulwuy, who was discussed in the previous chapter, Yagan is a famous historical figure (Figure 7.1), but is of particular significance to the Noongah, a number of whom identify Yagan as an ancestor (Fforde 2002b, 234-235).<sup>52</sup> In her account of the search for Yagan's head, Cressida Fforde (2008) explains how the mapping of historical networks and gaining an understanding of the individuals involved and their connections, led

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<sup>52</sup>Yagan is a famous figure due to his part in the early resistance to British settlement. Noongah Elder Ken Colbung, who identifies Yagan as an ancestor began the search for Yagan's head in the 1950s, continuing until the 1990s when he passed his research onto Peter Ucko and Cressida Fforde who had been gathering data on Aboriginal remains held in the United Kingdom (Fforde 2008).

to the discovery that Yagan's head had been deaccessioned from Liverpool Museum in 1964 and buried at Everton Cemetery. After the exhumation and handover of the skull in 1997, the community hoped that Yagan's original burial place could be located. When this proved not to be possible the Noongah decided that a burial place would be found on the Upper Swann River, near to the site of his murder, and the place marked with a memorial park (Fforde 2008). The aim of the memorial park, which opened 2010, was to create a shared spiritual place for the whole community and acknowledge Yagan's story, and through that the Noongar people. As Australian Premier Colin Barrett stated at the opening, 'I would hope that from here in, that Yagan's place in our history is properly remembered and respected and indeed that Aboriginal people and the whole community might take pride in what he stood for in his life' (as cited in Emery 2014). The use of the Yagan's skull to create a place of memorial that aims to be a spiritual place but also a site of education for the wider community indicates the combined agency of the biography of a known figure with their physical remains.

What is evident in the story of the repatriation of Yagan's skull is how detailed archival research can sometimes return names, biographies and identities to human remains long separated from this information. However, discovering the people and place the remains belong is often the limit of what can be achieved through archival research and, as I found out on my first visit to the ancestral remains store at National Museum Australia (NMA), despite the archival research undertaken some remains can only be provenanced to a state or country.

Prior to the 2003 repatriation from The Royal College of Surgeons of England (RCS) to the Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action (FAIRA), a researcher from FAIRA and Simon Chaplin from RCS undertook detailed archival research on the remains. Work to

discover as much as possible about the collection and history of the remains was undertaken for all the RCS repatriations and is an important part of the process as it ensures the return of remains to the right communities. Yet despite this work, of the fifty-four sets of remains returned to Australia, at the time of their return the provenance of twenty-three was uncertain and a further six could only be provenanced to Australia. Lacking the interesting biographies that make named remains relatable (for example Fforde 2002b, Palm Island 2002, Suvendrini 1996, Roginski 2015, Henderson 2014) these 'unprovenanced' remains are not well represented in the repatriation literature, but for Indigenous communities dealing with unprovenanced ancestral remains, this is a pressing and contested issue (ACIR 2013, Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme 2010a).

Research on the unprovenanced remains from RCS held in museums in Australia and New Zealand is ongoing, but given the lack of information about some of the remains, it is likely that for some, no further information will be found. In the previous chapter I discussed how returning ancestors to country so their spirits can rest is a central aim of repatriation for many Indigenous people, with those I spoke to talking of feelings of responsibility and obligation to the ancestors to undertake this task. There are therefore questions to be asked in relation to the issues raised and meanings held by ancestral remains whose provenance is unknown.

In this chapter, I will consider the issues created by poorly or unprovenanced remains at local, state and national levels, exploring the meanings these remains have at these different scales. Following the argument made by Pardoe (2013) and Nilsson Stutz (2008) that there is a mistrust of bio-anthropology within Indigenous communities, I start by considering the different scales of provenance and the techniques used to improve the provenancing of remains, drawing on work on DNA testing and identity (Nash 2012, Bardill 2014, Nash 2005, TallBear 2013a, 2013b, Weiss and Long 2009), and ownership of bio-information (Greenhough

2006, Parry and Gere 2006, Parry 2004, Waldby and Mitchell 2006), to explore the issues that scientific approaches to provenancing remains raises. I then discuss concepts of state and national level identities by comparing different approaches taken to burying remains in the Australian State of Victoria and the current consultations on a National Keeping/Resting Place in Australia and New Zealand. This leads into the final section in which I demonstrate that in lacking provenance ancestral remains can come to represent loss and a painful history on many levels making them powerful social and political agents.

## **7.2 Unprovenanced Remains**

Before moving on to consider the meanings and materialities of unprovenanced remains it is worth being clear about the meaning of the term 'unprovenanced'. Coming from the French word *provenir*, 'to come from', the term provenance is used in archaeology to refer to archaeological context, the relationship, position and association of an object or feature in space and time, and in relation to tracing the geographical location of raw materials. Within museology the concept of provenance is expanded beyond a three-dimensional location to 'the full history and ownership of an item from the time of its discovery or creation to the present day, through which authenticity and ownership are determined' (ICOM 2013, 16). In this articulation, mapping provenance equates to tracing the circulation of objects, usually through the related documentation, so as Kathy Tubb (2007) points out, an uncertain provenance is problematic as it raises legal and ethical questions around appropriation of the material. In considering the provenance of human remains, both these meanings of provenance are relevant. Knowing the location from which collectors had removed remains is key to being able to return the remains to the right community, but finding and authenticating this information often involves working through archival sources and mapping the networks through which remains circulated. In the case of Yagan, Fforde's painstaking archival research eventually yielded results, yet the records vary in the amount of detail they

provide. Although there is sometimes detailed documentation about the circumstances of collection, for some remains a donor's name, place of collection, or even just a country, maybe the only information (Fforde 2004, 44).

### **Researching Provenance**

In some cases, archival research can indicate that remains are likely to have come from a particular place, as in this example from an interview with David Kaus at National Museum Australia: 'in a case from western New South Wales we have a river name with one item and we have the name of the person who'd donated it to the overseas museum. He was a mineralogist so there may well be information about him working there. If it turns out he only worked in one place along this river then that would increase the possibility of him collecting that item' (D. Kaus, Interview 24<sup>th</sup> June 2015). Although research of the type Kaus describes here is of use in locating the most likely site of collection, the lack of certainty is still problematic for some communities. Having worked as a researcher on the National Skeletal Provenancing Project in Australia, Deanne Hanchant recalls finding remains repatriated from the South Australian Museum to the Borroloola community in the Northern Territory ten years previously in the offices of the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority. The time it can take communities to be ready or able to reburial remains has already been discussed but, as Hanchant explains, in this case the community did not want the remains buried as they did not know exactly where they had come from or who they were; a 'provenance of 'Borroloola' [was] not good enough for the majority of the community' (Hanchant 2002, 315).

In writing about Aboriginality, Lynette Russell states that it is connection to land that shapes identity. Both personal and group identities come from a 'sensing of place' and even when removed from that place, identity is still shaped through an imagined engagement and relationship (Russell 2012, 401-405). So, as Russell acknowledges, there are connections

between history, shared experience and identity, but she also urges caution, arguing that there is a need to understand broader concepts of Aboriginality and identity as complex and multifaceted if we are to move beyond the homogeneity paradigm found in colonial discourses (Russell 2009, 93). Therefore, the approach I have taken is to try to understand the various issues that arise in relation to unprovenanced remains drawing on specific examples and interview data, for as will become evident, the opinions on how to deal with unprovenanced remains are far from homogenous.

In her work with the traditional owners of Lakefield and Cliff Island National Parks, Marcia Langton (2002) found people had a belief in, and experience of the presence of the spirits of the ancestors in the landscape, an emotional effect that was both personally and socially experienced. In this example, although there was no visible marking, space became place through interaction and signification (Maddrell 2010), and the perceived existence of the spirits of deceased ancestors enliven place as powerfully affective, dangerous and gendered. For this community unknown country could be dangerous and should be approached cautiously, with the Elders having the responsibility of mediating with the sentient ancestors. In evidence given in a land claim tribunal Elder George Musgrave explained the importance of speaking in the ancestor's own language, as a demonstration of relationship, indicating that not being able to communicate, and therefore mediate, with the ancestors would be a threat (Langton 2002, 262). While I am in no way suggesting this understanding of ancestral remains is more broadly representative, what it does illustrate is a belief in the capacity of the ancestors to act. National Museum Australia Repatriation Officer Lee Burgess, himself a Yirandali man, explained that it is this agency that makes communities uneasy about taking remains with an uncertain provenance:

Aboriginal people are quite superstitious and spiritual and having the remains of strangers [...] buried on your traditional lands would...make people feel uneasy and may actually make people sick. And if anything...bad in the communities happens to, particularly to an Aboriginal person then...there is a tendency for people to, well not put the blame, but sort of say 'well it's because of these strangers remains on our Country that this has happened'.

Interview with Lee Burgess, National Museum Australia, 20<sup>th</sup> May 2015

This concern about the remains of 'strangers' being buried on traditional lands was reiterated in interviews with the Māori repatriation staff at Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand and by Edward Ayau of Hui Mālama I Nā Kūpuna O Hawai'i Nei with reference to the return of ancestral remains to Hawaii. When asked about unprovenanced remains, Ayau explained that making decisions about remains with uncertain provenance can be a challenging process for communities to go through 'because you make this call and if you're wrong...there will be consequences' (E. Ayau, Interview 15<sup>th</sup> May 2015). Once again, the agency of the remains to impact negatively on health and well-being, and that for some people burying unprovenanced or poorly provenanced remains on their country represents a potential threat, is evident. Even if a community agrees to burial the remains can still present a dilemma. As Lee Burgess explained to me; 'if they're buried then spiritually, for Aboriginal people, that is the best thing you can do, to allow the spirit belonging to those remains to then move on and continue, but then you lose that potential to provenance remains' (L. Burgess, Interview 20<sup>th</sup> May 2015).

However archival research is not the only option for provenancing remains. For those remains from RCS for which there is little archival documentation there are various scientific methods that can provenance the remains to geographical area or communities. While the use of these provenancing methods might appear to resolve the issue of unprovenanced remains, these techniques are not unproblematic in terms of their impact on the ancestral remains and living communities.

The most common approach used on repatriated remains is the non-destructive technique of biometric provenancing. Biometric provenancing is based on taking measurements of remains and takes account of the strong relationship between biology and geography, as given sufficient data it is possible to use statistical analysis to identify the group to which an individual belongs (for example Howells 1995, Willis 1998, Pietrusewsky 1984, Wright 1992).<sup>53</sup> While working on the skeletal remains collection at South Australia Museum, biological anthropologist Colin Pardoe developed a biological provenancing system to assist in the reburial of the remains that had no known place or origin, a process that has since been applied to other groups of unprovenanced remains (for example Pardoe 2006, 2003). In tests, the *Remains Identification Programme* showed at state or regional level placement of individuals was 87-94% correct with analysis of individuals in a specific region being 83% likely to be placed in their correct group or a neighbouring group (Pardoe 2013, 744). In some cases, communities have been willing to take remains that biometrical provenancing suggests are from their country, even if they were not totally sure this was the case. This was a process that Jamie Thomas, former repatriation officer at Museum Victoria, described to me as communities 'taking on the responsibility for returning [ancestral remains] home to rest and looking after them' (J. Thomas, Interview 26<sup>th</sup> June 2015). However, as with a provenance based on archival research, for some communities the lack of certainty is a cause for concern. A concern exacerbated by the mistrust of bio-anthropology as a discipline, a view that Pardoe (2013) and Nilsson Stutz (2008) argue has been fuelled by the negative stereotype of biological anthropology that has formed part of the repatriation debate.

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<sup>53</sup> At the Natural History Museum in London, biometrical provenancing is undertaken prior to all repatriations as the records of remains in the museum's collection are often incomplete and inaccurate. As Margaret Clegg explained, provenance was sometimes changed to increase the scientific and monetary value of remains so biometric provenancing is complimentary to detailed archival research to ensure remains are returned to the right community with as much information as possible (M. Clegg, Interview 30<sup>th</sup> January 2015).

Although sustained by the framing of the repatriation debate as a contest between tradition or science (Teague 2007, Besterman 2004, Hubert 2003), the negative stereotype of the biological anthropologist is rooted in the history of the collection and use of ancestral remains to construct Indigenous people as inferior, taking no account of how Indigenous people saw themselves and giving legitimacy to policies that rejected continuing claims of Aboriginal identity (Fforde 2004). In Tasmania, claims that Truganini was the last pure blood Aboriginal Tasmanian allowed the government to deny the continuing existence of Aboriginal Tasmanians until the 1970s and still continues to cause tensions (ABC News 2016). The mistrust of Western scientific approaches that has then been compounded by more recent instances of researchers viewing certain social groups as 'resources to be mined', an accusation that has been levelled at the Human Genome Diversity Project (Bardill 2014, 163, Lock 2002a, M'charek 2005). As Ngāti Te Ata Elder Nganeko Minhinnick expressed when speaking of her concerns about Indigenous people being studied:- 'you've got all the stuff being done and a hundred years later you don't believe it anymore, so continually we're used as guinea pigs' (N. Minhinnick, Interview 18<sup>th</sup> June 2015).

Tensions between the use of scientific methods for provenancing and the concerns about future uses of the data are also found in the debates about the sampling of remains for DNA and/or isotope analysis. Used to provenance remains that are too fragmentary for biometric provenancing, both techniques require taking small samples which for some people is unacceptable. As Tony Brown, former Senior Curator of Indigenous Cultures at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery told me, 'I'm one of these people that, I like to get as much information, but I draw the line at...DNA testing and all that sort of thing [...] I think that's a real invasion of these old people' (T. Brown, Interview, 6<sup>th</sup> August 2015). Te Papa Tongarewa do not currently carry this type of sampling but as their website states, 'a close eye is being kept on technological developments, particularly as methods become less invasive' (Te Papa

Tongarewa undated-a). What these statements indicate is how a lack of provenance can create difficulties for individuals and communities as they attempt to balance cultural considerations with the potential benefit of gaining knowledge and being able to return their ancestors to country. When telling me about a documentary on repatriation that the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council were working on, Maria Pizzi mentioned that one of contributors stated that finding a balance between knowledge gained from a Western based education and from traditional culture and the teaching of the Elders was a challenge faced by many Aboriginal people. This was especially the case for younger generations, who often felt they were 'living in two worlds' (M. Pizzi, Interview 26<sup>th</sup> June 2015). This view is supported by Mark Dugay-Grist, an archaeological graduate who in *Shaking the Pillars* (2006) writes about his ongoing struggle to resolve the contradictions created by the disjunction between his archaeological world view and his spiritual one.

Along with the issue of destructive sampling, the type of information collected and its potential use is also a concern. While Isotopic techniques investigate the geographical locations a person lived in (for example Font 2015, Lehn 2015, Bartelink 2014, Holobinko 2011), DNA analysis looks for genetic relationships between the remains and living populations. In her description of the use of DNA analysis to identify individuals from mass graves in post war Serbia, Sarah Wagner (2010, 71) explains how blood samples were taken from the living to create a database to which bone samples extracted from the remains could be matched. This is an approach that could also be applied to repatriated ancestral remains, with aDNA from preserved specimens bring processed and sequenced for comparison to samples from current populations, and inferences made from those comparisons (Bardill 2014, 156).<sup>54</sup> At the South Australian Museum the Aboriginal Heritage Project team is planning to use ancient specimens, along with linguistic records and anthropological and

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<sup>54</sup> Ancient DNA (aDNA) is DNA isolated from ancient specimens, or any biological sample not specifically preserved for DNA analyses.

archaeological data, to create a genetic map of Australia. Although Aboriginal communities are collaborating in this research, and the protection of the information from commercial and legal use an important part of the project design (South Australian Museum undated), there are still concerns about what the meanings of projects such as this are for Indigenous peoples.

In the US, tribes have used genetic testing to establish a connection to remains, but for Bardill (2014) by focusing on Western ways of defining relatedness this approach may actually undermine claims to ancestral remains that are based on geographical relationships. Work in this area by Bardill (2014), Nash (2012, 2005) Tallbear (2013a, 2013b) and Weiss and Long (2009) have highlighted the issues raised by genetic testing, the dangers of overgeneralisation (for example see Zolfagharifard 2013) and assumptions that science can provide definitive answers. With reference to the concept of Native American DNA, Tallbear (2013a) and Bardill (2014) argue it is a concept that is constantly being reshaped, but one that has ramifications for the social lives of current communities and the research performed with those communities. Following this argument, it can be suggested that projects such as the one at the South Australian Museum foreground complex questions around the relationships between biology, culture and place, how people understand themselves and their ethnic, racial or national identities (Nash 2012, 671), and the dangers of the dehumanising of self into 'pure genealogy' in order to gain recognition (Povinelli 2002, 234, Smith 2012).

For Yorta Yorta Elder Henry Atkinson the potential uses of DNA and genetic testing is a concern. As he states, 'I am worried about the terms used by non-indigenous for acknowledging one's Aboriginality. Will governments then be able to say that a person's DNA does not have enough of certain characteristics and that therefore they are not Indigenous?' (Atkinson 2010, 7). Atkinson's statement reflects concerns about the political use of genetic

research to define indigeneity creating a geneticized geography of relatedness in a similar way to the race studies of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Following this historical thread, the idea that Western science may be able to provide more answers to the provenance of remains creates an ironic conundrum; it was because of the answers sought by Western science that Aboriginal communities now must deal with the difficulty of unprovenanced remains. Therefore for some, the use of DNA testing to provenance remains represents a potential threat to community and individual identity.

Deanne Hanchant (2002) has argued that the question of whether scientific research should be undertaken on remains highlights the need for Indigenous management of any National Keeping Place for unprovenanced remains. A view supported by Ray Ahmat, former Repatriation Manager for the Yorta Yorta Aboriginal Corporation who, when asked about this issue, explained that he felt the acceptance of DNA testing would be contingent on the information produced remaining under the control of Indigenous people, as 'only by taking control of research will Aboriginal people be able to take control of their own narrative'. (R. Ahmat, Interview 29<sup>th</sup> July 2015). The issues that scientific provenancing of repatriated remains raises around the use and control of the information derived from bodily components, echo those found in the wider debate on bio-information (Greenhough 2006, Parry and Gere 2006, Parry 2004, Waldby and Mitchell 2006). As Parry and Gere (2006, 140) state, concerns about the commodification and monopolisation of gene sequences, who benefits and who could, or should have rights and interests in bioinformation remains unresolved and is an issue I will return to in the next chapter.

### **Scales of Provenance, Scales of Identity**

In looking at the different ways remains can be provenanced, what has emerged are not only different methods of provenancing but also the different scales at which remains can become

labelled as 'unprovenanced' or 'poorly provenanced'. Archival research that provenances remains to a place maybe questioned due to conflicting information, or evidence of historic alterations to records done to increase the scientific and or commercial value of the remains. Also remains may be provenanced to an area, but the actual community they came from may not be known. Moving up again in scale, remains may only have a provenance of a state or territory, a common problem due to local collection of Indigenous remains, an example being the remains at Museum Victoria handed into the museum after a state-wide campaign following the discovery of Aboriginal remains in a masonic lodge in 2002 (R. McWilliams Personal Communication 27<sup>th</sup> May 2015). As Mike Pickering explained in relation to the collection at National Museum Australia, 'sometimes state museums will also inherit remains from their anatomy departments or other institutions, that's how we got ours, primarily from the Institute of Anatomy, and again the Institute of Anatomy was a national institution, it wasn't just a state institution, so you'd have remains from all over the country and other cities as well' (M. Pickering, Interview 12<sup>th</sup> May 2015). As Pickering indicates, in some cases the only provenance for remains is at a national level. At Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, despite the detailed research undertaken, the manager of the repatriation programme Te Herekiele Herewini estimated that for a third of the ancestral remains returned, the only provenance they would be able to achieve was a general New Zealand one. In 2010, the number of unprovenanced kōiwi tangata (human remains) held in the Wāhi Tapu (consecrated repository) at Te Papa was recorded as 166 (Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme 2010, 13).

This is an issue for all repatriation programmes. In the United States the passing of the *Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act* (NAGPRA) in 1990, saw remains not affiliated with any federally recognised tribe become a complex and unresolved problem that left the remains 'sat on museum shelves in legal purgatory' (Colwell-Chanthaphonh et al.

2011, 27). In Australia under the *Indigenous Repatriation Programme*, 'where there is limited historical documentation and the community of origin is not known, the Office for the Arts facilitates the return of the ancestral remains to the care of Australia's major museums in the hope that further work can be done in the future to identify the rightful custodians' (ACIR 2013, 2). The standard practice has become for remains traced to a state or territory to be transferred to the relevant state museum to be cared for 'in trust' while consultations on longer-term options are carried out. While the storage of remains provenanced only to Australia comes within the remit of National Museum Australia who, as of 2013 had more than one hundred such ancestors in their care (ACIR 2013, 2-3).

Following Linnekin's concept of 'nested identities' (1990, 170), the different scales at which remains can be provenanced reflects the way identity can be constructed at different levels. As the remains move further towards the unprovenanced end of the scale they start to be seen as being from an area, state or country. While their meaning as specific individuals is still acknowledged, at the same time they come to be thought of as belonging to, and representative of all Indigenous people at that particular scale. At the time I was undertaking my fieldwork in 2015 the remains repatriated by RCS that had only been provenanced to a state or country were all still held within museums. The remains from RCS therefore contribute to the large number of unprovenanced remains whose physical presence within museums has instigated debates and consultations at national levels.

### **7.3 Taking Responsibility and Finding Ways Forward**

Having already discussed the feelings of having a responsibility or obligation to return ancestors to country in the previous chapter, I want to return to the point made by Jamie Thomas when he spoke of 'taking on the responsibility' for poorly provenanced remains.

When asked about dealing with unprovenanced ancestral remains returned to Hawaii, Edward Ayau described the importance of being led by the ancestors and taking a spiritual approach:-

We did a repatriation trip and it involved three hundred and something sets of remains, mostly skulls, [...] so we did it in one trip. So we had a lot of remains, about sixty or seventy of them in which...the Island of their origin was unknown and while we were on that trip, because it took a while for us travel back there and get there and get them and then go to the next place and get them and get them to the airport, so it took a while, so while we were in that trip every morning when we woke up over the breakfast the Elders who were with us would ask us, 'how did you, you know did you sleep well, how did you dream last night?' And...there was one women, she was middle age, and she would, she kept talking about...the dreams that she had and the faces of the people that she saw and they were clear in her head but she had never seen them before and she was asked questions like 'were you afraid of them?' And she said 'no but they look lost' and so we did a ceremony and everyone felt that those ancestors were reaching out her and so she called her community and asked whether or not a place could be designated in their community for these seventy ancestors, and whether her community would adopt them. So the Hawaiian word is hanai, hanai is where a soul who is not a member of a family is taken in to become a member of the family. [...] It's challenging because you can have run ins with the blood siblings and all that kind of stuff but in that case the, that community made a decision to hanai these seventy or so, and so the decision for us was straight forward, transport them to that island and have them buried there...So there's ways to deal with situations like this...on a cultural slash spiritual level.

Interview with Edward Ayau, Hui Mālama, 15<sup>th</sup> May 2015

In this example, the community took the decision to adopt and take responsibility for the unprovenanced ancestors. All those involved in that repatriation felt that this was culturally the right thing to do, for as Edward Ayau explained, if anyone had felt it not to be the right decision, then it would not have gone ahead. I have already discussed the reasons why a community may not wish to take remains, but this example also raises questions around who should take the responsibility, who should have a voice in the discussions and what these remains represent to different people. These questions are particularly pertinent when dealing with remains that only have a state or country as their provenance, as where remains should be reburied, who should be involved, marking the site of burial and how that site should be and memorialised become sources of debate and tension.

## **Resting Places for the Lost People**

At my first meeting with Lindy Allen and Rob McWilliams at Museums Victoria, they told me about two burials of remains that could only be provenanced to Victoria. The first was at Kings Domain Gardens in Melbourne and the second at Weeroona Cemetery in Greenvale. Although not directly related to the RCS repatriations, these sites were an opportunity to explore the materialities of unprovenanced remains and their role as sites of remembrance and memorial. I therefore want to move away slightly from following the journey of the RCS repatriations to explore these two examples in more detail.

Having been told that the burial at Kings Domain was marked with a boulder, after leaving the museum I walked across Melbourne to try and find the site:-

Once I reached Kings Domain Gardens, I walked across the open green space past a number of sculptures, structures and memorials, including one of Sir John Monash. Having not noticed it on my first walk across the gardens I eventually found the memorial stone that marked the location of the burial. In contrast to the prominent bronze equestrian statues, the site was marked with a rather unassuming boulder near the top of a slope that led down to the road. This was not a busy part of the park, a few people did walk through this area in the time I was there but none paused as they passed the boulder with its embedded plaque. In front of the memorial was a bundle of leaves which reminded me of flowers laid in front a grave and suggested that the site is still recognised and has meanings as a place of burial and memorial. My impression was of a small and intimate memorial on the periphery of the space, a stark contrast to the imposing formal Shrine of Remembrance that is also within the park and that same day was busy with visitors.

Extract from Research Diary 27<sup>th</sup> May 2015



**Figure 7.2:** The memorial stone in Kings Domain Gardens, Melbourne marking the burial of the unprovenanced Koorie ancestral remains at that took place in November 1985.

Photograph: S. Morton May 2015

Having already been involved with serving injunctions against University of Melbourne for the return of the Murray Black collection of ancestral remains, in 1985 Gunditjmara Elder and former Chief Executive Office for the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Jim Berg discovered that Museum Victoria held ancestral remains that were from Victoria but recorded as ‘not provenanced’. When Berg found out the Aboriginal Advisory Committee to the Museum were not making arrangements to have these remains buried, he approached the Melbourne City Parks and Gardens Committee about a possible burial site (Berg 2010, 22). Once a site had been found at Kings Domain Gardens in Melbourne, and Melbourne City Council had agreed to cover the costs, Koorie communities through Victoria were invited to attend the burial.<sup>55</sup> On the day of the burial a procession two hundred people carried the thirty-eight sets of bark wrapped remains through Melbourne to the burial site at Kings Domain (Berg 2010, 24-26).

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<sup>55</sup> Koorie is a generic terms used by contemporary Aboriginal people and communities of Victoria and Southern New South Wales to identify and differentiate themselves from Aboriginal groups from other parts of Australia.

The site of the burial was marked with a boulder with an embedded plaque that states that site is the resting place for the skeletal remains of thirty-eight Aboriginal people who represent of the thirty-eight tribes of Victoria listed on the memorial (see Figures 7.2 and 7.4).

For Arnold Zable who attended the event, it was 'a point of revitalisation for Aboriginal cultural heritage protection' (in Faulkhead and Berg 2010, 48), yet Jim Berg recalls that there was opposition to the reburial, with some people feeling it was not being done the right way or that the Koorie community in Melbourne should have greater control (Berg 2010, 23). Others who were involved argue it was important for Aboriginal organisations to take action at a time there when 'there was a lot of talking going on' (Wayne Thorpe in Faulkhead & Berg 2010, 44). The public march and burial started what is described by Berg as a 'chain reaction' in the return of other ancestral remains from the public, with many of those remains also being unprovenanced (Berg 2010, 27). The effect of the march was in part due to the affective presence of the remains as they passed between people and then were finally buried at Kings Domain. When asked about attending the burial, Maxine Briggs recalled the embodied act of carrying the wrapped remains stating 'I particularly remember picking them up at the beginning, when we had the parcels in our hands and then handing them over at the site' (in Faulkhead and Berg 2010, 43). For Wayne Thorpe and Nicole Cassar, who also took part in the march from the museum to the burial site it was also the affective presence of the ancestral remains made the journey more meaningful and significant than other protest marches they had been involved with (Faulkhead & Berg 2010).

The continuing repatriation of Aboriginal remains meant that by 2002 Museums Victoria held 130 sets of unprovenanced remains and began consulting with Koorie communities across Victoria about another burial. An undertaking that reflects the development of the repatriation programme and improved relations between Museums Victoria and Koorie

Communities that had occurred since the Kings Domain burial in 1985. After the consultations, the museum decided to move forwards with a burial at Weeroona, an Aboriginal owned and controlled cemetery. In this extract, Lindy Allen from Museums Victoria explains some of the complications in preparing for the burial ceremony:

So we had an overseeing body of this group of Elders [...] and then we also had to negotiate with Wurundjeri because it's their land, as to what their role would be. And that got very complex because...we thought that somebody was brokering that...and they weren't, so Wurundjeri got very...concerned about what was going on, they weren't really in the loop. So we very quickly, in the throws, the last throws we had to then broker that and ensure that they were involved, closely involved and they were happy with that and absolutely on the day they were the hosts.

Interview with Lindy Allen, Museums Victoria, 27<sup>th</sup> May 2015

The burial took place in a dedicated area of the cemetery and two pits were dug, the first being for the men woman and children and the second for the fragmentary remains that could not be aged or sexed, a group of remains that became known as 'the lost people'. On the day those attending the burial decided to line the pits with fresh leaves and people brought elements from their own country to add to the graves. The remains, wrapped in hessian, had a fresh leaf added to mark the position of the head before being passed down a line of people to the gravesite (Figure 7.3). Lindy Allen explains these spontaneous acts as people drawing on customary knowledge to be able to resolve how to carry out the burial. For her, this was an important part of it being a state-wide event and she recalled 'being very touched' by a little girl who had brought a toy to put in the grave with the children's remains (L. Allen, Interview 27<sup>th</sup> May 2015). Just as with burials discussed in the previous chapter, ceremony was an important factor with the unknown provenance and physical presence of the remains prompting a combining of traditional knowledge and the creation of an unplanned hybrid practice.



**Figure 7.3:** Images from a digital display in Bunjilaka Aboriginal Culture Centre at Melbourne Museum showing the reburial of Remains at Weeroona Cemetery 2012.

Photographs: S. Morton, May 2015

What the repatriation team at Museums Victoria also made clear was the length of time needed to work through the consultations with different communities, plan the ceremony and organise the event, which involved sending letters to between twelve and fourteen thousand people and holding meetings all around Victoria. As Lindy Allen explained, it took 'seven years to do that' and even then 'not everyone in Victoria agreed with it' (L. Allen, Interview 27<sup>th</sup> May 2015). Even with extensive consultation there were dissenting voices, but as suggested in Chapter 6, this should not necessarily be framed as problematic. As Faulkhead and Berg (2010, xvi) argue, the Indigenous nations of Australia are not homogenous and disagreements should be accepted as a reflection of the different cultures, beliefs and differences of opinion between individuals and communities.

At both the Kings Domain and Weeroona burials, the remains came to represent all Koorie people in Victoria as well as each individual community, as shown by the list of tribes on the memorial boulder at Kings Domain (see Figure 7.4) and the inclusion of elements of country in the Weeroona burials. Yet what also emerges from a comparison of the burials are the differences between the memory sites they have created. Kings Domain is on hill overlooking

the Queen Victoria Monument in Melbourne. For some, including Sharon Faulkhead, it is a perfect choice, as it was symbolic of the Ancestors reclaiming land belonging to the King and then 'watching over Queen Victoria and consequently the land of Victoria that is named after her' (Faulkhead and Berg 2010, 35). Following Hay et al.'s (2004) study of the memorial landscape of Prince Henry Gardens in Adelaide, the placing of the bolder in the memorial landscape of Kings Domain can be read as a challenge to the hegemonic memory that ignores Indigenous histories. In writing about memorial sites Dwyer and Alderman (2008) suggest they can be viewed as a materialised discourses emplaced in landscape. However, Till (2003) has pointed out those who are responsible for creating memorials cannot control how those place are perceived, understood and interpreted; the 'social meanings of monuments and places are not fixed' (Hay et al. 2004, 212).

The shifting social meanings of the Kings Domain Memorial can be seen through the selection of the site as the location for a sacred fire and smoking ceremony during the Camp Sovereignty protest against the 2006 Commonwealth games (McIntyre 2013). For Wayne Thorpe, who had attended the reburial in 1985 the memorial was chosen as a site of protest as it was a place significant to 'the struggle and the respect that connects us to our ancestors' (in Faulkhead and Berg 2010, 47). However, Jim Berg (2010, 26-27), while supporting the concept of the burial site being a sacred place, felt that the fact that some of the people involved in the 2006 protest had chosen not to be involved with the burial was upsetting and 'an insult to Our Ancestors, and to all the people who took part in the march', highlighting the strong emotional connection Berg has both to the site and to the memory of the burial ceremony.

The burial and site and memorial at Kings Domain are now registered as a significant Aboriginal site under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*, but at the time the burial ceremony

was being planned there were objections that the site held no significance for the Koorie community (The Herald 1985). Another issue was that Kings Domain is a public site, as Mark Dugay-Grist states; 'I find peace over there. But some others don't find peace. Some people say it's not private. Some people say that it should be in a more secluded area' (in Faulkhead and Berg 2010, 35). Attending a meeting about the second burial of unprovenanced remains, Jill Gallagher recalls the comment being made that 'we don't want to make the same mistake that they made back when they buried the people at Kings Domain' (in Faulkhead and Berg 2010, 40-41). At Weeroona the boundaries of the site are controlled by being situated within an established cemetery site, while the site at Kings Domain, although more explicitly marked, has porous boundaries with the surrounding park, blending into and becoming part of the everyday landscape (Szpunar 2010, Marshall 2004). So in choosing to bury the remains in a private cemetery and distinctly Aboriginal space, in some respects Weeroona is a counter memory site to Kings Domain. This introduces a concept of public/private space that I will return to, but first I want to consider the issues created and the proposed options for dealing with unprovenanced remains at a national scale.

### **A National Keeping Place**

As previously stated, of the remains repatriated by RCS in 2003 there were six sets just provenanced to Australia. If further archival research does not reveal more information or communities decide they do not want to accept remains based on the results of biometric provenancing, there are questions around the future for these remains and the meanings that they hold for both Indigenous and non-indigenous interests. On arriving in Australia, I became aware of the discussions about a National Keeping Place for unprovenanced remains which, despite two national consultations addressing the issue, is not a debate currently reflected in the wider repatriation literature.

In Australia, the notion of a National Keeping Place for unprovenanced ancestral remains was suggested when the first part of the Edinburgh University collections were returned in 1991 (Hanchant 2002, 314). Between 1997 and 1998, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) held consultations that included the issue of unprovenanced remains, followed by another consultation in 2004 carried out by National Museum Australia on behalf of the Australian Government. Both consultations reflected the concern that museums, despite the best intentions of the staff, were not culturally appropriate locations for ancestral remains and the proposal of a National Keeping Place was supported (ACIR 2014, 8). This supports the argument put forward in the previous chapter that ancestral remains stores are liminal spaces in which remains are not completely out of place but not in their proper place either. What also emerged from the consultations was that Indigenous people wanted control and ownership over the process of establishing any such place (ACIR 2013, 3). In 2013 the Advisory Committee for Indigenous Repatriation (ACIR) sent out a discussion paper and survey to seek opinions from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities about the location, form and function that a National Keeping Place might take.<sup>56</sup> Now referred to as the National Resting Place consultation, the results published in 2014 recommended a site in Canberra, within sight of Parliament House, that would act as a resting place for the ancestors and be both a ceremonial space and a public space. The report also states the National Resting Place should be controlled and run by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the extent of any further provenancing work should be a matter for the governing authority of the site, taking into account 'prevailing community opinion' (ACIR 2014, 1).

In New Zealand, the Karanga Aotearoa repatriation programme at Te Papa Tongarewa are undertaking a similar consultation process, hosted meetings around the Country to canvas

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<sup>56</sup> The Advisory Committee for Indigenous Repatriation is an all-Indigenous advisory committee appointed by the Minister for the Arts to advise the Australian Government on policy and issues related to Indigenous repatriation.

perspectives. As in Australia, the discussions are still ongoing but the interment of unprovenanced remains in a Putunga Kohahi (mausoleum) in Wellington is one suggestion (Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme 2010a, 14). When asked about National Keeping Place discussions in Hawaii, Edward Ayau explained that he felt that it was an idea that developers who want to use burial sites were pushing. In Ayau's view, a National Keeping Place would act as a location where the remains could go, undermining the case to leave the burials undisturbed and therefore could be a threat to ancestors already buried (E. Ayau, Interview 15<sup>th</sup> May 2015). Although the results of the consultations in Australia and New Zealand indicate the idea of a National Keeping Place or National Resting Place is viewed more favourably, Lindy Allen at Museums Victoria raised the issue that for some people, a National Keeping Place would function as 'just another museum' (L. Allen, Interview 27<sup>th</sup> May 2015). For the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC), the fact the current conversation is being state driven is problematic, as for them this undermines Aboriginal autonomy and moves towards sovereignty. As Caroline Spotswood explained, for the TAC the proposal of a National Keeping Place is government 'taking away self-determination' (C. Spotswood, Interview 7<sup>th</sup> August 2015). A view that highlights the importance of understanding who is shaping the memorial landscape and the narratives and representations contained within it.

In Australia, a National Resting Place as envisaged by the Aboriginal Committee for Indigenous Repatriation, would function as a mausoleum with the remains stored within the monument while work to provenance them and return remains back to country continues, with the site managed by an Indigenous body under a custodianship agreement (ACIR 2013, 4). For Lee Burgess from National Museum Australia, having a space and organisation separate from the museum is important, as many Indigenous people regard museums as having a history of taking Indigenous remains and artefacts, but he also stressed the advantages of working collaboratively. As he explained: 'my feeling is that...yes there should

be a place established to house unprovenanced remains and there should be [...] Indigenous involvement, but not exclusively. I think there are lots of benefits in partnerships, particularly people like Mike [Pickering] and David [Kaus] can actually have a hand in providing advice, sort of in a more of an advisory role, and certainly under the directorship or leadership of a senior...Indigenous person would be appropriate as well' (L. Burgess, Interview 20<sup>th</sup> May 2015). For Lindy Allen, the key to the Weeroona burial was not just consultation but working with Committee of Elders as this gave the process legitimacy and authority. In discussing the reburial of remains at Weeroona Cemetery, Lindy Allen highlighted the amount of organisation required and the burden of responsibility this placed on staff at the cemetery, who for the most part were community volunteers. As she explains, 'it was a state-wide funeral, it's a long time afterward but it is a funeral and we need to think about it in those terms' (L. Allen, Interview 27<sup>th</sup> May 2015). Regarding a National Resting Place, other museum staff reiterated the points made by Lee Burgess and Lindy Allen regarding recognising the need for there to be Aboriginal authority but also the advantages of working in partnership, raising further questions around what and where the space will be, what it will represent and who will it be for.

## **7.4 The Meanings of Place**

In the discussions and consultations on where a National Keeping Place or National Resting Place should be, there have been suggestions of places based on their spiritual importance and meaning. In New Zealand, Te Rerenga Wairua, the area at the top of North Island where Māori believe the spirit travels back to its traditional homeland has been suggested (Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme 2010a). Edward Ayau also expressed the importance of spiritual places to native Hawaiians:

Sometimes we'll have remains from a particular Island but it won't say where on the island, but in our culture we have places designated on each Island called leina, leina-a-ka-'uhane, and leina-a-ka-'uhane are places where the people believe that after a person dies their spirit will go and that's the leaping off point to the next...place of existence which is called po'ele which is Hawaiian for darkness or night. So there are places where this can happen so our, you know one of the decisions we made once was well that will be the place We would want to bury them because we may not know where they're from but we're providing them the means by which to make the leap and return back to their families.

Interview with Edward Ayau, Hui Malama, 15<sup>th</sup> May 2015

In Australia, Uluru is one of the sites suggested for the burial of unprovenanced remains due to its spiritual nature and central location, and in Tasmania the scattering of cremated unprovenanced ancestral remains takes place at the symbolic site of putalina.

In 1847, the Aboriginal Tasmanians who survived the forced removal to Flinders Island were moved to the ex-convict station at putalina, also known as Oyster Cove. Abandoned for over a hundred years, the Aboriginal community reclaimed the site in 1984 and in 1995 the Tasmanian Government officially returned putalina to Aboriginal control. For pagmarena Elder pooralee-amee-amatta (Jim Everett) the reclaiming of the putalina was an important demonstration of Aboriginal identity; 'you've got to convince others, especially in your own state Tasmania, that we're still here...I think the biggest impact we had was when we took Oyster Cove back' (National Museum Australia undated). In selecting putalina as the resting place for the unprovenanced ancestral remains, it has become a place bounded up with remembrance and it is now the site of an annual festival that celebrates Aboriginal culture and community. In their work on memorial landscapes, Dwyer and Alderman (2008) highlight how festivals and pageants can be used to foreground the historical identity of places, but that visitors can react differently to the same story. This appears to be the case in Tasmania, as some people I spoke to had concerns about the use of putalina as both a resting place for the unprovenanced ancestors and a festival site, as expressed here by Julie Gough, a

Tasmanian Aboriginal woman whose research and art practice involves uncovering and re-presenting subsumed and often conflicting histories:

Anyway so the Oyster Cove history is so important because to me, it's a great sadness place. You go there and it's strange and it's peaceful but quite and contemplative, it really echoes sounds of the birds. But each year the Aboriginal Centre holds a festival there and I've been to quite a few festivals and with mixed feelings about being at the festival run by that corporation, but there's other people there from non-Aboriginal, everyone's welcome, but you can feel ostracised...I suppose it depends on how, whatever your case, but in my case, but the feeling there to me is...not a festival place.

Interview with Julie Gough, 6<sup>th</sup> August 2015

Scattering the ashes of cremated unprovenanced remains at Putalina has created a memorial landscape in which divergent memories are anchored in place (Hoelscher and Alderman 2004, 248). Yet as seen at Kings Domain, the ongoing interpretation of that landscape is contested. Following the discussion in the previous chapter about the access to place and the availability of funding, it is also important to consider these aspects in this context. As Phil Gordon, a member of the ACIR committee, explained in relation to finding a site for a National Resting Place in Canberra, at one point an area of land was suggested that 'was within eyesight of the National Parliament and we [...] got very excited about the symbolism of it all, but the Government decided it didn't have any money' (P. Gordon, Interview 8<sup>th</sup> May 2015). So although, as Johnson (1995) argues, the locations of new memorial sites are not arbitrary but consciously situated, the availability of space and finances are also factors that need to be taken into consideration.

### **Memorial and Memory**

As already discussed, for some communities having a stranger buried on their country is a threat. When the notion of having a Keeping Place at Uluru was first raised in 1991, the Elders raised their concerns about having such a large number of unknown people on their country (Hanchant 2002, 314). As well as a spiritual threat, there are also practical issues around land

ownership and continued management and protection. Having discussed the challenges the Ngarrindjeri face with regard to protecting burials in the previous chapter, Ngarrindjeri Elder Major Sumner's view that a National Resting Place should be a space where the remains are safe is understandable: 'one big memorial where everyone goes, that would be it, you got people looking after it, you got people watching it all the time, you got people there that's employed to...have it looking good' (M. Sumner, Interview 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2015). What Major Sumner also raises here is the concept of a National Resting Place as a memorial and as Hay et al. (2004) points out, the space in which memorials are placed is critical to their significance. In Australia, the position of the Aboriginal Committee on Indigenous Repatriation (ACIR) is that the best option is for the internment of unprovenanced remains in a National Resting Place located in Canberra. For the ACIR, the site would be a sacred, symbolic place to 'bring closure for the ancestors so that their dignity is recognised' but it would also act as a political statement (ACIR 2013, 4). As Phil Gordon told me, having the Keeping Place in Canberra would mean it was 'in the politicians face every day' but it would also create a distinctly Aboriginal place within a memorial landscape that already includes other nationally significant cultural institutions, most notably the Australian War Memorial (P. Gordon, Interview 8<sup>th</sup> May 2015). For the ACIR, a National Keeping Place in Canberra would bring a national focus to historic injustices and be a vehicle for national reconciliation.

In both Australia and New Zealand, the National War Memorials are sites where public memory becomes national history and heritage, and this heritage is a marker of identity (Walton 2015, Jones and Birdsall-Jones 2008). At the Australian National War memorial in Canberra, efforts have been made to expand the narrative to include the role of Indigenous personnel, but the debates around recognising the contribution to the Australian Defence Force by Indigenous Australians and the lack of discussion about the frontier war continue

(Daley 2015a).<sup>57</sup> For some, such as Ngambri Elder Shane Mortimer<sup>58</sup>, a National Resting Place would act as a memorial to Indigenous Australians killed in frontier conflicts and massacres (Daley 2015b). What Mortimer's suggestion highlights, is the intersection of discussions about unprovenanced remains with conversations around the representation of Aboriginal historical narratives within Australia's memorial landscapes. This follows Marshall's (2004) suggestion that the material presence of a counter-hegemonic monument can be used to remedy a lack of recognition of loss, or contribution, within a memorial landscape, creating the 'trial by space' that is necessary to facilitate social compensation, moral reflection and public education (Lefebvre 1991 cited in Burk 2003, 317).



**Figure 7.4:** Plaque on the memorial bolder at Kings Domain that lists the 38 Koorie tribes in Victoria.

Photograph: S. Morton May 2015

<sup>57</sup> On the hillside behind the National War Memorial in Canberra, there is the Aboriginal War Memorial, an Aboriginal space that appears to have been constructed in reaction to the exclusive space of the National War Memorial Site (Cooke 2000).

<sup>58</sup> The Ngambri were the custodians of the country south-west of Weereewaa (Lake George), which includes the modern Australian Capital Territory.

For Jill Gallagher, one of the benefits of the public memorial in Kings Domain Gardens is that the plaque lists the names of all the Koorie tribes in Victoria (see Figure 7.4), as non-indigenous people walking through the gardens could just happen across the site and say ‘well gee! There are Aboriginal people in Victoria’ (in Faulkhead and Berg 2010, 40). This suggests that for Gallagher the memorial is an important display of identity to the wider public. Yet the debates about where the second burial of unprovenanced Victorian remains should be, and the decision to bury the remains in a private Aboriginal cemetery reveals the tensions between the site being a resting place for the ancestors and a place that makes a political statement through a public memorial.

### **Private Grief, Public Memorial**

It has been suggested that a memorial in Canberra would raise public awareness of repatriation and the meanings of the ancestral remains to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities, and as such could become a site for commemorative ceremonies in a similar way to the National War Memorial (Walton 2015). As Lee Burgess from National Museum Australia explains:

I sort of envisage a National Keeping Place of sorts being like a memorial, a place where...people can come and the general public can come and learn about that history and sort of a respectful and quiet sort of a place with Indigenous involvement...and an educational aspect as well as...for teaching [...] the general public, or even school groups, about repatriation and why these remains ended up where they are.

Interview with Lee Burgess, National Museum Australia, 20<sup>th</sup> May 2015

Te Herekiele Herewini, Repatriation Manager at Te Papa Tongarewa, expressed a similar vision for a national cemetery or memorial in New Zealand stating that it could be ‘a way of educating ourselves about [...] how we developed as a nation’ (T. Herewini, Interview 5<sup>th</sup> June 2015). However, in order to fulfil this function the National War Memorials in Canberra and Auckland are open to the public and attract an audience of local, national and international

visitors; they are spaces where private emotion and grief is displayed in public (Burk 2003, 317).

At the Auckland War Memorial in New Zealand, which is at Auckland Museum, architecture and signage is used to separate the memorial spaces and create a different atmosphere (Figures 7.5 and 7.6). As noted on my own visit:



**Figure 7.5**



**Figure 7.6**

The sign at the entrance to Memorial Gallery inside Auckland Museum that explains to visitors that this is a commemorative area and that therefore they should act respectfully and the memorial outside the main entrance to the museum

Photographs: S. Morton June 2015

The war memorial within the museum is a rectangular space with door at either end. Signs at each entrance indicate that this space is considered differently to other areas of the museum and as I approached the door, a group of children were being told by a member of museum staff that they needed to be respectful once they entered and not shout or run around. Going into the memorial space the difference to the adjacent galleries was notable, even though the atmosphere in the War galleries was fairly sombre, this space was clearly designed to create a reverential atmosphere, which as I sat and observed people moving through and interacting in the space, had a notable impact on their behaviour.

Extract from research diary 17<sup>th</sup> June 2015

As Ignjatovic (2010) notes, performance at memorial sites allows the living to connect with dead, fitting with Maddrell's concept of the memorial landscape as a cultural process experienced through embodied performance (Maddrell 2010, 138). The Auckland memorial is a space where the absent dead are made present. In contrast, in a National Keeping Place the

remains of the dead would be present within the space, a distinction that brings me back to the tensions between a National Keeping Place as a final resting place for the ancestors and as a site of public memorial.

In speaking about finding a location to bury the unprovenanced remains from Victoria, Wade Morgan, who works on repatriation at the Yorta Yorta Aboriginal Corporation, explained that 'the main hurdle was finding a place where people from all around Victoria could go any time without having to book in' (W. Morgan, Interview 29<sup>th</sup> July 2015). One of the reasons for selecting Weeroona was it was already an Aboriginal cemetery that people could visit.

Although there is nothing preventing entry to the cemetery or monitoring of visitors, the signs at the entrance make it clear that this is an Aboriginal site that you should have permission to enter, even though no details on who to approach for permission are given. Weeroona is a very different site to the public space at Kings Domain as I discovered when I stopped to visit the cemetery on my way out of Melbourne.



**Figure 7.5:** The sign at the entrance to Weeroona Cemetery, Victoria.

Photograph: S. Morton July 2015

The site is off a small side road and is not well marked although there is a sign once you reach the car park. Although there were some marked graves visible from outside the site it did not have the appearance of a traditional European graveyard looking more like parkland than a cemetery. The cemetery website makes it clear that you should have authorisation to go into the cemetery and the sign at the entrance reiterated this, although there is no actual control over access. As I did not have permission and wished to be respectful, I had no intention of entering the site, however as I was taking a photograph of the sign (Figure 6.7) a car pulled into the car park. Two women, one carrying flowers, and a small girl got out of the car and one of the women approached me to ask if I had an issue with the cemetery being authorised access only. Her demeanour was defensive and she seemed unsettled by seeing me but when I explained I was a researcher interested in repatriation and had not meant to be disrespectful in anyway, she seemed to relax slightly. As she began to walk back towards her companions she turned and said that 'it's important to check, they're always trying to take things from us', leaving me with the impression that rather than being angry about my presence she had taken it as a potential threat to the cemetery as a defined Aboriginal space.

Extract from Research Diary, 30<sup>th</sup> July 2015

The tensions between public and private spaces that arose in Victoria are also apparent in the New Zealand discussions. Underlining the tension in these debates is the contrast between the two main suggestions put forward; storage of the remains at a National Keeping Place that continues to provide provenancing work, or laying them to rest at a sacred place creating a private space for the community to mourn. Like Weeroona, this would create a distinct Indigenous space, yet this approach does not preclude the construction of a memorial that makes political statement and serves as a space of public education. As Dwyer and Alderman (2008) suggest, where the past is remembered actively shapes the process of commemoration and there is often a social negotiation and struggle over where is best to emplace that memory within the cultural landscape. While this concept of social negotiation and struggle can be applied to the debates about unprovenanced ancestral remains, the issue here is not just where to emplace memory in the landscape but where to emplace the ancestral remains; what must also be considered is the material presence of the remains themselves.

## 7.5 The Meanings of the Lost People



**Figure 7.6:** The Roll of Honour at the Australian War Memorial that records the names of members of the Australian armed forces who died in service  
Photograph: D. Gobbes April 2012

In her study of the Sebrenica-Potočari Memorial Centre, Sarah Wagner (2010) discusses the importance of discovering the identity of the remains to the international community who saw the identification of the missing as means of social repair and part of the move towards reconciliation. At other sites of mourning, such as the Australian War Memorial (Figure 7.6), names come to stand in for the missing body. As Thomas Lacquer states in relation to bodies from WWI that are hidden in the ground, 'they cannot be their own memorials', but that through marking of graves or listing of names the human imagination is forced to deal with the numbers involved; 'to see, as concretely as possible, what a million dead men look like' (Lacquer 1994, 161). The unprovenanced ancestral remains under discussion here represent almost the opposite of the names listed at the war memorial. Unlike the remains at the Sebrenica, although it may be possible to discover where they came from, for the majority their identities are lost and very few will ever be named; the material remains of the body come to stand in for the missing identities.

In the previous chapter, I highlighted how the material presence of ancestral remains could be distressing they can embody the historical injustice done to their ancestors and the loss of culture and land that continues to affect the lives of many Indigenous people. For Lindy Allen, being involved in the Weeroona burial confirmed the distressing nature of repatriation but also highlighted that unprovenanced remains can be particularly challenging. This is due to their lack of provenance but also that the fragmentary nature of some the remains means they cannot be aged or sexed, and consequently the appropriate ceremonies cannot be carried out (L. Allen, Interview 27<sup>th</sup> May 2015). In *Morbid Curiosities*, Alberti (2011) suggests that the fragmentation of the body makes it easier to objectify as traces of identity hinder the objectification that transforms human body parts into material culture. As seen with Yagan's head, being able to give a name to fragmented body parts allows them to become representative of that person and aspects of their biography, in Yagan's case his resistance against the British invasion. It is perhaps then not surprising that when considering the impact and meaning of repatriation for communities the focus is often on remains with known biographies, or biographies uncovered by research (for example Fforde 2002b, 2004, Palm Island 2002, Roginski 2015, Suvendrini 1996, Henderson 2014). Yet at the Weeroona burial the most fragmentary remains were just as distressing; if not more so; what was missing and unknown was as affecting as what was present and known.

According to Lindy Allen, what was particularly distressing for those involved with the Weeroona burial was the number of remains, as she explained, 'it's high numbers and you might have for one individual just a single finger bone. So, it's this whole thing of not just the volume but then it comes down to this is all there is that we can establish as being one person, so...they found it quite hard' (L. Allen, Interview 27<sup>th</sup> May 2015). For Edward Ayau of Hui Mālama, the poor records kept by museums that have led to these remains being unprovenanced is a source of anger as the lack of documentation and archival information is a

sign of disrespect and reveals the trade and objectification of ancestral remains that can be even more distressing than the collection of a named individual. In an example from the US, when Denver Museum described the unprovenanced remains it wanted to repatriate as 'lacking in value' due to an absence of information, one of the tribal representatives present described it as being 'slapped on the back and punched in the face at the same time' (Colwell-Chanthaphonh et al. 2011, 30). Just as remains repatriated to communities can create and play into politics at a local level (see Chapter 6), the physical presence of the remains not only feeds into conversations about land, ownership and memorial at state and national levels, but forces them.

In her research project on the mass graves uncovered in Cape Town, South Africa, Karen Till found that the appearance of the bodies was not just an opportunity for forensic investigation (see Cooke and van Riemsdijk 2014). By forcing people to confront and consider the violent past of the city the remains became a catalyst for discussions about historical colonial and racial injustices. With the continued repatriation of unprovenanced remains comes the reminder of the historical status of Indigenous people within the wider community, a status that for many, continues into the present day. At the Weeroona burial, singer songwriter Archie Roach spoke about the bundles that only consisted of a finger bone as once being hands that held babies and made things, humanising them and giving them an identity within the community. But he also used the concepts of stolen identities and separation of the physical body from culture to draw a direct parallel between the unprovenanced ancestral remains and the stolen generations.<sup>59</sup> As Lindy Allen recalls 'he equated their experience as bones in a museum to being a stole generation, which of course they are' (L. Allen, Interview 27<sup>th</sup> May 2015). For Allen, the burial was like a funeral but marking the passing of history

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<sup>59</sup> The Stolen Generations were children of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent removed from their families by the Australian government agencies and church missions. The removals mostly took place between the early 1900s and the 1960s although in some areas the practice continued into the 1970s.

rather than individuals, suggesting the remains buried at Weeroona had come to represent the past. This is a concept acknowledged by the Aboriginal Committee for Indigenous Repatriation who state that the establishment of a National Keeping Place 'would serve as a memorial to all the ancestors removed from their traditional homelands bringing together the removal of ancestral remains with the removal of the living' (ACIR 2013, 4), signifying that in not having a provenance, ancestral remains both belong to, and are representative of the Indigenous community at a national scale.

### **Identity, Indigeneity and Political Agency**

At Weeroona, the unprovenanced remains brought together communities from across Victoria. In not belonging to one community the remains symbolically belonged to all and passing the remains down a line of people from different communities and the addition of the different elements from country to the graves, gave the remains an identity as part of the wider Aboriginal community. For Edward Ayau, the grounding of repatriation in a very spiritual approach and the adoption of unprovenanced remains described earlier allows the expression of significant Hawaiian values, such as *mālama*, the value of caring for others and *kuleana*, the value of protecting. This implies that for Ayau the adoption of unprovenanced ancestral remains is not only a display of identity as an Indigenous Hawaiian, but can also act to strengthen that identity. Conversely concerns about the risks involved in taking responsibility for ancestors that are not your own demonstrates the importance individual community identity. Even in a burial that brings communities together at a state level there is acknowledgment of difference, examples being the symbolic number of bundles at Kings Domain and the addition of elements of country at Weeroona. So, the burials of unprovenanced remains that have occurred have elements that confirm individual community identity while also acting as an acknowledgment of a shared history between different Aboriginal communities.

At a state level, unprovenanced remains can act as agents in the creation of social networks between communities. Based on his experience of repatriation in Victoria and as a member of the Aboriginal community, Jamie Thomas felt having local processes was important as it enables the building of relationships, and he voiced his concern that centralising the process or having a central memorial or Keeping Place may negatively affect these processes of local relationship building. However, remains that cannot be provenanced at state level can have a social role at a national one. As Te Herekiele Herewini explained, in New Zealand the *toi moko* (tattooed heads) are not just a tool for educating the wider public about history but also offer the Māori restitution to their own history:

It's important is because they're old, they're ancient, the other thing is that they...are fallen warriors and so through acknowledging Māori soldiers participating in World War I, World War II we're actually learning that...from the 1770s or up to the 1840s those Māori ancestors that died in battle they were actually protecting their tribal territories. So, their heads may have been taken and traded overseas by the enemy but when they come home they actually belong to us, the family of origin. And because we don't necessarily know who exactly the family of origin is there's becoming a growing understanding that they actually belong to all of us as Māori, and so a special place may need to be put aside for them as well because they're our fallen warriors.

Interview with Te Herekiele Herewini, Te Papa Tongarewa, 5<sup>th</sup> June 2015

In lacking identity and link to place the unprovenanced *toi moko* become conceptualised as belonging to all Māori. In some respects, this echoes the idea of the Unknown Soldier whose body comes to symbolise universality and sacrifice on a national scale (Johnson 1995, Clarke 2010, Ignjatovic 2010, Wittman 2011).

Writing about remembrance, Deborah Marshall (2004) identifies remembrance as embodied yet focused on the disembodied. This perhaps goes some way to explaining the need for physical remains that become the focus, as in the tomb of the Unknown Soldier, or the lists of names giving an identity to what is absent. Yet unprovenanced repatriated remains cannot be equated to the use of a set of remains symbolically stripped of identity. In the case of the unprovenanced remains it is the affective presence of the remains themselves that has driven

the discussions, and their emotive materiality that has intersected with a lack of representation within the memorial landscape. What also contrasts to the Unknown Soldier example are the numbers of remains. The emotive materiality and political agency of the unprovenanced remains is not only linked to their lack of identity, but also to their quantity. The remains are not just symbolic; it is their material presence that is forcing action.

## **7.6 Conclusions**

Having researched the background to the RCS repatriation before going to Australia and New Zealand, I was aware that RCS had returned remains for which there was very little archival information about their provenance. Despite this I had not given much thought to the issues this would create in terms of repatriation practice or the meanings that these remains may hold. Although those working in repatriation and many Indigenous communities are aware of the issues relating to unprovenanced remains, the wider literature does not currently engage with these discussions. Becoming aware of this issue led my research in a new direction, as the most likely future for the most poorly provenanced remains from RCS is that they become part of a national assemblage of unprovenanced remains.

In lacking an identity, unprovenanced ancestral remains create a problem that needs to be resolved, while also foregrounding a history of forced removal and loss of cultural identity. Unlike the Unknown Soldier, whose body comes to symbolise universality through the stripping of identity, the loss of identity that has allowed unprovenanced ancestral remains to become representative of all Indigenous peoples at a national scale has not been done by design. By becoming situated as the 'lost people' unprovenanced remains come to represent loss on many levels, and their ability to embody loss and a painful history at a national level has given them political agency and symbolic efficacy (Verdery 1999).

In Australia and New Zealand, discussions about where to place unprovenanced remains have highlighted the absence of a memorial within the national memorial landscape and the consultations about a National Resting Place have become part of a narrative of restitution. As Te Herekiele Herewini explains in relation to ancestral remains in New Zealand; ‘when they are buried sometime in the future, we want some acknowledgement that the museums were involved, the directors of the museums were involved. And it may involve a situation where they are given a national burial site and that is the only way the New Zealand public is going to know that this was a dark period in our history’ (T. Herewini, Interview 5<sup>th</sup> June 2015). Therefore, in not having a provenance, unprovenanced remains have come to represent a period of difficult and distressing history. The argument for bringing them together at a National Resting Place is that this would be a space that would disrupt the idealistic view of a relatively uniform Australian heritage (Jones and Birdsall-Jones 2008) and promote a better public understanding of what is currently a silenced history and past.

However, the idea of a National Keeping Place is not unproblematic, as in becoming representative of all Indigenous people and in memorialising that meaning as part of the national reconciliation agenda, there is the possibility of ideas about Indigeneity becoming a fixed body of knowledge (Russell 2012). The other source of tension in the National Keeping Place discussions comes from the continuing affective presence of the remains as ancestors. In this debate, the ambivalent agency of ancestral remains noted in the previous two chapters again becomes evident as the agency of the remains as unconscious material objects comes into conflict with their agency as ancestors who continue to make demands on society, require respectful treatment and have the potential to cause harm.

Having previously argued for the reframing of repatriation as part of a process of decolonisation in which there is space for communities to discuss, debate and disagree on how to proceed, I would also suggest that the discussions around how to deal with unprovenanced be understood in the same terms. Debates about how to deal with unprovenanced remains at local, state and national levels are going to continue and therefore to understand the impacts of repatriation it is important to recognise the role of unprovenanced remains as social and political agents at different scales.

What the issue of unprovenanced remains has also foregrounded is the unease about the use of scientific methods for researching provenance. While I expected the cultural taboo of taking samples from ancestral remains to be topic of discussion, what became clear during my fieldwork were the concerns around the future use of this data and who should have control of this type of information. Having suggested concerns about the control of information derived from ancestral remains intersect with wider debates around rights in relation to the use of bioinformation, this is a discussion I will pick up in the next chapter as I move away from considering the remains themselves to examine the agency of the documentation about them.

## 8. Multiple and Mobile: Mapping the Documentation

The Elders of this region have instructed me as their representative to write and request the return of these peoples remains so they may continue their spiritual pass.

Letter from Geoff Clark to Sir Terence English 13<sup>th</sup> July 1990  
Royal College of Surgeons of England Museum Archive Exit File 92

I must be able to explain to Council what interests you represent and to check with other interested parties the validity of your claim. I am sure that you will appreciate our anxiety that these remains should not be placed in the wrong hands. There are well-known examples of this happening and you have already urged us not to release them to the Australian High Commissioner in London. Rest assured that we will give the matter the most careful attention and that the remains will thereby suffer no loss of dignity.

Letter from Sir Terence English to Geoff Clark 15<sup>th</sup> July 1990  
Royal College of Surgeons of England Museum Archive Exit File 92

### 8.1 Introduction

These extracts from letters in The Royal College of Surgeons of England (RCS) museum archives relate to a request from Geoff Clark, Chairman of the Brambuk Cultural Centre for the return of ancestral remains. In his reply, College President Sir Terence English highlights the College's concerns around making sure remains were returned to the right people and explains that the Council will discuss the request at their next meeting. After this meeting, the College informed Geoff Clark that RCS would only consider requests for the return of ancestral remains from 'members of the relevant local tribal group'.<sup>60</sup> Having made a request meeting this requirement, in February 1991 RCS notified Clark that under the current policy they could only return remains of named individuals to close kin and therefore they were denying his repatriation request on this basis. It was only after a change in policy almost ten

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<sup>60</sup> Letter from Sir Terence to Geoff Clark 19<sup>th</sup> September 1990, Royal College of Surgeons of England Museum Archive Exit File 92

years later that RCS agreed to return these remains, their repatriation taking place with the rest of Indigenous Australian remains in 2003.<sup>61</sup>

As seen in this example and the use of archival information described in the previous chapters, the RCS museum archives are a rich and detailed source of information from which to reconstruct the history of repatriation at RCS. Following work in historical geography which acknowledges the uneven survival of documents and that the process of creating an archive not as a 'value-free exercise in preservation' but rather a social practice that affects the material itself (Moore 2010, 263, Ogborn 2003, Kurtz 2001, Gagen et al. 2007), I would argue that the RCS exit files are not only a source of information about the repatriations and the people involved, but can also be read against the grain to explore how repatriated material was, and is conceptualised within the museum. Along with the information related to the process of returning ancestral remains, RCS also holds information about the remains themselves, information duplicated and shared as part of repatriation practice. This is a part of the process that has received little consideration and yet, as seen in the previous chapter, information about remains and who controls that information are important issues. Therefore, in this chapter I want to move away from the materialities of the remains, to consider the documentation that travels with them, independently of them and, as seen at RCS, continues to reside in the locations they have moved through.

Within the museum sector there has been much discussion about the restitution of cultural artefacts (Hitchens 1997, Greenfield 1989, Tythacott and Arvanitis 2014, Kendall 2011) but less attention paid to the meanings, use and management of documentation once the objects to which it relates have left the collections. Nor is the process of deaccessioning considered in

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<sup>61</sup> Draft Letter for the attention of Sir Terence English undated Royal College of Surgeons of England Museum Archive Exit File 92

the growing body of work relating to the geographies of museum collections, practices of inventory and the role of decay (for example Geoghegan and Hess 2014, Driver 2013, Hill 2006a, 2007, 2006b, Patchett 2010, DeSilvey 2006, 2012, 2007). Exploring the materialities of the documentation related to the RCS repatriations is therefore an opportunity to apply a geographical lens to the deaccessioning process, bringing together ideas of absence and presence (Law 2004, Meier et al. 2013, Hetherington 2004, Meyer and Woodthorpe 2008, Meyer 2012, DeLyser 2014), with an understating of the archive as a social agent (Gell 1998), issues around the control of bio-information (Greenhough and Roe 2006, Parry 2008, 2004, Bardill 2014, Widdows 2009, Bridge et al. 2003) and the curation of Indigenous knowledge (Nakata and Langton 2007, Langton and Ma Rhea 2007, Peers and Brown 2003b, O'Sullivan 2013, Russell 2006, Russell 2005).

## **8.2 Documentation and Deaccessioning**

In my analysis of the handover of the ancestral skull from RCS to Hui Mālama I Nā Kūuna O Hawai'i Nei, I argued that the meanings the skull embodied were not linear, but multiple and shifting (see section 4.2). Through exploring these multiple, cohering and competing meanings, my intension was to move away from a linear biography in which the skull shifts from object to ancestor. Yet in viewing this same repatriation event through the lens of museum process, a distinct shift in status does occur. A key part of the repatriation was the signing of paperwork that created a formal record of the museum handing custodianship of the skull to the representative for Hui Mālama, Edward Ayau. At this point, despite being in RCS labelled packing and still having the museum accession number inked onto the bone, the status of the skull shifted; it had been deaccessioned.

In principle, deaccessioning (a process sometimes referred to as disposal), is the permanent removal of items from the inventory of a museum's collection, a process that Vecco and Piazzai (2015, 222) describe as being the 'opposite of accessioning operations'. Drawing on work by Susan Pearce (1995), Merriman argues that it is the concept of knowledge as being based on the 'systematic organisation of material evidence' that drives museums to collect, the legacy of this philosophy being the encyclopaedic nature of collecting based on the concept of filling the missing gaps within the collection (Merriman 2008, 17). In their review of approaches to deaccessioning of museum collections in Europe, Vecco and Piazzai (2015) show that although all the major museum associations adhere to the International Council of Museums *Code of Ethics* (ICOM 2013) there is little conformity among European policies. However within the UK, there has been a recognisable shift in practice from 'a strong presumption against disposal' (Museums Association 1977), to the suggestion that 'museums should take an active approach to disposal' (Museums Association 2005). While the ethical and practical issues of deaccessioning material other than human remains are outside the scope of this discussion,<sup>62</sup> before moving on to the repatriation archives at RCS, it is worth briefly considering the broader context of deaccessioning practice within UK museums.

In 2014 the Museums Association, the professional membership organisation for UK museums, published a revised version of the *Disposal Toolkit Guidelines for Museums*.<sup>63</sup> In relation to documentation, the key message is that the deaccessioning process should be documented to the UK collections management standard and that all the documentation

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<sup>62</sup> The edited volume *Museums and the Disposal Debate* (Davis 2011) provides a good introduction to the arguments for and against the deaccessioning of collection objects from UK museums

<sup>63</sup> The *Disposals Toolkit for Museums* (2014) was revised by the Museums Association in conjunction with Arts Council England, CyMAL, Museums Galleries Scotland and the Northern Ireland Museums Council. The toolkit is based on the principles found in the Museums Association's *Code of Ethics* (2015) and provides detailed advice on the process of identifying appropriate items for disposal, and ensuring that their removal from a museum collection is ethical.

should be retained by the museum as a historical record of their custodianship and evidence of good practice regarding the disposal.<sup>64</sup>



**Figure 8.1:** Page from *Disposal Toolkit Guidelines for Museums* that sets out how the deaccessioning and disposal process for material from UK museum collections should be documented

Museums Association (2014, 22).

Although the Museums Association guidelines (2014, 22-24) state they do not cover disposal through repatriation in detail, the key concepts that ‘all aspects of the disposal process are documented’ and if there is a lack of documentation ‘museums should make all reasonable attempts to research the item’s history’, can be seen in the approach that RCS has taken to documenting repatriation. The current RCS Acquisition and Disposal policy (2011) states that full records will be kept of all decisions on disposals and proper arrangements made for the preservation and/or transfer, as appropriate, of the documentation relating to the items concerned. Therefore, the deaccessioned status of the repatriated remains means that although RCS is no longer responsible for the care and preservation of the physical remains, it

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<sup>64</sup> The UK museum collections management standards (SPECTRUM standards) were developed and continue to be updated by the Collections Trust, an independent UK-based charity that works with museums, libraries, galleries and archives worldwide to improve the management and use of collections.

has continued to act as a trustee of the information about them and their history as part of the collections.

### **8.3 Researching the Exit Files**

At RCS, information about the collections is held in the archives, in the museum accession registers, on record cards, in hard copy files and in the museum database. When items are deaccessioned from the collections, copies of this information, as well as the records of the deaccessioning process itself, are gathered together to create an 'exit file'.

The exit file for the Hawaiian repatriation was stored in the museum office. It consisted of a black box file labelled 'Exit 259'. The curator told me that each repatriation had been given an exit number, the standard process when deaccessioning items from the collection. As only the most recent exit files are stored in the museum office, I then had to go down to the museum archive to access the files for the other repatriations. Each of the three other repatriations had their own file and exit number, but for Exit 92, the Australian return, there were also two extra box files labelled as 'Background Documentation' and 'Old Papers'. In each of the files was the documentation I expected to find; lists of the returned remains and the attendant paperwork documenting the deaccessioning process, but I was surprised by the amount of other information. The files contained letters, internal memos and emails that dated back to first requests for the return of ancestral remains made in 1986. That afternoon I started to work my way through the 'Old Papers' file, learning more about the people involved in the repatriation discussions at RCS and beginning to build a picture of the social networks that formed around the repatriation debates.

Extract from Research Diary 30<sup>th</sup> October 2013

The information contained in the RCS exit files shows how repatriation drove the creation of an archive of material that, as well as containing information about the remains, documents the repatriation process itself. In the previous chapters I argued that the remains were social actors that can act as nodes within social networks and relationships. What has emerged from my study of the RCS exit files is that these social networks can be mapped through the information that the files contain. Furthermore, within the correspondence in the RCS exit files, are examples of requests for information and the transfer of documentation, suggesting the enactment of social relationships through information about the remains, as well as through the remains themselves.

One series of letters and emails I found in the RCS repatriation archive, relates to the research undertaken for publication of an article in the 1992 *World Archaeological Bulletin* which followed on from the 1989 World Archaeological Congress (WAC) Inter-Congress meeting, *Archaeological Ethics and the Treatment of the Dead*.<sup>65</sup> The aim of the bulletin article was to document the histories of collection, and current holding of human remains within English museums as preparatory work to the 2002 publication *The Dead and their Possessions: Repatriation in Principle, Policy and Practice* (Ucko 1992, Fforde et al. 2002). Carried out by Professor Peter Ucko and Cressida Fforde from Southampton University, the research on the collections at RCS was one of the case studies they planned to publish. Having initially agreed to the research, internal memos from RCS Curator Caroline Grigson to College President Professor Norman Browse make clear Grigson's concerns that the publication of the museum holdings might cause problems for RCS. These tensions come through strongly in one particular memo in which Grigson describes Ucko and Fforde as being 'outwardly objective' but having 'a reputation for stirring up controversy'.<sup>66</sup> Concerns about how the information about the collections might encourage repatriation claims, or unwanted press attention<sup>67</sup>, led to RCS insisting that all unpublished information about their holdings were omitted from the Bulletin (Fforde 1992, 29).

In not allowing the publication of the list of their holdings in the *World Archaeological Bulletin*, RCS appeared to have been attempting to retain control over access to information.

A position reiterated in correspondence with other researchers in which it is stipulated that

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<sup>65</sup> Held at Vermillion, South Dakota, the WAC 1989 Inter-Congress meeting brought together Indigenous people and archaeologists. The most notable result of the meeting was the *Vermillion Accord*, a document that Larry Zimmerman describes as showing that 'mutual understanding and respect were possible between Indigenous people and archaeologists' (Zimmerman 2002, 91).

<sup>66</sup> Internal memo to Professor Norman Browse from Dr Caroline Grigson 19<sup>th</sup> October 1992, Royal College of Surgeons of England Museum Exit File 92, Box 1

<sup>67</sup> Internal memo to Professor Norman Browse from Dr Caroline Grigson 11<sup>th</sup> December 1992, Royal College of Surgeons of England Museum Exit File 92, Box 1

the researcher will provide RCS with a copy of any resultant publication prior to submission. Yet in the repatriation request made for the Hawaiian skull in June 2010, it is stated that the skull had been found on the RCS on-line database SurgiCat (see Figure 8.2).<sup>68</sup> When compared to the blank pages in the 1992 *Bulletin*, having a publically accessible database of the RCS collections indicates a shift in thinking about access to information that is echoed in the repatriation related changes to the *Acquisitions and Disposals Policy* (RCS 2001, 2011).

Writing about the printed catalogues at Manchester Museum, Alberti (2009, 134-5) describes them as part of the material culture of museum that can tell us much about changing ideas and practice and I suggest that the repatriation files at RCS be considered in the same way, as interesting objects of study in their own right. In retaining the information about the repatriations, the museum staff appear to have attached an importance to the discussions and process from its earliest stages. Yet the object record for each set of remains was deleted from the museums database after the repatriation of the remains. This is not to say this information was lost, hard copies travelled with the remains and are still present in the RCS exit files, but the transfer of the object records from live digital files to static records within the archive does raise some interesting questions about the perceived use and meanings of information relating to deaccessioned objects.

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<sup>68</sup> Letter from Clyde W.Nāmu’o and Edward Halealoha Ayau to Briony Hudson 1<sup>st</sup> June 2010, Royal College of Surgeons of England Museum Exit File 259

Royal College of Surgeons SurgiCat  
ADVANCING SURGICAL CARE


Introduction Search Details

RCSHC/Osteo. 879 - Skull, General Osteology of Man, Un-mounted dry bone

**Actions**

Send via e-mail

Print



**Object number** RCSHC/Osteo. 879  
**Scientific name** Homo sapiens  
**Collection** Hunterian  
**Category** Dry preparations  
**Object name** Skull  
**Object name** General Osteology of Man  
**Object name** Un-mounted dry bone  
**Description** The skull of a male from the Caribbean.

This skull formed part of Hunter's series showing the osteology of different human races. Hunter believed that the angle or slope of the face in humans and animals could be used to arrange different races and species in a progressive order. In this order he saw Europeans as being higher up the scale, or more 'perfect', than African races. Hunter's ideas were shared by several contemporaries, notably the Dutch anatomist Peter Camper. Although some recent historians have argued that neither Camper nor Hunter's work was inherently racist, their ideas did influence 19th century racial theories that were used to justify the exploitation and oppression of 'native' races.

As none of Hunter's notes on his collection of skulls have survived we don't know whether he believed the shape of this skull to have been the result of artificial deformation. Hunter certainly believed that other parts of the human body could be shaped during life. At least one contemporary visitor to Hunter's collection thought that the possibility of artificial deformation undermined any attempt to class human races by skull shape. James Beattie (1735-1802) visited the Hunters in London in 1773. In his diary he noted that Hunter was 'of the opinion, that the Negroes are removed from us one degree in the scale of animals, and approach towards the monkey; but his reasons are not satisfying. The tendency of the negro's skull [sic], when placed on a table, to lean backwards; the flatness of the nose, and the bluntness of the chin, may be the effect of a diff. treatment when they are children. Every body knows that in infancy the skull will receive almost any shape.'

**Production date** 1760 - 1793  
**Preparator** Hunter, John, 1728-1793, surgeon, anatomist, London  
**Owner/user** Hunter, John, 1728-1793, surgeon, anatomist  
**presented** Trustees of the Hunterian Collection (1799)

**Physical Location**

**Location in museum** Case 4, Bay 3

**Physical Information**

**Physical description** Dry preparation of bone un-mounted.  
**Dimensions** weight: whole 950 g

**Bibliography**

**Source** Dobson 1970-71  
**Transcript** 879 The skull of a male Carib from one of the Caribbean Islands. It has a remarkably flat and receding forehead, probably from the effects of compression in infancy. The nasals are large and prominent; the lower jaw is large, with a prominent chin.

**Figure 8.2:** Example of a record from the SurgiCat the publically accessible online catalogue of the museum and archive collection at the Royal College of Surgeons of England.

<http://surgicat.rcseng.ac.uk/Details/collect/4144>

When asked about the decision to delete the database records, Simon Chaplin, who was the Curator at the time this was done, explained this was the usual approach taken when deaccessioning, as 'otherwise you create the impression those things are still there' (S. Chaplin, Interview 7<sup>th</sup> April 2015). Within the wider museum sector it is now considered best

practice to retain digital records and deleting catalogue records relating to deaccessioned objects is no longer the practice at RCS, nevertheless when interviewed, Simon Chaplin stood by his view that the database should only contain records for the items still in museum.

### **Absence and Presence**

In the previous three chapters, my focus has been on the affective presence of the remains, yet what considering the meanings of the documentation that RCS holds foregrounds, is the absence of those remains from the museum collections. Therefore, before moving on to consider the meanings and agency of information and documentation in more detail I want to examine the elusive phenomena of absence further, engaging with ideas around the material presence of absences in order to view the process of deaccessioning in a new way.

In their comparison of museum and cemetery spaces, Meyer and Woodthorpe (2008) suggest both spaces can be characterised by a simultaneous presence and absence. In the museum, as in the cemetery, death is both absent and present with objects being the vehicle through which the absent is made present. Law (2004, 84) describes this as manifest absence and as such, as Meier et al. (2013) assert, absence is different from gone, erased or leaving no trace; absence is not a void. In considering what objects do in relation to what is absent from space, Meyer and Woodthorpe use the example of a mounted lion, to argue that while the museum is a place where the discipline and practice of natural history are performed through objects, those objects can only ever be versions, or representations of the natural world. 'A stuffed lion in a museum becomes a spokesperson; it represents all other lions, those that have lived, those that are living 'out there', essentially those *not in the museum*' (Meyer and Woodthorpe 2008, 12 emphasis in the original). What this example acknowledges is the fragmented nature of objects within museum spaces; museum objects are a present part of an absent whole (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1988, 19). In applying this concept to human remains

within museum there are clear parallels with the way Fforde (2002a) suggests Indigenous human remains were used to represent a version of Indigenous identity (see discussion in Chapter 2). Yet what Meyer and Woodthorpe do not consider in their analysis are the absences created by the deaccessioning of objects from museum collections.

In the preceding chapters, I have framed the physical remains as having agency following Gell's (1998) concept of objects as actors within social networks. In returning to the example of the absence Pemuluy's head, first discussed in Chapter 6, I am drawn to Kevin Hetherington's (2004, 159) argument that 'social relations are performed not only around what is there, but sometimes also around the presence of what is not'. In the case of Pemulwuy, although his head is no longer, or in fact may never have been in the RCS collections, the hardcopy and digital repatriation files contain a trail of related enquiries and there is a dedicated folder for related correspondence on the museum computer system. What is also apparent is that the absence of Pemuluy has become spatially located at RCS. What connects Pemulwuy's head with RCS is the letter written by Joseph Banks to Governor King in April 1803, and even though no corresponding record has been found in any documentation since that date, the connection has endured. The reference to the transfer of Pemuluy's head to John Hunter is the trace that draws the absent head into the present and spatially situates that absence at RCS.

In writing about the research she undertook to trace the absence of the first neon sign in the USA, Dydia DeLyser (2014, 42) reflects that 'tracing absence requires meticulous documentation and the defeat of all claims to presence'. In her use of traditional empirical research, DeLyser brings together theoretical conceptualisations of absence with a methodology applicable to professional museum practice. In tracing the absence of Pemulwuy's head, the museum has turned to archival research and auditing of the

collections; the only way the museum has been able to deny the presence of the head has been to point to the absence of evidence for its presence at RCS.<sup>69</sup> In the example of the neon sign, DeLyeser (2014, 45) argues that it is the weight of absence that allows her to overturn the accepted narrative, as being able to show the sign was absent in 1922-3 overturned previous accounts of its history. In the case of Pemulwuy, archival research has not been able to show the head was absent from the collection prior to 1941 or prove it was destroyed along with many specimens when RCS was bombed. This lack of evidence of absence means Pemulwuy's head continues to be negotiated and contested.

Although the head of Pemulwuy is presumed to have been destroyed in 1941, there are plenty of other remains for which this is known to have been the case, their absence in the collections being made present through their presence in object records and institutional documentation. In his work on absence, Hetherington (2003, 2004) suggests that absence can have materiality, agency and be spatially located. Yet is it the absence of these specimens that has agency or is it the records and documentation that have the agency to make the absent present and meaningful? I would suggest that if we accept that absence comes to be present only when attended to, then to map the geographies of absence within museum collections we need to pay attention to the traces that draw those absences into the present.

As part of my Assistant Curator role at RCS, I worked on updating the records for certain parts of the collection. It was familiar work, inputting information from hand written record cards into the database, but partway through there was an unexpected intersection with my repatriation research:

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<sup>69</sup> Email to Liz Edwards from Simon Chaplin 27<sup>th</sup> September 2001, Royal College of Surgeons of England Museum Exit File 92, Box 1

As I was working on the records cards this afternoon taking each in turn and inputting the handwritten information into the Adlib database, I entered the number from one card but found no digital records. Having tried a few alternatives, I tried the next few cards only to have the same problem. Reading through these cards I realised they documented the remains from Bergen-Belsen that had been deaccessioned for burial at a Jewish Cemetery in 2001. I was aware of this event due to the research I had been doing on the archives but when I mentioned it to the other staff present, they all admitted they either didn't recall or had never been aware this had taken place. As with the remains repatriated to Australia, once the material had been deaccessioned the digital records had been deleted. The information could still be found, evidenced by the fact I had come across it in course of my research, but the link between the record cards and the files in the database had been lost. Given that none of the staff present would have made the connection, not maintaining a digital catalogue record that makes it clear an item has been removed from the collection and where the further information may be found, is clearly problematic especially as the standard response to any collections enquiry is for the staff to search the database. The current situation means that if RCS is contacted regarding information about a particular set of repatriated remains the staff would have to know about the exit files, as a search of the database would yield no results, and as time passes it becomes more likely that this knowledge will be lost.

Extract from Research Diary, 19<sup>th</sup> February 2015

In writing this entry, my focus was on the issues caused by the decision to delete the database records for deaccessioned material. It is therefore important to note that the database is not the only place that object information is stored and that other staff who were not present knew of the deaccessioning of this material, although I would argue that in terms of museum practice, this event highlighted issues with the connections between those sources of information. However, the reason I included this extract here is that it illustrates how documentation can act as a vehicle through which the absent is made present. Absence comes to be present only when it is attended to as being absent and is inherently interwoven with lived experience (Meier et al. 2013, Meyer and Woodthorpe 2008). In framing the documentation in this way, I am suggesting that it be considered as present and having its own agency and meanings, and it is the agency and meanings of the RCS repatriation documentation that I now want to focus on in more detail.

## 8.4 Multiple and Mobile

Up to this point, I have been using the term documentation for the information that RCS holds about the repatriated remains themselves, and the process of repatriation. Yet there is a clear distinction between the institutional archive and the object records and I now want to look at each separately, beginning with the information about the remains themselves.

Within UK museum practice, when items are transferred it is expected that the documentation about those items will travel with them, either as hard copies or digital versions. With the repatriation of human remains, the documentation referred to usually relates to the information the museum holds on provenance (see Chapter 7), copies of biometric data, analytical results and collections records.<sup>70</sup> Prior to the repatriation of ancestral remains to RCS from New Zealand in 2007, a researcher from Te Papa Tongarewa Museum of New Zealand visited RCS to carry out research, the focus being information that would aid with provenancing. When I visited Te Papa in June 2015, Repatriation Researcher Amber Aranui gave me a copy of the report for the kōiwi tangata (ancestral remains) returned to the Ngāti Te Ata in 2010. She explained to me that these reports are produced for each repatriation to provide all the known information about the kōiwi tangata to the iwi (community), allowing them to make an informed decision about accepting the remains. As well as providing reports to specific iwi, the museum also makes them available to the public through publication on their website.

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<sup>70</sup> Although the Museum Association *Toolkit for Disposal* (2014) does not cover the repatriation of human remains in detail, the Museum Ethnographers Group *Guidelines on Management of Human Remains* does have a section related specifically to requests for the return of human remains in which it is stated that 'before any transfer take place items should be fully documented and a copy should be transferred with them' (Museum Ethnographers' Group 1994, Section 4.9)

**Appendix 1 – Copy of Museum of the Royal College of Surgeons Accession Record**

<b>Object number:</b>	RCSOM/A 53.292			
<b>Taxonomic name</b>	Homo sapiens			
<b>Anatomical name</b>	Cranium			
	Un-mounted dry bone			
<b>Description:</b>				
Cranium, young adult Maori, probably male, collected at Waiuku Pass.				
There is a rim of 'seruminal calculus' on several of the teeth; there are no signs of pathological changes in the alveolar bone. Skull probably male due to large mastoid processes and nuchal ridge and prominent supraorbital ridges.				
Right lambdoid sutures completely fused. From tooth wear the skull is probably from a young adult approximately 17 to 25 years. The right 1st and 2nd molars show a dip in the middle running medial to distal. Wormian bones are present on the left lambdoid suture.				
Marked 'Mr G Archey / 13707.6 / Waiuku Pass'. The location and name marked on this cranium clearly indicate a New Zealand origin. Waiuku Pass is near Auckland: 'G Archey' is presumed to be Gilbert Archey (1890-1974) who was Director of the Auckland Institute and Museum in the 1930s. The number '13707.6' is an Auckland Museum catalogue number. This cranium was erroneously listed as Australian aboriginal in the Odontological Museum Catalogue HMO 39.9.				
<b>Inscription(s):</b>				
<b>museum label/number</b>	Above right orbit.	Handwritten in ink on circular paper label with serrated edge	Mr G. ARCHEY	Gilbert Archey (1890-1974) was Director of the Auckland Institute and Museum in the 1930s
<b>legend</b>	Centre of frontal bone	Handwritten in ink on to bone	13707.6 / Waiuku Pass	Auckland Museum catalogue number and site of original find.
<b>museum label/number</b>	left parietal	Handwritten in ink on to bone	E W Fish / A 53.292 / 13707.6	E W Fish is owner's name. A 53.292 is RCS Odontological Museum catalogue number added after 1952. 13707.6 is Auckland Museum number.
<b>owner's mark</b>	On occiput.	Handwritten in ink on pasted paper label.	Dr E W Fish	Name of owner.

**Figure 8.3:** The RCS collections information as reproduced in the 2010 kōiwi tangata report prepared from the Ngāti Te Ata by the Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme.

Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme(2010b, 17)

On meeting Nganeko Minhinnick, who had overseen the return of the kōiwi tangata for the Ngāti Te Ata and showing her the report, she asked if I could make her a copy. She was no longer sure where the community one was, and thought other community members would be interested in seeing the information. Later on it also transpired that the Yorta Yorta Aboriginal Corporation could not locate copies of the documentation relating to the remains returned to them from RCS, although it should be noted that this does not necessarily mean that they had never been given the information. When asked about the information held at National Museum Australia, Repatriation Officer Lee Burgess explained that 'information gets lost and occasionally we find ourselves in this funny situation where we are having to do the repatriation process all over again'. What this seems to suggest is that museums involved with the return of remains to communities have a role beyond the return of the physical

remains. They continue to curate the information about those remains and facilitate access to that information for communities.

What the examples discussed thus far have demonstrated is that as part of the repatriation process documentation travels with the remains and is retained by the returning institution. On the return of ancestral remains to communities, the community receive the information about those remains but the museum also keeps a copy of that documentation. However, in a conversation with Cressida Fforde at the National Centre for Indigenous Studies it emerged that the documentation could also move through institutions independently of the remains it related to. As I noted in my research diary:

One of the current issues [in Australia] seems to be around the archives of information that are returned with the remains. There is a complex relationship between the museum, the Government and the community, and this relationship shifts and changes. The Government department that deals with repatriation, has been restructured a number of times with archives being moved each time and sometimes lost.

Extract from Research Diary 20<sup>th</sup> April 2015

In discussing the repatriation to Australia with the Repatriation Unit staff at National Museum Australia it became clear that this was exactly what had happened to the documentation from RCS. Prior to the 2003 repatriation to Australia, museum staff and researchers gathered together all the available information in the RCS archives and created an information sheet for each set of remains, but the journey of that documentation diverged from that of the remains on their return to Australia:

While we were in the store workroom I was given the file on The Royal College of Surgeons repatriation to look at. The file revealed the complexity of the remains journey once they had been returned to Australia. The repatriation had been negotiated and organised by FAIRA with the remains being initially being returned to National Museum Australia. In some cases, the relevant communities had been identified but arrangements to return remains had to be made, sometimes combined with returns from other institutions. Lee [Burgess] and David [Kauss] who are working on these returns told me that the process has been hampered by the lack of information as they only received basic details from RCS. On enquiring what had happened to the archival information prepared by the curator and FAIRA researcher I was informed that although the remains had come to National Museum Australia,

FAIRA had retained the documentation as they felt it should only be handed over with community permission, but as David Kauss then explained without the information the community cannot be identified, so they had reached a frustrating impasse.

Extract from research diary, 12<sup>th</sup> May 2015

Since the repatriation from RCS in 2003, the management of repatriation in Australia has changed and the Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research Action (FAIRA) no longer oversee the process. Despite this, the National Museum Australia repatriation unit have been unable to get hold of the documentation and suspect that even if FAIRA agreed to provide a copy, given the time that has passed it would probably be difficult for them to locate. It also appears that the changes in process have not eliminated this issue. As Cressida Fforde pointed out when we discussed the problems related to the loss of documentation, the simple solution would be to keep a copy of the relevant documentation with each individual box of remains. That this approach has not been implemented, therefore suggests that there may be other reasons for the separation of the remains and documentation.

As discussed in Chapter 6, the physical presence of ancestral remains raises practical and spiritual issues for communities and storage at a museum is a compromise that some communities choose to make. Yet if we come back to the understanding of repatriation as being about the return of control, retaining control over the documentation can be interpreted as Indigenous organisations like FAIRA to keeping control over the process. In the same way, by not handing over documentation to the museum, the Australian Government can argue it is working directly for Indigenous communities rather than giving total control of the process to museums.

### **Issues of Control**

To explore these issues around the control of information further, I will start by returning to the repatriation request RCS received from Geoff Clark, Chairman of the Brambuk Living

Cultural Centre with which I opened this chapter. In response to this request, RCS curator Caroline Grigson recommended a scientific examination of the seven skulls. Planned in conjunction with colleagues at University College London, the work was to include measurements, photography, x-radiography, DNA sampling and radio carbon dating.<sup>71</sup> However, in subsequent correspondence between the College, Geoff Clark and FAIRA, there is no mention of this proposed research, suggesting that neither FAIRA, nor the Brambuk Living Cultural Centre were informed.<sup>72</sup> The thinking behind the analysis appears to have been twofold. Firstly, demonstrating the scientific importance of the remains would bolster the argument for retention and secondly, if a claim for return was successful, the museum would be able to retain as much information as possible. In the same way excavation archives preserve information about archaeological sites, the documentation would preserve the data about absent remains with access and use of the information still controlled by the museum.

Although started, the programme of study proposed by Grigson was never completed.<sup>73</sup> When the issue of repatriation was reviewed by the RCS College Council in 2000, it was noted that although the case for retention was still valid the fact the initial scientific work had not been finished demonstrated that the potential value of the material had not been matched by its use, and there was general agreement that deaccessioning of the remains was the way forward.<sup>74</sup> However, when following the introduction of the *Human Tissue Act in 2004*, the Natural History Museum agreed to return the Tasmanian Aboriginal remains in their

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<sup>71</sup> Letter from Caroline Grigson to Terrence English 27<sup>th</sup> September 1990, Royal College of Surgeons of England Exit File 92

<sup>72</sup> The personal letters and emails within the RCS exit files indicate that it was concerns about Indigenous groups or communities objecting to the proposed research that underlay the decision not to inform the other stakeholders or request consent. This guarded stance contrasts with the more open approach taken in the 2000s that, by the later repatriations to New Zealand and Hawaii (in 2007 and 2011 respectively), appears closer to the concept of repatriation as a 'constructive engagement between the museum and their diverse communities of identity' (Besterman 2014, 34).

<sup>73</sup> Council Minutes Attachment 3C: Skeletal remains 26<sup>th</sup> June 1991, Royal College of Surgeons of England Exit File 92

<sup>74</sup> Minutes of the Heritage Committee Meeting 27<sup>th</sup> October 2000, Royal College of Surgeons of England Exit File 92.

collection to the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC), they decided that the remains would be returned only after they had been extensively studied and analysed:-

With some of my colleagues at the museum who worked on human remains we put together a plan of what we would do and what data would be collected. Now I do have to say we threw everything but the kitchen sink in because my colleagues told me that on past experience you never got everything you wanted. [...] As you might expect the TAC were not happy and I was of the opinion that we would have an injunction [...] and got to the end of the non-destructive [analysis...] and I got a phone call one Sunday afternoon, [...] there'd been an order granted in Tasmania which gave the TAC rights of administration over the estates of the people involved, despite the fact we didn't know, apart from one individual, we couldn't give any identity to these people [...]. So, they then came to the British courts and asked for an injunction as the executors to stop us from doing any more, so we had an injunction put on us. So, all work had to stop, we had to cancel everything and the court case was due to go ahead but more and more people became involved, all sorts of interested parties that you would not expect, some obvious ones like the Australian Government, but all sorts of other people as well. Anyway, the judge decided that it was far too complicated now to go ahead within the scheduled time but suggested to both parties that they might like to go for mediation.

Interview with Margaret Clegg, 30<sup>th</sup> January 2015

In this case, one of the main points of contention for the TAC was the Natural History Museum holding DNA information. The decision reached through the mediation process was that there would be joint custody of the DNA, which would be held a laboratory in Tasmania until a protocol for considering requests for use could be agreed. The relationship between the TAC and the Natural History Museum has continued to be strained, and at the time of writing, a protocol for use of the DNA samples has not been established. However, the joint custody agreement means that the links between organisations is been maintained post the return of the ancestral remains. The DNA samples and data gained from the remains continue to have agency in relation to creating and maintaining networks, as even if those connections are strained, they have continued to exist.

Although this example is unusual, in that in for majority of repatriated remains DNA samples are not taken or retained by museums, many of the key issues raised in the debates around retaining bioinformation are applicable to the retention of other types of data. Within

museums the documentation about an object or specimen is part of the value that it holds. One of the key concepts here is provenance, and it is this concept of provenance that Parry and Greenough apply to their study of the information held by biobanks. As they state, 'the connections between bioinformation and its source populations, communities and individuals are what makes this data interesting and valuable' (Parry and Greenough forthcoming) What Parry and Greenough go on to set out are the issues surrounding who should have control over how bioinformation is used and repurposed, and the ethical difficulties presented by maintaining these types of resources.

This level of ethical consideration does not yet seem to have been applied to the information about repatriated ancestral remains in the same way, but it can be argued that in framing repatriation as a returning of control, the control over the information about and gained from those remains should also be considered. In Chapter 2 I set out how the ancestral remains of Indigenous peoples were used to support now discredited scientific opinions about race (Turnbull 1991, Zimmerman 1989a, Fforde 2004), and that it was the desire for data that drove the collection process, just as it has been the main argument for retention (Foley 2004, Stringer 2003, Mulvaney 1989, 1991, Payne 2004). Yet as we have seen, the physical remains and the information about those remains are separate things. Documentation and data can be reproducible and multiple, its presence can mark absence and be used to trace the journey ancestral remains have taken, but it can also take its own journeys, distinct of those taken by the remains to which it relates. As Michael Christie writes in relation to databases, '[they] are not innocent objects. They carry within them particular culturally and historically contingent assumptions about the nature of the world, and the nature of knowledge; what it is, and how it can be preserved and renewed' (Christie 2004, 4)

When RCS repatriated ancestral remains to Australia, FAIRA retained control over the documentation that came with them; however, RCS also retained that information. For some, if museums are retaining information related to repatriated remains, this is not the returning of control the process is purported to be. A view a number of the participants in the discussions at the repatriation workshop I took part I at Camp Coorong in July 2015 appeared to agree with:

One community member then stated that he thought that museums should return all the information that they held related to repatriated remains. He had spoken previously about the importance of sovereignty to the Ngarrindjeri and clearly made a link between the control of this information and a sovereign Ngarrindjeri nation. When asked by one of the Ngarrindjeri Heritage Team what information should be handed over, he emphatically replied that museums should return everything and keep no copies themselves. This was information that should be under community control and museums should not continue to benefit from having stolen ancestral remains. Other community members appeared to agree with this sentiment. One of the Elders present then voiced their concern about how the information about remains could be used, pointing out that the reason the Old People had been collected was to try and 'define Ngarrindjeri' and there was a risk the data could be used in the same way. For some members of the community present it seemed that even documentation about the repatriation process was something that should be removed from museum control as 'it should be Ngarrindjeri who tell Ngarrindjeri stories, although others felt some information should remain within museum archives as they should 'not be allowed to wipe the slate clean'.

Extract from Research Diary 10<sup>th</sup> July 2015

What emerged from this discussion was the concern that the data taken from ancestral remains could be a threat to Ngarrindjeri identity if not under community control. However, there are complex ethical issues raised by arguments for the removal of all information about Ngarrindjeri remains from museums. As the repatriation researchers present at the Camp Coorong discussion pointed out, it would be difficult to separate out the information about remains from an individual community as historical archives are complex, entangled and often spread between different institutions. Mike Pickering also highlighted the challenges of curating information, reiterating the point made by his National Museum Australia colleague Lee Burges, that it was not uncommon for communities to request duplicate reports and records from the museum, the original having been misplaced or lost.

As seen through the previous two chapters, repatriation can be a long process, during which the remains need to not only be stored but also curated. The maintenance of registers, logs and databases of information allows for the identification of remains, research on their provenance, and details about their history to be passed onto the relevant community. This curation of information can continue once remains have been returned, maintaining a link between the museum and the communities who have had remains repatriated to them. Continuing to make the information accessible and providing copies to communities is one of the ways museums can provide ongoing support, but as with the physical remains, the community has a degree of control. This was evident when the staff at National Museums Australia informed me I could not be given access to the information they held on remains that had been returned without the permission from the relevant communities. On the surface, this contrasts with the approach at Te Papa Tongarewa where, as the Manager of the Karanga Aotearoa Repatriation Programme Te Herekiele Herewini explained, repatriation reports are publically available, yet as he also pointed out this is policy with which the iwi (communities) are in agreement and at the time of speaking, no concerns had been raised about this approach (T. Herewini, Interview 5<sup>th</sup> June 2017). However as Fforde et al. (2014) call attention to, in other contexts information about repatriated remains is freely circulated within and beyond European scientific communities with museums continuing to assume rights of curatorship and using information in a manner that may be contrary to the wishes of Indigenous communities. This then raises questions around who has the power and authority with regards to the custodianship of information about repatriated ancestral remains.

## 8.5 Documenting the Social

There are different types of documentation that are part of and created by the process of repatriation. Having discussed the information about the remains, I now turn to consider the documentation that relates to the process of repatriation itself.

At RCS, the documentation of the human remains in the collections tends to focus on the anatomy or pathology of the specimen. Though sometimes the name and biographical details of the living person may be known, as in the case of Charles Byrne (see Chapter 1), the majority of specimens are anonymous and associated with the surgeon or anatomist that collected them rather than the living person they came from (Alberti 2011). In relation to the modern teaching collections, Curator Carina Philips explained in the majority of cases, patient information is not held in the museum database but is retained by the hospital anatomy department, so as with the historical specimens the names associated with these body parts are those of surgeons, technicians and curators, rather than the donor (C. Philips, Interview 14<sup>th</sup> November 2014). The descriptions in the records are usually clinical with social details appearing only when needed as part of a medical explanation. Although some object records do contain historical and biographical narratives, for the most part the nature of the collections means the focus of the documentation is not on social histories or biographies. An example of this approach comes from the case of the FOP patient who donated their body to the teaching collection (see Chapter 5). Although the Head of Conservation Martyn Cooke had been in touch with the family of the donor and got to know about her life, this information did not get added to the object record in the database:

Sarah: ...does that end up documented anywhere, or is that the kind of information that *you* know, but it isn't going to be retained?

Martyn: I would say it's never documented anywhere.

Sarah: Do you think there should be more of that with some of the collections, especially the modern collections, do you think more information should be included if that's what the donors want?

Martyn: Well I certainly think it could help because, if for no other reason, especially in the modern side where you are dealing...in fact we are here to try and help medics and associated individuals get a better grasp of the condition, the patient and understanding the patient's thought process and how they feel about things.

Interview with Martyn Cooke, 11<sup>th</sup> December 2014

Yet as we have already seen, this does not mean that this rich social information is not retained. At RCS historical information relating to the collection of the remains and the collectors themselves is held in the archives. It is accessioned and catalogued, and as such is part of the RCS collections. Conversely, the position of the information in the museum exit files that I have been discussing is less well defined. Although part of the museums documentation, the documents in the exit files are not catalogued and so are not considered part of the RCS collections. When asked about the potential of this information, former Curator Simon Chaplin suggested that while it may be of use for academic studies of the repatriation process, there would be a natural limit to how long this work would continue. What Chaplin appears to be suggesting by this is that the current interest in the repatriation of human remains will wane, and consequently this information will be of little interest in the long-term.

Interestingly, the Natural History Museum has similar box files of information that relate to the repatriation of ancestral remains from their collections:

It's not in the database as such at the moment but I have left, well you'll see them when you go in to [the] office, large numbers of box files which document everything we've ever done. So everything from when I started at the museum all the way though. All the different relationships with communities, all of the interactions, all of the things that have happened to the remains, all of the contacts that we've had from different communities so all of those things are recorded now, the database is such that if you have time it would be possible to record those but I think if you took remains in now then you would start that, but what you're talking about databasing retrospectively and with somewhere between twenty five and thirty thousand sets of remains, that's really hard.

Interview with Margaret Clegg, 30<sup>th</sup> January 2015

As at RCS, the repatriation process has created files of information, but transferring the information to the digital database has not yet happened. At the Natural History Museum there is an ongoing process of updating the digital record but with limited time and funding it is the information about the remains that has been prioritised, the documentation about the process itself and those involved is of interest, but is considered secondary and less important. So, although the information which I have termed the 'social documentation' of repatriation has been retained by both RCS and the Natural History Museum, those left to curate it seem uncertain about the meanings of this information and its potential future use.

When discussing the potential use of archives, Matt Poll, Curator of Indigenous Heritage and Repatriation Project Officer at Sydney University, provided an alternative view, stating that 'there is a younger educated and computer literate generation that is questioning about the past, for example artists have already started mining archives and using the information in their work' (M. Poll, Interview 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2015). An example of this comes from the work of artist Daniel Boyd. As an artist known for creating work that appropriates images that disseminate a Eurocentric perspective of Australian history, Boyd was artist in residence at the Natural History Museum in 2012. In one of the works he created, he included disused boxes that had contained human remains, describing them as 'powerful potent objects' even though they were now empty. By using the boxes and 'appropriating imagery of Indigenous people' from the museum's First Fleet collection, Boyd's aim was to mark the changes in the way the museum approaches their human remains collections and to continue to add to the dialogue around repatriation (Museum 2012).



**Figure 8.4:** Daniel Boyd's Installation, Images of Natures Gallery Natural History Museum, February 2012.

Photograph: <https://curiouscongress.wordpress.com/2014/01/08/bergit-arends/daniel-boyd-installation-images-of-nature-gallery-feb-2012/>

Building on James Clifford's (1997) concept of museums as 'contact zones', Laura Peers and Alison Brown (2003a) argue that artefacts are contact zones, in that they are sources of knowledge and catalysts for new relationships. Boyd's installation at the Natural History Museum demonstrates that the absence of ancestral remains within museums can also be understood a site of 'intersecting histories' (Edwards 2001, 2).

Based on the response from the Indigenous community members spoken to as part of this research, there appears to be an interest in not only documenting the repatriation process but also in interrogating that documentation to find new ways of understanding the process

and the people involved. Yet in the current discussions around control and ownership of scientific data (see Chapter 6), the meanings of the social archive are in danger of being obscured. As seen at both RCS and the Natural History Museum the institutional records that relate to the process of repatriation have been retained but have not as yet been cataloged and curated in the same way as the institutional archive.

### **Acknowledging the Absence and Agency**

When speaking to Nganeko Minhinnick about the repatriation of the kōiwi tanga to the Ngāti Te Ata, she explained with sadness about the loss of many of the community members who had been involved. In asking if I would make her a copy of the kōiwi tanga report I had brought with me, she made clear that this was not just about having a copy of the information. It was opportunity to share the information and her own memories and experiences of the process with the younger members of the community. The importance of documenting the process of repatriation and sharing it with the wider community was also addressed in my interview with Edward Ayau:

I've been hounded by friends of mine for the last decade to write a book, but my answer always is, who has the time? We've kept really, really good records, our trip to the Natural History Museum in 2013 was intended to be our last repatriation so we got funding and brought a film crew [...] and we created a short, twenty, twenty-five minutes movie documenting the trip and then an article was written about the work that led to us getting there. For those in the community who are exposed to it, I mean for me it's second nature really, I stopped crying years ago, but we had a public premier [...] and people were just like, I mean they were definitely moved by it. Then we did a second showing on another Island and I invited a bunch of friends of mine and afterwards we did a panel session and I went to see them, it was dark and they all had their sunglasses on and underneath the sunglasses I could see their tears so you know, talking to them afterward they were just, I mean it was just overwhelming for them.

[...] In terms of is that story important to our community, I would say absolutely. I wish I had the time to work with someone else, I mean I could never write [a book] myself, I want to work with someone else to do it because we've done, I mean we've done over one hundred repatriation cases. [...] So telling the story is important but having the time to do so is probably more important

Interview with Edward Ayau, 15<sup>th</sup> May 2015

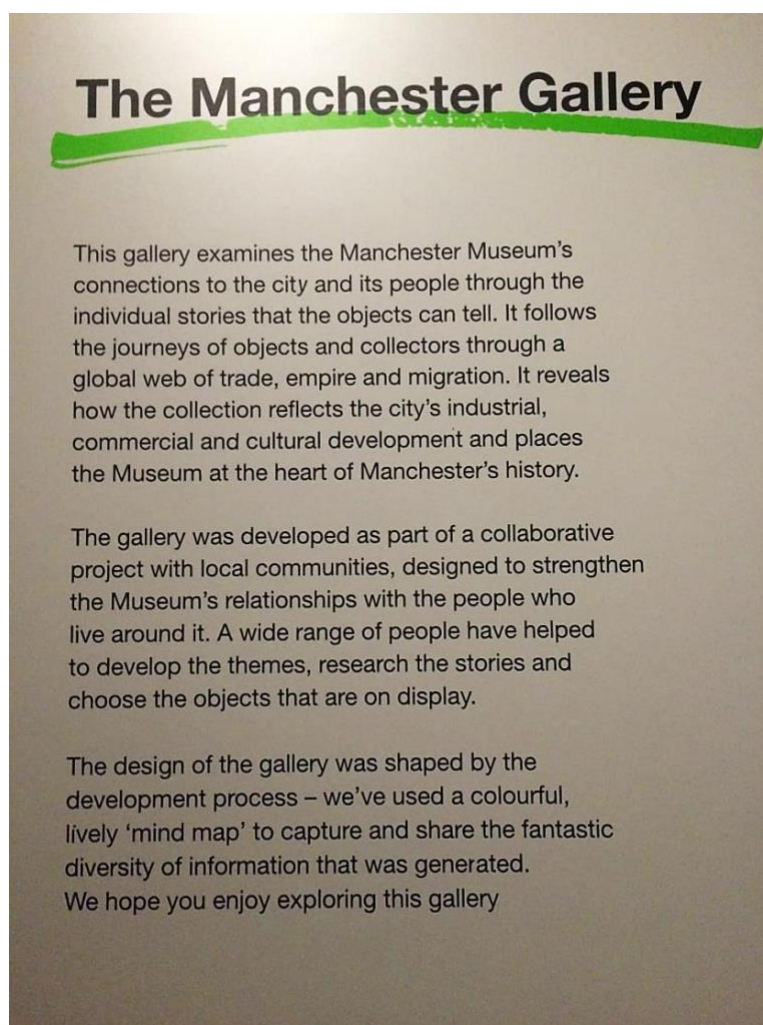
Like Hui Mālama, the Ngarrindjeri have also documented the process of repatriation. For Ngarrindjeri Elder Major Sumner, one of the important reasons for this was that having developed cultural protocols for returning the Old People to country, it was important to pass this knowledge on. As he explained when I asked about documenting the process, 'now that there's not enough of us around that's doing it, or that's done it, that's got that knowledge and carry that knowledge with us. So, what we'll do is we'll document it and in that way people later on will say, well ok, yeah we know how to do that' (M. Sumner, Interview 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2015). In both the examples from Edward Ayau and Major Sumner, the process of documenting the repatriation is one through which the individual memories of those involved in the repatriations can become social memories and part of community histories and as such, a device for the construction of identity (Ketelaar 2005). The documentation of the repatriation process can also be used to communicate a community identity, with an example being the documentary made by Ngarrindjeri filmmakers in 2006 to document the story and journey of the Old People repatriated and buried on country (Hemming and Wilson 2010). Opening up the repatriation ceremony allowed the Ngarrindjeri to communicate their culture, beliefs and history to a wider public, a communication of identity continued through the documentary.

Having spent a long day at Camp Coorong discussing many of the practical issues faced by communities wishing to repatriate their ancestral remains, the conversation in the evening turned to informing the public about the process. The discussion began with the importance of documenting the reburials and the impact of the 2006 film, but then moved on to the lack of acknowledgment of repatriation as an important Indigenous achievement. While it was agreed that a touring exhibition with empty cases to mark the return of the remains would be

evocative, as one community member pointed out it was important to celebrate and tell the story of the Elders who had fought for, and continue to fight for, the return of their ancestors. Although I found information related to repatriation in the museums I visited in Australia, for example the section on Yagan in National Museum Australia (Figure 7.1) and images of the burial of unprovenanced remains at Weeroona at Melbourne Museum (Figure 7.3), explicit accounts of repatriation were absent. At the repatriation event I attended at Warrington Museum in 2013 (see Chapter 4), the repatriation team from the Te Papa explained that they always tried to hold this type of event, as for them repatriation was an opportunity to educate the wider public on Maori culture. Yet when I visited Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa in 2015, I found no mention of repatriation in the public galleries. When asked about this, Repatriation Researcher Amber Arunui told me although when the remains returned the museum held welcoming ceremonies, there has never been an exhibition about the work done by the Karanga Aotearoa repatriation team. However, having some information in the galleries was something that the team had discussed, the consensus being that it was a project for the near future.

Given the lack of information about repatriation in museums in Australia and New Zealand it is perhaps unsurprising to find a lack of acknowledgement in the public galleries of the UK museums. In the Manchester Gallery at Manchester Museum, the focus is on where and who the collections in the museum came from. Yet, despite the mention of projects that involved consulting and collaborating with source communities, no mention is made of the repatriation of ancestral remains. When asked about how the narratives were selected for this gallery, the Living Cultures Curator Stephen Welsh stated that due to the 'overwhelming number of narratives explored [...] we didn't have time to consider including one about repatriation' (S. Welsh, Written Response 1<sup>st</sup> September 2015). However, in conversations with other staff it was also implied that part of the reason for the nonappearance repatriation was that

collections and narratives about items that were present had precedence over those that were absent.



**Figure 8.5:** Introductory panel from the Manchester Gallery at Manchester Museum

Photograph: S. Morton January 2015

In not acknowledging the repatriation of ancestral remains within the public galleries Manchester Museum is not alone. Although there have been a few examples of exhibitions focusing on repatriation, these have tended to be short term and none of the museums that took part in this research had information about repatriation in their permanent galleries.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> A noted example of a temporary exhibition focused on repatriation was the exhibition at Kelvingrove Museum and Art Gallery about the return of a Ghost Dance shirt to Lakota Sioux. A replica shirt presented to the museum was the centre piece of the exhibition (Taylor 2004, Maddra 1996).

Repatriation is therefore made visible to the public mainly through events such as the one I attended at Warrington, and although more information about the repatriation and repatriation decisions is sometimes to be found on museum websites, my own experience suggests this is information you would have to already be looking for. In highlighting this lack of acknowledgement, I am not suggesting a major oversight on the part of UK museums as repatriation only accounts for a (very) small part of their work with collections and their institutional history. Rather my objective is to illustrate the framing of repatriation as an isolated event in both physical and virtual public museum spaces and that the absence of the remains is not an integral part of the institutional narrative.

## **8.6 Reframing Repatriation Documentation**

Although the repatriation of ancestral remains both creates documentation and facilitates the duplication and movement of information, it is a part of the process that has received little attention. Having recognised the need to reflect on how documentation about repatriated remains and the process of repatriation might be shared and utilised, the team involved with the *Return, Reconcile, Renew* (RRR) project has proposed the development of a central archive of information. Beginning in 2013 with funding from the Australian Research Council, the *Return, Reconcile, Renew* project team consisted of representatives from the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Cultural Centre (KALACC), the Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority, Gur A Baradharaw Kod Torres Strait Sea and Land Council, and the Association on American Indian Affairs. The participating research institutions are The Australian National University, The University of Melbourne, The University of Tasmania, Flinders University, The Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) and the University of Otago. The Australian Government's Indigenous Repatriation Unit was a partner and the

National Museum of Australia and Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa are also represented.

The creation of an archive is one the key aims of the RRR project with the envisaged web resource containing 'information about repatriation, including community histories, online exhibitions, digital stories and provenancing guides' as well as 'digitised primary sources about overseas collections' (Fforde et al. 2014, 3). Attending to the noted shortcomings of standard classification schemes to document relationships and the need for structures that support Indigenous ways of knowing, cultural protocols and control (Maina 2012), the technological basis for the online archive will be the Online Heritage Resource Manager (OHRM) at the University of Melbourne Scholarship Research Centre:

A key innovation of this project is the utilisation of new digital technology *combined with* appropriate information management and access protocols that will be co-developed by the project team and Indigenous expertise in the project's regular community workshops. This methodology and approach is imperative for best practice management of culturally sensitive information.

Cressida Fforde et al. (2014, 3 emphasis in the original)

One of the key aspects of the OHRM system is that it documents not just entities but also their relationships (McCarthy and Evans 2007). As Fforde et al. (2014, 3-4) explain, by documenting both the entities and their relationships in an open ontology using standard form, an OHRM project can be responsive to the information needs of a community while not compromising the evidential foundations of the knowledge captured in archives, records, testimony or other forms of community remembering and knowing'. Eventually the RRR online database will contain information about the ancestral remains repatriated from RCS and possibly the repatriation process, as community and organisational archives that mirror some of the information in the RCS exit files may also be added. Through this information, the link between RCS and the Indigenous communities who have had remains returned to them will be maintained. Understanding the documentation as an actor that has agency within

social networks allows for the boundaries between the data about the remains and the records of the process of repatriation to be blurred. Yet, as previously noted there can be multiple copies of repatriation documentation held by different museums and organisations, and recognising the agency of this information brings me back to questions around control, management and data, as well as the responsibilities of organisations holding documentation that can be considered as containing Indigenous knowledge.

### **Curating Indigenous Knowledge**

To reach an understanding of what considering repatriation archives and the information about ancestral remains as containing Indigenous knowledge might mean for museums and institutions, a useful starting place is work that acknowledges the impact and importance of archives in the lives of Indigenous people in Australia (for example see Christie 2005, Nakata and Langton 2007, Russell 2005, Russell 2006, Hughes and Dallwitz 2007, McKemmish et al. 2010, Ormond-Parker and Sloggett 2012, Thorpe 2014). What has become increasingly recognised, is the proliferation of Indigenous knowledge housed within Western or 'Eurocentric' archives (Maina 2012, 14, Nakata and Langton 2007, Cawthorn and Cohen 2013), along with an understanding that documentation conventions can act as pervasive structures of discrimination (Turner 2015, 659). So while access to the information held in these archives has been shown to augment traditional forms of knowledge, other commentators have highlighted the issues that accessing archival material can raise for Aboriginal people (Ormond-Parker and Sloggett 2012, Williams et al. 2006).

As an experienced researcher, Lynette Russell documents her surprise at the unease and distress that information contained in archival medical records relating to her great grandmother caused her (Russell 2005, 164). She goes on to argue that although the medical records cannot be routinely described as Indigenous knowledge, as the information contained

within them becomes incorporated into a community's world view, it is factored into the decisions and choices made by that community, so it becomes Indigenous knowledge. This is an understanding that corresponds with Battiste and Henderson's (2000) description of Indigenous knowledge as distinct, dynamic and adaptive. Definitions such as local or orally transmitted, risk situating Indigenous knowledge in the past and therefore adopting a view of Indigenous knowledge as dynamic and adaptive has allowed the utilization of archival information held by institutions such as museums and government agencies in a way that supports the construction of identity and shared memories within Indigenous communities. Yet, as Lynette Russel points out, it also means that those holding this material need to be cognisant of the issues connected with it, and make every attempt to consult with communities about use, as 'anything less is simply bad manners' (Russell 2005, 167).

In *Reflections in a Cracked Mirror*, Richard Robins (2008) questions how mainstream museum spaces can be utilised as tools of cultural understanding that assist communities in accessing, managing or even safeguarding their cultural materials. Sandy O'Sullivan (2013, 147) argues that for information held in museums, the museum continues to be the accepted authority and Indigenous communities to whom that information may relate risk continuing to be marginalized. For O'Sullivan, community database projects are important in finding pathways of engagement that are reciprocal for both museums and communities, with one of the key components being the creation of a resource that is easily accessible and culturally appropriate. A high-profile example is the Aṛa Irititja databases where the South Australian Museum has worked with the Pitjantjatjara Council to share materials. This process has validated and enriched the information, and the archive has become a site for the creation of new material (Scales et al. 2013, Christen 2006, Ormond-Parker and Sloggett 2012, O'Sullivan 2013, Hughes and Dallwitz 2007)

The recognition that many museums in Australia hold cross cultural archives has led to projects to make this information, which is often relevant to the civil, political and legal rights of Aboriginal people, available to Aboriginal communities (Scales et al. 2013, Ormond-Parker and Sloggett 2012, McKemmish et al. 2010). However, the practice of sharing and co-curating collections that has been developed in countries such as Canada, New Zealand and Australia, becomes more difficult at an international scale. One area where the co-curation of collections has been successfully implemented is ethnographic photography collections, a notable example being the *Kainai-Oxford Photographic Histories Project*. This was a project based around thirty-three photographic portraits of Kainai people taken by anthropologist Beatrice Blackwood during her fieldwork in North America between 1924 and 1927 and which are now part of the ethnographic photography collection at the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford. Writing about the project, Laura Peers and Alison Brown highlight the importance of a community centered methodology to developing long term partnership, and of giving space to the Kainai community to reinterpret the photographs in their own way and for their own purposes (Peers and Brown 2009, 124).

In her study of the visual repatriation of images to Indigenous communities in Australia, Sabra Thorner (2013) contends that photography should be considered as a social practice and material form that, as part of dynamic social relations, has the power to unsettle linear histories and become a site through which those histories are revisited, contested and discussed (also see Bell 2003, Stanton 2003). This is an argument that builds on work by Elizabeth Edwards (2003, 2001), in which she positions ethnographic photographs in museums as the visual legacy of sets of encounters and relationships, and challenges museums to consider the process required to open up those images to other readings. For Edwards, as cultural objects, photographs such as Kainai portraits are largely non-indigenous and yet, in terms of content they do embody Indigenous interests. They have the agency to

'become social actors, impressing, articulating and constructing fields of social actions and relations' (Edwards 2003, 88). In the example of the digital repatriation of images from the Pitt Rivers to the Kainai, the agency Edwards described is evident in Peers and Brown's (2009) account that for some people what the images represent is a time of historical transition. As with the return of ancestral remains, the return of images can be a negative experience that foregrounds disruption and loss, alongside the positive feelings cultural survival, identity and kinship. However, what Peers and Brown also note was that none of the Kainai who participated in the project requested that the original images be returned to them. It was access and the space to appropriate the images into Kainai ways of inscribing the past that was important.

In providing insight on past experiences, collections such as photographs, documents and sound recordings can be sites of active engagement for the present and act as 'critical bridges to the future' (Stanton 2003, 151). What makes these types of collections different from objects, and therefore particularly relevant in this context, is that they can be made multiple. As seen in the Kainai-Oxford project, digital versions of the images held by museums have an agency that relates to the original photographs but can also act independently of them. Therefore adding repatriation documentation to the *Return, Reconcile, Renew* online database puts the information together in new ways and different contexts, creating new nodes within social networks. I therefore argue that applying this same understanding of the agency to the documentation held at RCS, has the power to enliven the repatriation archives through foregrounding them as agents within social networks. Yet this approach is not unproblematic as it raises issues in relation to the culturally appropriate management of information and the role of museums in facilitating engagement with communities and although the responsibilities of holding images and information of Indigenous peoples have begun to be addressed in relation to accessioned collections (Peers and Brown 2009, Edwards

2003, 2001), museum records have not yet been considered in the same way. This therefore brings me back to the issues raised in relation to museums holding information about the remains: who has the power and authority with regards to custodianship and consultation in relation to this information and what are the attendant responsibilities that come with holding it.

### **Questions of Community**

In Chapters 6 and 7 I raised questions about Identity in relation to who should have the right to speak for ancestral remains. What emerged was the importance of allowing for discussion and differences of opinion. The expectation or demand for a homogenous Indigenous voice is problematic as it can be perceived as a continuation of colonial control, and as evidence that the relationships between repatriated ancestral remains and Indigenous self-determination and sovereignty are not recognised. Given the agency I have ascribed to the documentation and the recognition of its multiplicity and mobility, I now want to return to the discussions around identity and community within this context.

At RCS there are procedures for controlling documentation for human remains that the curators regard as culturally sensitive:

Sarah P: [W]ith image and filming requests we always think very carefully about why film companies, authors, writers or journalists want to use images of human remains in their work and really I suppose it's the same as the idea of retention and display of remains, does the benefit of showing and keeping these remains outweigh the possible negative impacts? With image requests we are very careful to make sure they aren't sensational or upsetting and that there are important historical or scientific research reasons why these images would be reproduced. It's about reducing risk factors, you have to be careful as the risks of harm are potentially greater than the benefits. So that's why we wouldn't show all images on our online catalogue.

Sarah M: So you're saying you consider the same issues with images and film as you would with the actual human remains themselves?

Sarah P: To an extent we consider it in the same way, although obviously not to the same degree..., using human remains themselves...would be different from showing images and reproductions, but the same basic questions apply, yes.

Interview with Sarah Pearson, 8<sup>th</sup> January 2015

When asked about the retention of documentation related to repatriated remains and the repatriation process, RCS Curator Sarah Pearson explained that to her knowledge, the information RCS retained was in consultation with the organisations to whom the remains were returned and that any use of the material would have to be driven by the wishes of the relevant community.

In contrast to the Australian and New Zealand returns, the management of the RCS repatriations to Tasmania and Hawaii was entirely overseen by Indigenous organisations. As no other museums were involved in these repatriations, RCS handed over the documentation to the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre and Hui Mālama, and those organisations continue to hold it. While this would seem to be the type of community control that some of the Ngarrindjeri were advocating for in the discussion at Camp Coorong (section 7.4), it is important to return to the concept put forward in Chapter 5 of community being a complex and shifting network of relationships. This became evident in Tasmania as some people who identify as Aboriginal Tasmanians felt themselves to be outside of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC), as described by researcher and artist Julie Gough:

I admire them but I am also wary of anything that purports to be representative of a whole people. I don't believe that's possible. So, I've very mixed feelings about the corporation or organisation or whatever they're called, the centre that has power purporting to represent, but they also then wield too much power but the power that they have is what the outside Western society requires, someone to negotiate with, i.e. a corporation, [...] a single corporation as the voice, the stop, the place for contact with Aboriginal people. So they've maintained that hold and by doing that they've managed to have lands returned and our ancestors returned to Tasmania. So, I'm like wow that's great, they have done these amazing things but on the other hand they are only as strong as the people within them, and the people within any powerful organisation are, can be a concern. In a way it's like a kingdom of particular people and particular families so it's problematic and, so stating my position is, I grew up

elsewhere in mainland Australia and moved here in '94 to Tasmania. So I grew up outside of this corporation and this community with my own family and then connect here to my extend family.

Interview with Julie Gough, 6<sup>th</sup> August 2015

As a researcher interested in repatriation, Julie Gough thought it would be difficult for her to gain access to information held by the TAC, stating that: 'you're in or you're not in and I've been out from the beginning, I've never tried to be in so I'm well and truly an independent.' She then went on to say that she would be interested in knowing about the remains returned from RCS but would approach the College for information rather than the TAC. So, should the museum provide this information about the repatriated remains, or ask permission from the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre? Just as with repatriating the remains it is difficult for museums to be sure they are doing 'the right thing' (Tythacott and Arvanitis 2014, 9). There may also be a difference between what community members state publically and think privately. In an example from the US, Hopi photographer Jean Fredericks (cited in Lippard 1992, 22) explains that privately many Hopis approve of photography and want pictures of their families and celebrations, just like anyone else. However, many people felt that publically they have to adopt a political position against photography in order to protect their privacy.

At RCS, the concerns raised in relation to being sure ancestral remains were returned to the right people were resolved by the Australian Government legitimising the organisations involved. Yet as Julie Gough highlighted when speaking about the TAC, it was Western society that required a single voice to negotiate with, a group that represented a whole community, or in the case of FAIRA, many different communities. Requiring Indigenous peoples to define themselves in opposition to the West is an identified trend within post-colonial identity politics (Forsyth 2012), with similar issues also evident in relation to bio information, were there can be an expectation for Indigenous communities to generate and maintain protective

biosocial ties with related samples. As Kowal et al. (2013a, 582) point out, this assumption takes material form in the 'guidelines, articles and statements that attest to the spiritual and cultural significance of DNA samples'. Coming from a legal standpoint, Forsyth (2012, 2-3) argues that the complications of community ownership and rights are often glossed over 'with policy makers and legislative drafters making assumptions about the homogeneity and boundedness of local communities that overlook the complex realities of group dynamics'. This is an approach that risks disenfranchising those who lack power within those communities. A view is supported by accounts of how local, state or international interventions can benefit some, while excluding others who believe they also have traditional rights (for example Brown 2010, Cang 2007).

Having reached a point of advocating for moving away from a homogenised view of community, I suggest that that this position as one that problematises the ability of museums to respect the views of 'community' needs to be acknowledged. Even if museums set out in policy that static views or constructions of community and identity will be avoided through the inclusion of Indigenous voices within museum process, as Sandy O'Sullivan (2013, 146) points out in relation to the National Museums of the American Indian, policy is not always achieved in practice. One of the problems that can occur is that museums present options to Indigenous communities when, as Stanton (2003, 151) argues, for the process to be collaborative, there is a need for 'communities to define their own positions, and for museums actively to seek these alternatives'. Given the issues that arise with museums working with communities at local and national levels, the challenges faced when trying to develop and maintain relationships at an international scale have to be recognised. However, while acknowledging the difficulties, I would still argue that there is a need for museum professionals in the UK to be more alive to the tensions around the control, ownership and

access to information about repatriated ancestral remains and the repatriation process, and that this begins with the recognition of the agency of the information they hold.

## **8.7 Conclusions**

One of the key questions that the Royal College of Surgeons wanted this research project to explore was the viability of maintaining the relationships with Indigenous organisations and communities established through the repatriation process. This interest was based on the view that although museums may lose human remains from their collections through repatriation, the process allows new relationships to develop and brings different views and understanding of the collections into the institution (Conaty 2003, Conaty 2006, Fforde 2004, Besterman 2004, Peers 2004). However, for museums like RCS that do not hold broader ethnographic collections, it can be argued that the potential to develop these types of relationships beyond the personal connection forged during the process of return, is limited (Scott and Luby 2007). However, despite there not being the collections through which to maintain and develop relationships, I would argue that the information the museum holds, both about the returned remains and the repatriation process offers similar, if perhaps less immediate potential.

The ancestral remains repatriated to Australia, New Zealand and Hawaii are now absent from the RCS collections, an absence brought into the present through the traces of information and documentation left behind. The RCS archives hold information about the collection of the remains and their journey into the collections, the museum records contain information about the remains themselves, including measurements and the results of analytical testing, and the exit files document the process of repatriation and the people involved. Yet copies of some of this information has have travelled with, and independently of the physical remains.

Through this we see that the documentation is more than a trace through which the absent remains are made present. It has its own agency and mobility interwoven with, and yet distinct from, the physical remains it relates to.

The process of repatriation creates a distributed archive, with information being reconfigured and absorbed into Indigenous spaces, creating new meanings and social networks, while at the same time serving as an ongoing link between the museum and community. In moving towards an understanding of repatriation as an important Indigenous achievement and an ongoing process, space for considering the potential uses of all different parts of repatriation archive is created. Just as narratives of resistance mean that ancestors such as Yagan and Pemulwuy are important figures in Aboriginal Australian history, it is conceivable that the stories of the Indigenous leaders who fought to bring the ancestors home will be the subject of future research and community memory work. It is therefore important that museums are alive to the agency of the information they hold and the potential of Indigenous contributions and engagement. For as Christie (2005, 61) suggests, 'through the metaphors of environment and journey we can explore ways to refigure the archive as a resource to support the work of active, creative and collaborative knowledge production.'

Although projects such as *Return, Reconcile, Renew* are addressing some of issues relating to access, use and control of information, the role of museums in the ongoing stewardship of documentation post deaccessioning deserves further consideration, as does the way the archive is being transformed by digital technologies. Writing in relation to how cultural geographers conceptualise cultural artefacts, Gillian Rose (2016, 334) highlights the amount of cultural practice that is created, disturbed, displayed and circulated digitally and the need for the mapping of the 'production, circulation and modification of meaning' produced at digital interfaces. Although the use of technologies within museums is a current topic of

research and discussion (for example see Keene 1998, Denzer 2015, Tallon and Walker 2008, Srinivasan et al. 2010) , museum documentation as multiple and mobile is not being attended to. Therefore how projects such as *Return, Reconcile, Renew* reconfigure information to create new sites of meaning is area for further research in both museology and cultural geography.

In making the case for the documentation of repatriation and repatriated ancestral remains to be considered as containing Indigenous knowledge, I am cognisant of the issues this conceptualisation may raise for museums. As Nakata et al. (2008) highlight, there is a risk that in acknowledging them as stakeholders, Indigenous communities become a problem to solve rather than a relationship to be developed. Recognising that museums continue to hold Indigenous knowledge post repatriation certainly raises some complex questions that require careful consideration and an approach that takes account of the idiosyncratic nature of museums and avoids homogenisation of Indigenous communities. In reframing repatriation as part of process of decolonisation, the agency of all forms of documentation and information related to the remains, their collection, their time as parts of museum collections and eventually their repatriation can be taken into account. I would therefore argue there is a need for further consideration and study of the materialities of repatriation documentation and ongoing developments such as the *Return, Reconcile, Renew* project if we are to understand the ongoing legacies of the repatriation process.

# 9. Conclusions

## 9.1 Introduction

Between 2002 and 2011 The Royal College of Surgeons of England (RCS) repatriated human remains from their collections to Tasmania, Australia, New Zealand and Hawaii. On reaching their bicentenary in 2013, the College was keen to reflect on the impacts of these returns and the current and future role of the non-European remains still in their collections. Based on this interest in the legacies of the RCS repatriations, this thesis set out to explore three key areas: firstly, what the impact of repatriation had been on the conceptualisation of the human remains in museum collections and how this had influenced performance and practice in museum spaces; secondly to investigate the complexities of the repatriation process and analyse how it intersects with issues of restitution, sovereignty, identity, relatedness, memory and memorialisation; and finally to examine the information and archives created by repatriation, how they are thought about by the institutions that hold them and their future potential and meaning.

In addressing these questions, the approach I have taken is to use the four RCS repatriations as case studies. Through engaging with the materiality, mobility and agency of these repatriated remains, my aim has been to bridge the gap between work considering the approach of museums to repatriation (Harris 2015, Besterman 2004, Pickering 2010, Di Domenico 2015, Pickering 2006, White 2013), and ethnographic studies on meanings of the return of ancestral remains for Indigenous peoples (Krpmotich 2014, Conaty 2015). Having argued that repatriation needs to be understood within its temporal and political context, my intention has not been to present a general survey of the process of repatriation and its impacts. Rather, in grounding my understanding of the legacies of repatriation through a

focus on the remains returned by RCS, I have attempted to examine in-depth, the impacts of this particular set of repatriations, exploring the role of the remains within social networks and drawing out the connections to broader themes around the control of heritage, political landscapes, post-colonial politics, identity, belonging and memorial.

The object or ancestor divide that resulted in the framing of repatriation debate as a contest between science and tradition echoes the ontological indeterminacy of human remains found at the heart of wider debates about bio-information (Besterman 2004, Teague 2007, Hubert 1992, 2003, Parry 2008, Parry and Gere 2006, Hirschauer 2006). Therefore, rather than reject the idea of the body as object, following work by Sofaer (2006), Krmpotic et al.(2010) and Fontein (2010) I have suggested that a recognition of the material foundations of the body allows human remains to be conceptualised as both material and social, and understood through their materiality. This consideration of materiality moves away from the concept of a linear biography to an understanding of human remains as holding a complex and unstable set of cohering, conflicting and competing meanings. Repatriation is fundamentally about the movement of human remains and, as Young and Light (2013, 143) point out, the materiality of human remains is central to their mobility and ‘further performances of death, remembrance and memory as part of complex emotional geographies’.

In taking a more-than-representational approach and acknowledging the affective presence and mobility of the remains, my purpose has not been to side line their symbolic agency, but rather to explore the entangled material and symbolic dimensions of repatriated remains, considering not just what the remains have done to them but what the remains themselves do (Krmpotich et al. 2010, Fontein and Harries 2013, Young and Light 2013). This engagement with the materiality and agency of the remains, combined with viewing repatriation through a spatial lens, has offered a new perspective and engaged with aspects of the process that have received little attention in previous studies. By placing the material remains repatriated by

RCS at the centre of the study, the journey of those remains has shaped my work, a journey that has foregrounded the challenging nature of repatriation for communities, the issues around unprovenanced remains and discussions about the control, management and meaning of information and data.

In this final chapter I will summarise the findings of my research focusing on each of my three research questions in turn before drawing together the ideas around agency, absence and presence that run through this thesis. Finally, I will summarise the contribution this thesis has made to museum practice before highlighting avenues for future research.

## **9.2 The Impact of Repatriation on Museums**

With any attempt to understand what the impacts of repatriation have been on museum practice, there is a need to consider the wider socio-cultural shift around the conceptualisation of the dead body and the development of new theoretical approaches to museum practice with in which repatriation is entangled. Just as the study of Indigenous human remains was undertaken within a colonial ideology (Fforde 2004), so repatriation is situated within a political context in which neither side is immune from socio-political influence (Turnbull 2002, Gould 1981).

Tiffany Jenkins (2011) has argued that the shift in thinking around the repatriation of human remains that occurred in the UK, is symptomatic of a crisis of cultural authority within museums and has resulted in the problematisation of human remains collections more broadly. In not only being the result of, but also contributing to a shift in museum practice that has created a role for museums as ethical mediators (Di Domenico 2015), repatriation can be framed as having problematised human remains collections as Jenkins suggests. At

RCS, discussions about the repatriation of human remains were certainly part of wider debates and shifts in practice related to the questioning of medical ethics that occurred in the late 1990s and the establishment of the Human Tissue Authority (Swain 2013, Gieson 2013a, Jenkins 2011). However, through comparing the approach to repatriation claims and the wider human remains collection at RCS with that at the British Museum, Natural History Museum, Manchester Museum and the Oxford University Museum of Natural History, what has emerged is the influence of people, place and the wider collections on both decision making and what is considered respectful in terms of storing, handling and displaying human remains. In understanding museums as heterogeneous, it becomes clear that the respectful treatment of human remains is a cultural construct influenced by context. What I therefore propose is the replacement of the concept of repatriation as having problematised human remains collections within UK museums with a nuanced and contextually sensitive understanding of repatriation that recognises the role of the remains in social interactions that have impacted on the emotional geographies of museum practice.

Although in each museum I visited what the staff regarded as appropriate behaviour in relation to human remains varied, what was deemed to be respectful within that context was demonstrated through performance and practice. So, although repatriation does appear to have foregrounded alternative understandings of the dead body, the meanings remains hold are not fixed or static. In order to map the social interactions between museum staff and the objects they care for, Geoghegan and Hess (2014, 461) use the concept of object-love (Macdonald 2002, Morrison et al. 2013) to interpret the sensory experience of the store room. For Geoghegan and Hess, object-love offers a way of understanding affect and emotion that takes into account the need to care for material heritage that underpins the form and function of the space. However, as the examples drawn from my own experiences at RCS have demonstrated, the affective presence of human remains and their agency to invoke

immaterial meanings and emotions are not necessarily connected to those particular remains, time or place.

In relation to the corporeality of the dead body, Fontein and Harris (2013, 116-117) ask whether in absence of personhood, identity and social relatedness, this material can be conceived as of as 'human' at all. The responses from the museum staff I worked with and interviewed suggest that in this context the answer is yes, as demonstrated by the consideration of human remains as special and different from objects and even animal remains within the collection. Having argued that the emotional geographies of the human remains store cannot be understood through the concept of object-love alone, I have therefore combined work on museum geographies and materiality with theorising on deathscapes as places associated with and places for the dead (Maddrell and Sidaway 2010a, Cloke and Pawson 2008, Kong 1999, Hartig and Dunn 1998, Maddrell 2010, Young and Light 2013), to propose that museum spaces that contain human remains can be understood through this lens.

Understanding the museum as a deathscape foregrounds how for those making repatriation claims, their ancestral remains are out of place (Cresswell 1996). However, for other stakeholders, the museum is a proper place for the long dead, although the meanings that these dead bodies hold are multiple and fluctuating and the boundary that separates subjects and objects is unstable. Acknowledging this spatial aspect opens up a new way of theorising and discussing repatriation. Rather than a contest between science and tradition in which the remains are either object or ancestor, what repatriation claims represent are the different views about the proper place for certain remains. As Maddrell and Sidaway (2010b, 3) point out, death being out of its proper place is 'at the heart of many of the individual and collective negotiations around death, dying, mourning and remembrance', and I argue that thinking

about repatriation in this way has opened up a new way of exploring the social and cultural meanings of human remains collections within museums.

### 9.3 The Process of Repatriation

In her study of repatriation to Haida Gwaii, Krmpotich (2010, 2014) suggests, that the return of ancestral remains within that context can be understood through the lens of kinship. While an important ethnographic study of repatriation, in focusing on kinship, Krmpotich's approach suppresses the political meanings of the remains and process of repatriation. Through a focus on the materiality and by following the journey of the remains repatriated from RCS, I have illustrated the complexities of the repatriation process and the intersection of the remains with issues of land rights, health, sovereignty and politics at local, national and state levels. This understanding of the meanings of repatriation as entangled and interdependent therefore contrasts with the presentation of the process as being somehow separate from wider concerns or issues communities face (Jenkins 2011, Batty 2005, Nail 1994, Foley 2004), and as being either political *or* therapeutic (Nilsson Stutz 2013, Forsman 1997) with the remains categorised as political symbols or a means to heal the 'wounds of history' (Thornton 2002).

For the members of the Ngarrindjeri I spoke with, returning the Old People (ancestral remains) to country is a burden and obligation which can also be therapeutic as part of a wider moves towards self-determination and sovereignty. In this example, the therapeutic and political meanings of the remains are entangled, suggesting that any study of the meanings of repatriation for the Ngarrindjeri needs to address the emotive materiality and affective agency of the remains at local as well as national and international scales. Speaking to representatives from communities, it became clear that ancestral remains can be

distressing and challenging and feed into community tensions suggesting that the framing of repatriation as therapeutic is overly simplistic. What also emerged was the importance of taking into account the material properties of the remains (Ingold 2007). In her study of the nameless dead in former Yugoslavia, Katherine Verdrey (1999, 102) identifies how corpses became powerful political symbols through their connection to space, territory, grief, proper burial and revisions of history. Yet in theorising the mobility of human remains although Verdrey argues that *materiality* is central to their symbolic efficacy, she does not really engage with the body as *material*. Following the journey of RCS remains has foregrounded some of the practicalities created by the material presence of the remains; the remains are material and as such require space for storage, land for burial, funding for transport and burial, and the time (from people) to carry out the process. In the case of the unprovenanced remains, their corporality is what allows them to become symbolic of loss and a painful history at a national level. Yet it also means ongoing bodily interactions with the remains as work continues to try to find information about them, and that the space they occupy is a key component in discussions about where they will eventually come to rest; the material and symbolic cannot be separated.

Based on my experience of following the remains returned by RCS, I would argue that acknowledging the practicalities of dealing with repatriated remains is fundamental to understanding the meanings created by repatriation process. Following Hodder's (2012, 1) suggestion that we 'look more closely at things themselves' led to me discovering that the remains returned from RCS that had not been returned to communities and were still active in an ongoing process of repatriation. At RCS, and the other participant museums in the UK, I found the impacts of repatriation were entangled and difficult to isolate. In the museums I visited in Australia and New Zealand, the impacts of the repatriation of human remains could be more clearly determined as the presence of the remains has led to the creation of

ancestral remains stores, a particular type of cultural space more closely associated with loss and mourning than the human remains stores visited in the UK. Ancestral remains stores are liminal spaces in which the boundaries between museum and other cultural practices become indistinct. So, although remains may not be in their proper place, their presence in the ancestral remains store is not necessarily inappropriate.

Therefore, in arguing that return of the ancestral remains from RCS should be understood as part of a process of decolonisation rather than a post-colonial act, I mean to highlight the complex and long-term nature of repatriation and that neither the process or the remains themselves can be understood in isolation. Reframing repatriation in this way also creates space within which to recognise the agency of unprovenanced remains to confront, disrupt and challenge, and that discussion, debate and disagreement are valid and important parts of the repatriation process.

## **9.4 The Control of Information**

In following the journey of the ancestral remains repatriated from RCS, alongside the materialities of the remains, the complex meanings of the related documentation also came into view. This is information about the remains held in museums and that travelled with and sometimes independently of the remains. It is also the information relating to the process of repatriation itself, the letters, emails, reports and photographs that document the network of individuals involved. The process of repatriation creates a distributed archive as information is created, reconfigured in new ways and becomes multiple and mobile.

That material remains are a source of data, be that biometric, isotopic, or genomic, is an important topic of discussion, especially in relation to unprovenanced remains (Pardoe 2013,

Bardill 2014, TallBear 2013b). Although a frequently used technique, communities do not always accept the results of biometric measurement, and isotopic and DNA testing remain controversial, not only due to the requirement for taking samples but also because of questions around the ownership, control and use of such information. While techniques such as isotope analysis can provide information about where a person has lived during their lifetime, genetic techniques make connections between the remains and the living population. This links the discussions around repatriated ancestral remains with current debates about genetic research on Indigenous populations and concerns about the use of genetic research to define indigeneity based on a western way of understanding relatedness (Nash 2012, TallBear 2013a, 2013b, Kowal et al. 2013b, Bardill 2014). This unease around the potential uses of data produced to aid the identification of the remains, highlights how information about the remains can continue to be present and have agency, even in the absence of its source.

The issues around use and control of the information derived from bodily components in the context of repatriation echo those found in wider debates on bio-information (Parry 2004, Parry and Gere 2006, Greenhough 2006, Bridge et al. 2003, Greenhough and Roe 2006, Waldby and Mitchell 2006, Widdows 2009) and it is clear that further thought needs to be given to the management and control of information relating to repatriated remains.

Influenced by feminist critiques of the unconnected individual (see Wolf 1996, Tong 2001, Mackenzie and Stoljar 2000, Donchin and Purdy 1999) and supported by an understanding of the genetic individual as fundamentally connected, Heather Widdows points to a shift from an individual focused ethic, to one in which adopts broader models of consent. While advocating for ethical frameworks that 'accommodate the right and interest of groups as well as individuals', Widdows (2009, 180) also acknowledges that communal models can be problematic. For example, there are difficulties around who speaks for the group, minority

representation and the protection of vulnerable individuals. In relation to how museums work with Indigenous peoples, what Widdow's consideration of the impact of genetics on ethical models provokes, are important questions around who is legitimate, who are the authorised and alternative voices, and who makes those decisions.

I have also argued for expanding the scope of the discussion to include all the documentation and information related to the process of repatriation. Just as we can explore what material remains do, asking the same question about the documentation reveals its potential to act as a node within social networks. Viewing the RCS archive through this lens, I have suggested it is through this information that the College might maintain and develop relationships with Indigenous organisations and communities. Yet although the recognition of the RCS repatriation archive as containing Indigenous knowledge foregrounds its meaning and potential, it also raises further questions around how museums should work with Indigenous peoples. In being alive to the agency of the information they continue to hold, the responsibilities of this ongoing stewardship need consideration.

## **9.5 Agency, Absence and Presence**

In exploring the emotive materiality and affective presence of the remains repatriated by RCS I am building on work acknowledging the agency of the corporal presence of the dead to affect the experience and actions of the living (Williams 2004, Hallam and Hockey 2001). In engaging with the agency of repatriated remains, Gell's (1998) relational theory of agency has provided a useful framework for examining their role in structuring interaction and shaping social networks. To deal with these complex relationships, Gell differentiates between primary and secondary agents. Yet having already established human remains as ontologically indeterminate and social ambiguous, it should perhaps be unsurprising that categorising them

as either intentional beings or secondary agents without will or intention would become problematic. While Tung's (2014) proposed change of the categories to sentient and non-sentient is helpful, in that it allows for the acknowledgement of ontological difference, I would suggest what is more critical is the recognition of the co-existence of these different types of agency.

Just as human remains can hold multiple meanings that coalesce, compete and conflict, this is also true of their agency as actors within social networks. Krmpotich et al. (2010, 373) state that attempts to separate out the agency 'accrued from the material property of the bone and that accrued from bones as parts of human beings' are counter-productive. However, I would argue that to understand the complex network of social relations in which repatriated remains are active there is a need to be alive to these different types of agency. For example, when dealing with unprovenanced remains, the agency of the remains as sentient ancestor, with potentially harmful will and intention, co-exists and sometimes conflicts with the non-sentient material agency of the remains. Although these types of agency are interdependent and interact to force conversations about land, ownership and memorial, I propose that identifying them as distinct allows for a more nuanced understanding of the different ways ancestral remains act in social relations and impact on social interactions.

Situating the material remains at the centre of my study of the legacies of the RCS repatriations is partly a result of my background as an objects conservator. Much of my previous experience of working with museum collections has involved engaging with the materiality of objects and the interconnection of meaning and material. Yet on beginning my research at RCS, one of the first discussions I had was about the head of Pemulwuy. This foregrounded the phenomena of absence in the museum and prompted my examination of the agency of absence in relation to deaccessioned material. In his work on absence what Hetherington (2004, 2003) describes, is an agency of the absent that resonates with Hallam

and Hockey's (2001) study of how the dead are incorporated into lives of the living through the objects they leave behind. What Hallam and Hockey suggest is that traces in the socio-material world draw absences into the present situation and it would therefore seem logical to argue that absence goes with presence, in what Meyer (2012, 107) terms the 'relational ontology of absence'. Yet, following Hetherington's (2004, 162) premise that the absent is moved along rather than ever been fully gone, Meyer proposes a less dualistic approach in which absence is conceived as a trace. For Meyer this then raises questions around how we 'follow and describe the movements, the attachments, the translations and representations through which absence becomes matter and through which absence comes to matter' (Meyer 2012, 107).

These theorisations of absence offer a new lens through which to view repatriation as the process can be understood in terms of the tension between absence and presence; the presence of the remains in one place marking their absence in another. Thinking about the repatriation process in these terms also foregrounds the traces that draw the absence of the repatriated remains into the present. One of these traces is the information about the remains held by museums and communities which is a legacy of the restitution process not considered within the wider literature (for example Hitchens 1997, Greenfield 1989, Tythacott and Arvanitis 2014, Kendall 2011). However, my consideration of the documentation related to the RCS repatriation has illustrated the agency of the information and role it can play within social networks, leading me to conclude a significant legacy of repatriation for RCS is information the museum continues to hold.

## 9.6 Informing Practice and Future Work

In limiting my case studies for this research to repatriations from RCS I have acknowledged the issues discussed will not reflect the experience of every organisation or community. However, what this approach has brought into focus are certain parts of the repatriation process that, although well understood by those working in repatriation, have received little attention in the wider literature. Therefore, in this final section I will consider the contribution of this research to future repatriation practice and the potential avenues for further research on the topics discussed.

Having set out to isolate the impacts of repatriation on policy and practice at RCS, it quickly became clear this would be problematic due to their entanglement with wider discussions about the use of human remains in museum and medical practice. In thinking about the impacts of repatriation on UK museums I would argue that we should not limit our scope to non-European human remains, or even the social act of repatriation itself. The recognition of the ontological instability of human remains, sensitisation of the collections and need to mitigate tensions between different museum identities has created new forms of social networks and relationships in which human remains act as a nexus. While it is difficult, if not impossible, to untangle exactly what impacts repatriation has had on each individual institution in terms of practice, the Indigenous agency of repatriation claims and the influence they have had within the UK should be recognised and also used to continue questioning, challenging and developing our policies and approaches to human remains collections in UK museums.

Having worked with human remains in museums contexts prior starting this research project, one of the key concepts I was interested in examining was that of respectful treatment. The current DCMS *Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums* states that

'[t]raditionally in the United Kingdom human remains are treated with respect' (DCMS 2005, 8), but what respectful treatment means is not defined. Having demonstrated the heterogeneous nature of museums, I suggest that rather than trying to move towards such a definition, acknowledging the concept of respectful treatment as culturally constructed would support museums in developing policies that embrace ambiguity and to recognise that 'we treat human remains with respect' risks becoming a hollow platitude unless some attempt is made to explain what this means within the particular context under discussion. One of the procedural responsibilities listed in the current *Guidance for the Care of Human Remains in Museums* is that in handling human remains and claims relating to human remains, museums should demonstrate '[r]esponsible communication, openness and transparency' (DCMS 2005, 14). Based on my time at RCS, I would argue that the key to museums achieving this is for the contextual relationships between the remains, people, practice and buildings to inform future policy developments and the approach the organisation takes to the management, use and display of their human remains collection.

With reference to future repatriation practice, an important issue to emerge from the RCS case studies was the requirement for Indigenous people to work within a Western system. During the repatriation negotiations, RCS looked to the Australian and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) for assurance that the TAC and FAIRA were the organisations they should be dealing with. Born out of concerns about the risk of returning remains to the wrong people, it is evident that for RCS national government bodies had an important role in giving legitimacy to the organisations claiming remains. As a Western museum professional, this can be understood as the museum undertaking due diligence prior to return and could therefore be held up as an example of good practice. However, what transpired during my time in Australia and New Zealand was that this had translated into Indigenous organisations and

communities having to present themselves as a homogeneous groups due to the concern that any difference of opinion may undermine their claim.

In his consideration of the legitimacy of authorized and alternative voices in the restitution discourse, Piotr Bienkowski (2014, 49) suggests more beneficial than the 'essentialist process of establishing criteria of ownership and rights' is an open, transparent and deliberative process. Yet to move towards the type of deliberative dialogue Bienkowski advocates for, I suggest there needs to be two fundamental shifts in understanding. The first being to move past the idea of human remains being object or ancestor and to understand repatriation debates as framed by differing views as to whether certain remains are in or out of place within museum spaces. Secondly, having observed that at RCS repatriation appears to be conceptualised as isolated event, I have argued for the reframing repatriation as part of a process of decolonisation in which there is space for discussion and disagreement amongst all stakeholders. While neither of these changes in approach negates the need for discussion, debate and difficult decision making, thinking about repatriation in this way has the potential to foster a greater understanding and engender a more empathetic and nuanced approach to repatriation policy and practice within UK museums.

Described by Tythacott and Arvanitis (2014, 1) as one of the 'most important, yet emotive and contentious issues facing Western museums in the twenty-first century' various different approaches to restitution have emerged in recent years. Yet although there are discussions around working with source communities (Scott and Luby 2007, Krmpotich and Peers 2011, Conaty 2006) and different forms of repatriation (Bell 2003, Peers and Brown 2009), the legacies of the information and documentation that museums continue to hold post repatriation and the recognition of the implications and potential for the future use of this material has not been part of these conversations. Through considering the multiple and

mobile nature of the documentation relating to the RCS repatriations and the meanings and agency of this information, I have drawn attention to this important aspect of the repatriation process and in doing so, added to the ongoing debates and opened up a new area for discussion in relation to the restitution of cultural objects from museum collections.

In the early stages of my research into the repatriation of human remains I encountered work by geographer Catherine Nash (2015) and anthropologist Cara Krmpotich (2014) that applied theories of kinship, Nash to explore genetic accounts of origins and ancestry, and Krmpotich in her study of repatriation in Haida Gwaii. For me, this synergy underlined the cross-disciplinary connections of this area of research and the potential of exploring the intersections of repatriation with cultural geography. Therefore in approaching repatriation as an inherently spatial and making links to current themes in geographical research, notably work on bio-information (Greenhough and Roe 2006, Parry and Greenhough forthcoming, Parry 2004, Parry and Gere 2006, Nash 2013), remembrance and memorial (Hay et al. 2004, Dwyer and Alderman 2008, Szpunar 2010, Petersson and Wingren 2011, Petersson 2010) and the development use and meanings created by digital archives (Rose 2016) I hope this thesis will act as a springboard for future cross-disciplinary work on the repatriation process.

Despite being a major achievement of the Indigenous rights movement and the subject of a broad body of work analysing the repatriation debate, the legacies of this global movement of human remains is under researched. This may in part be because understanding the impacts of the process for communities requires situated ethnographic research and raises issues in relation to speaking for Indigenous peoples. While there is certainly a need for Indigenous voices, experience and research methodologies to become more prominent, during my own research I found my observations and perspective to be valued but only within the context of the recognition of my own positionality and my willingness to discuss this openly with

participants. What this thesis also highlights are parts of the repatriation process, particularly the issue of unprovenanced remains, to which cultural geographical study could contribute, adding to the broader understanding of the local, national and international political landscapes in which the restitution of ancestral remains and cultural heritage takes place.

In considering performance and practice in relation to human remains collections within museums, this thesis contributes to a growing body of geographical work exploring the complex geographies of museum practice. Following calls for the re-materialization of geography, the interests of geographers in museum spaces and collections have tended to focus on what is present, observable and tangible (Hill 2006a, 2007, 2006b, Geoghegan and Hess 2014, Patchett 2010, DeSilvey 2006) However, drawing on other areas of geographical thought that explore and draw force from absence, the geographies of the collections that are no longer in the museum can be explored and I suggest that the geographies of deaccessioning present an interesting new area of research for cultural geographers interested in museum spaces to explore. Focusing on one part of the collection has also drawn attention to the potential for further work on the geographies of emotion and affect within museum spaces, particularly in relation to museum stores and the collections they house. For as Geoghegan (2010) has pointed out, the affective and emotional aspects of behind the scenes museum practice remain under explored, and more-than-representational geographies that explore physical and emotional engagements with museum collections and examine how human remain collections are experienced within museum spaces have much to add to this area of research.

Examining museums with human remains in their collections through the lens of deathscapes has also opened up a new potential area of study, as although museums are spaces in which people encounter the dead and their corporeal remains, they are not sites considered by the

current deathscapes literature (Maddrell and Sidaway 2010a, Young and Light 2013, Kong 1999).

As I was making notes on the display of foetal remains two visitors came through the gap between the show cases. Both were women in their 30s and having paused in front of the first case that contains animal remains, they moved toward the case in which the human foetuses are displayed. As they approached I moved to one side to allow them to stand in front of the case. Both were quiet for a few moments as they looked at the display and read the labels. One of the women remarked how sad it was to see 'such tiny babies', in response the other pointed to the top shelf stating 'look that one, that's how big he was when I lost him'. After moments silence they began to move away and as they did so the second women spoke again, this time commenting how she thought seeing the babies would have been upsetting but actually that 'it was helpful to see them, it helps when you understand'.

Extract from Research Diary, 20<sup>th</sup> October 2016

What this example from the Hunterian Museum at RCS demonstrates is that within museums the affective presence of human remains can prompt unexpected reactions, acts of remembrance and conversations about death, burial and loss.

Through examining the geographies of the museum spaces we can consider the behaviours and performance of staff and visitors to explore further the sensitivities of human remains, the performance of respectful treatment and the meanings and social role of the dead body and death in the museum landscape. I therefore suggest that the ways in which museums attempt to control the affective presence of the dead body deserve further consideration and that there is the scope for further cross-disciplinary research on the role of the museum in social and cultural understandings of death.

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- Elizabeth Allen to Michael Mansell, 4<sup>th</sup> July 1986, Exit File 92, Museum Archive, The Royal College of Surgeons of England
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- Heather Sculthorpe to Stella Mason, 21<sup>st</sup> September 2001, Exit File 82, Museum Archive, The Royal College of Surgeons of England
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- Simon Chaplin to Jonathon Magonet, 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2001, Exit File 78, Museum Archive, The Royal College of Surgeons of England, London
- Simon Chaplin to Liz Edwards 27<sup>th</sup> September 2001, Exit File 92, Museum Archive, The Royal College of Surgeons of England
- Simon Chaplin to Margaret Clegg 20<sup>th</sup> January 2010, Repatriation, Museum Files, The Royal College of Surgeons of England, London
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William Charles Osman Hill to Miss Green 7<sup>th</sup> March 1933, File MS0521/2/32-34, Archives, The Royal College of Surgeons of England

William Charles Osman Hill to W. Chanmugam 12<sup>th</sup> November 1932, File MS0521/2/32-34, Archives, The Royal College of Surgeons of England

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Minutes of the Board of Hunterian Trustees, 6<sup>th</sup> February 2008. Royal College of Surgeons of England Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Council 13<sup>th</sup> September 1990 (page 362). Royal College of Surgeons Minutes of Council 1987, Archives, The Royal College of Surgeons of England

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# Appendix 1

## Research Participants

Code	Participant	Association	Date	Data
LOR-001	<b>Carina Philips</b> Curator, Wellcome Collection of Anatomy and Pathology	The Royal College of Surgeons of England	14.11.2014	Recorded Interview
LOR-002	<b>Martyn Cooke</b> Head of Conservation	The Royal College of Surgeons of England	11.12.2014	Recorded Interview
LOR-003	<b>Sir Peter Morris</b> College President 2001-2004	The Royal College of Surgeons of England	18.12.2014	Recorded Interview
LOR-004	<b>Bryan Sitch</b> Deputy Head of Collections and Curator of Archaeology	Manchester Museum	06.01.2015	Recorded Interview
LOR-005	<b>Dr Campbell Price</b> Curator of Egypt and Sudan	Manchester Museum	06.01.2015	Recorded Interview
LOR-007	<b>Sarah Pearson</b> Curator, Hunterian Museum	The Royal College of Surgeons of England	08.01.2015	Recorded Interview
LOR-008	<b>Sir Terence English</b> College President 1989-1992	The Royal College of Surgeons of England	19.01.2015	Recorded Interview
LOR-009	<b>Dr Margaret Clegg</b> Former Head of the Human Remains Unit	Natural History Museum	30.01.2015	Recorded Interview
LOR-010	<b>Prof. Norman MacLeod</b> Researcher & Former Keeper of Palaeontology	Natural History Museum	17.03.2015	Recorded Interview
LOR-011	<b>Dr John Jackson</b> Head of Science Policy and Communication	Natural History Museum	18.03.2015	Recorded Interview
LOR-012	<b>Dr Paul Smith</b> Director	Oxford University Museum of Natural History	30.03.2015	Recorded Interview
LOR-013	<b>Dr Simon Chaplin</b> Former Director of Museums & Special Collections /Former Senior Curator	The Royal College of Surgeons of England	07.04.2015	Recorded Interview
LOR-014	<b>Phil Gordon</b> Aboriginal Heritage Project Officer	Australian Museum	08.05.2015	Recorded Interview
LOR-015	<b>Dr Michael Pickering</b> Senior Curatorial Fellow	National Museum Australia	12.05.2015	Recorded Interview
LOR-016	<b>Stella Mason</b> Former Director of Museums and Special Collections	The Royal College of Surgeons of England	21.01.2015	Phone Interview Notes
LOR-017	<b>Edward Halealoha Ayau</b> Director	Hui Malama I Na Kupuna O Hawai'i Nei	15.05.2015	Recorded Interview
LOR-018	<b>Lee Burgess</b> Repatriation Officer	National Museum Australia	20.05.2015	Recorded Interview
LOR-019	<b>Te Herekiele Haerehuka Herewini</b> Kaiwhakahaere Kaupapa Pūtere Kōiwi (Manager Repatriation)	Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa	05.06.2015	Recorded Interview
LOR-020	<b>Amber Kiri Aranui</b> Pou Rangahau Tautaki Kōiwi (Repatriation Researcher)	Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa	05.06.2015	Recorded Interview

LOR-021	<b>Dame Nganeko Minhinnick</b> Ngāti Te Ata and Waiohua Elder	Ngāti Te Ata	18.06.2015	Recorded Interview
LOR-022	<b>David Kaus</b> Repatriation Programme Director	National Museum Australia	24.06.2015	Recorded Interview
LOR-023	<b>Rob McWilliams</b> Senior Collection Manager, Indigenous and Restricted Collections	Museums Victoria	26.06.2015	Interview Notes
	<b>Jamie Thomas</b> Former Community Liaison Officer			
LOR-024	<b>Lindy Allen</b> Senior Curator and Repatriation Programme Manager	Museums Victoria	27.05.2015	Recorded Interview
LOR-025	<b>Ray Ahmat</b> Cultural Heritage Officer	Yorta Yorta Aboriginal Corporation	29.07.015	Recorded Interview
LOR-026	<b>Wade Morgan</b> Cultural Heritage Coordinator	Yorta Yorta Aboriginal Corporation	29.07.2015	Recorded Interview
LOR-027	<b>Rodney Dillion</b> Palawa Elder and Former ATSIC Commissioner	Palawa Community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission	05.08.2015	Recorded Interview
LOR-028	<b>Tony Brown</b> Former Senior Curator, Indigenous Cultures	Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery	06.08.2015	Recorded Interview
LOR-029	<b>Dr Julie Gough</b> Artist and Curator	Palawa Community	06.08.2015	Recorded Interview
LOR-030	<b>Caroline Spotswood</b>	Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre	07.08.2015	Interview Notes
LOR-031	<b>Matt Poll</b> Curator Indigenous Heritage and Repatriation Project	Sydney University Museums	23.07.2015	Interview Notes
LOR-032	<b>Repatriation Team</b>	Ministry of the Arts	21.05.2015	Meeting Notes
LOR-033	<b>Natasha Zanrosso</b> Project Officer	Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council	26.06.2015	Meeting Notes
	<b>Maria Pizzi</b> VAHC Secretariat			
LOR-034	<b>Major Sumner</b> Ngarrindjeri Elder and Repatriation Coordinator	Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority	23.08.2015	Recorded Interview
LOR-035	<b>Dr Daniel Antoine</b> Assistant Keeper for Bioarchaeology & Curator of Physical Anthropology	British Museum	12.01.2016	Recorded Interview
LOR-036	<b>Edward Halealoha Ayau</b> Director	Hui Malama I Na Kupuna O Hawai'i Nei	03.04.2015	Written Response
LOR-037	<b>Stephen Welsh</b> Curator of Living Cultures	Manchester Museum	01.09.2015	Written Response

The participants listed here took part on an arranged meeting or interview and gave written consent for the use of their data, name and association to be used in relation to the Legacies of Repatriation research project. Other interactions and meetings documented in my research diary have been anonymised so are not listed here. The role and association listed are that which links the participant to this research project and therefore former roles rather than current position/association has been given for some participants. Unless the participants position is listed as 'former' the position listed is the one the participant held at the time of data collection.

## Appendix 2

### Repatriations of Human Remains from The Royal College of Surgeons of England 2001-2016

Accession Number	Exit No.	Exit Date	Destination (RCS Records)	Location in September 2015
RCSMS/6	82	27.05.2002	Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre	Returned to Tasmania by TAC
RCSHM/Osteo. BD 1489	82	27.05.2002	Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre	Returned to Tasmania by TAC
RCSHM/Osteo. BD 1490	82	27.05.2002	Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre	Returned to Tasmania by TAC
RCSHM/Osteo. BD 1491	82	27.05.2002	Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre	Returned to Tasmania by TAC
RCSHM/Osteo. BD 1492	82	27.05.2002	Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre	Returned to Tasmania by TAC
RCSHM/Osteo. BD 1493	82	27.05.2002	Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre	Returned to Tasmania by TAC
RCSOM/A 54.2	82	27.05.2002	Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre	Returned to Tasmania by TAC
RCSHM/Osteo BD 1488	208	16.09.2009	Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre	Returned to Tasmania by TAC
RCSOM/A 53.13	92	07.04.2003	National Museum Australia, Canberra	National Museum Australia, Canberra
RCSOM/A 53.1	92	07.04.2003	National Museum Australia, Canberra	National Museum Australia, Canberra
RCSOM/A 53.14	92	07.04.2003	National Museum Australia, Canberra	National Museum Australia, Canberra
RCSOM/A 53.295	92	07.04.2003	National Museum Australia, Canberra	National Museum Australia, Canberra
RCSOM/A 53.291	92	07.04.2003	National Museum Australia, Canberra	National Museum Australia, Canberra
RCSOM/A 53.296	92	07.04.2003	National Museum Australia, Canberra	National Museum Australia, Canberra
RCSOM/S 50a.4	92	07.04.2003	National Museum Australia, Canberra	National Museum Australia, Canberra
RCSHM/D 703.5	92	07.04.2003	National Museum Australia, Canberra	National Museum Australia, Canberra
RCSOM/A 53.143	92	07.04.2003	for South Australia	National Museum Australia, Canberra
RCSOM/A 53.144	92	07.04.2003	for South Australia	National Museum Australia, Canberra
RCSOM/A 53.22	92	07.04.2003	for South Australia	National Museum Australia, Canberra
RCSOM/A 53.23	92	07.04.2003	for South Australia	National Museum Australia, Canberra
RCSOM/A 53.231	92	07.04.2003	for South Australia	National Museum Australia, Canberra
RCSOM/A 53.24	92	07.04.2003	for South Australia	National Museum Australia,

				Canberra
RCSOM/A 53.241	92	07.04.2003	for South Australia	National Museum Australia, Canberra
RCSOM/A 53.261	92	07.04.2003	for South Australia	National Museum Australia, Canberra
RCSOM/A 53.27	92	07.04.2003	for South Australia	National Museum Australia, Canberra
RCSOM/A 53.28	92	07.04.2003	for South Australia	National Museum Australia, Canberra
RCSOM/A 53.121	92	07.04.2003	for Northern Territory	National Museum Australia, Canberra
RCSOM/A 53.142	92	07.04.2003	for Northern Territory	National Museum Australia, Canberra
RCSOM/A 53.141	92	07.04.2003	for Northern Territory	National Museum Australia, Canberra
RCSOM/A 53.121	92	07.04.2003	for Northern Territory	National Museum Australia, Canberra
RCSOM/A 53.29	92	07.04.2003	for Victoria	National Museum Australia, Canberra
RCSOM/A 53.18	92	07.04.2003	for Victoria	National Museum Australia, Canberra
RCSHM/Osteo 1188 (object)	92	07.04.2003	National Museum Australia, Canberra	National Museum Australia, Canberra
RCSHM/Osteo 1028 (object)	92	07.04.2003	National Museum Australia, Canberra	National Museum Australia, Canberra
RCSHM/Osteo 1043 (object)	92	07.04.2003	National Museum Australia, Canberra	National Museum Australia, Canberra
RCSOM/A 49.9 (dental casts)	92	07.04.2003	National Museum Australia, Canberra	National Museum Australia, Canberra
RCSOM/A 53.293	92	07.04.2003	Yorta Yorta People, Victoria	Returned to Yorta Yorta Nation
RCSOM/A 53.133	92	07.04.2003	Yorta Yorta People, Victoria	Returned to Yorta Yorta Nation
RCSOM/A 53.19	92	07.04.2003	Yorta Yorta People, Victoria	Returned to Yorta Yorta Nation
RCSOM/A 53.191	92	07.04.2003	Yorta Yorta People, Victoria	Returned to Yorta Yorta Nation
RCSOM/A 53.192	92	07.04.2003	Yorta Yorta People, Victoria	Returned to Yorta Yorta Nation
RCSOM/A 53.193	92	07.04.2003	Yorta Yorta People, Victoria	Returned to Yorta Yorta Nation
RCSOM/A 53.194	92	07.04.2003	Yorta Yorta People, Victoria	Returned to Yorta Yorta Nation
RCSOM/A 53.195	92	07.04.2003	Yorta Yorta People, Victoria	Returned to Yorta Yorta Nation
RCSOM/A 53.15	92	07.04.2003	Yorta Yorta People, Victoria	Returned to Yorta Yorta Nation
RCSOM/A 53.196	92	07.04.2003	Yorta Yorta People, Victoria	Returned to Yorta Yorta Nation
RCSOM/A 53.152	92	07.04.2003	for Victoria	Returned to Community
RCSOM/A 53.153	92	07.04.2003	for Victoria	Returned to Community
RCSOM/A 53.154	92	07.04.2003	for Victoria	Returned to Community
RCSOM/A 53.155	92	07.04.2003	for Victoria	Returned to Community
RCSOM/A 53.156	92	07.04.2003	for Victoria	Returned to Community

RCSOM/A 53.17	92	07.04.2003	for South Australia	Returned to Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority
RCSOM/A 53.171	92	07.04.2003	for South Australia	Returned to Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority
RCSOM/A 53.172	92	07.04.2003	for South Australia	Returned to Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority
RCSOM/A 53.25	92	07.04.2003	for South Australia	Returned to Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority
RCSOM/A 53.251	92	07.04.2003	for South Australia	Returned to Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority
RCSHM/Osteo.1066	92	07.04.2003	for South Australia	South Australian Museum, Adelaide
RCSOM/A 53.2A	92	07.04.2003	for South Australia	South Australian Museum, Adelaide
RCSOM/A 53.292	173	15.11.2007	Te Papa Tongarewa	Returned to Ngāti Te Ata for burial
RCSHM/D 699	173	15.11.2007	Te Papa Tongarewa	Te Papa Tongarewa
RCSOM/A 49.2	173	15.11.2007	Te Papa Tongarewa	Te Papa Tongarewa
RCSOM/A 49.3	173	15.11.2007	Te Papa Tongarewa	Te Papa Tongarewa
RCSOM/A 49.4	173	15.11.2007	Te Papa Tongarewa	Te Papa Tongarewa
RCSOM/A 49.5	173	15.11.2007	Te Papa Tongarewa	Te Papa Tongarewa
RCSOM/A 49.61	173	15.11.2007	Te Papa Tongarewa	Te Papa Tongarewa
RCSOM/A 49.62	173	15.11.2007	Te Papa Tongarewa	Te Papa Tongarewa
RCSOM/A 49.621	173	15.11.2007	Te Papa Tongarewa	Te Papa Tongarewa
RCSOM/A 49.622	173	15.11.2007	Te Papa Tongarewa	Te Papa Tongarewa
RCSOM/A 49.623	173	15.11.2007	Te Papa Tongarewa	Te Papa Tongarewa
RCSOM/A 49.624	173	15.11.2007	Te Papa Tongarewa	Te Papa Tongarewa
RCSOM/A 49.625	173	15.11.2007	Te Papa Tongarewa	Te Papa Tongarewa
RCSOM/D 49.3	173	15.11.2007	Te Papa Tongarewa	Te Papa Tongarewa
RCSOM/E 14.711	173	15.11.2007	Te Papa Tongarewa	Te Papa Tongarewa
RCSHC/Osteo. 772	173	15.11.2007	Te Papa Tongarewa	Te Papa Tongarewa
RCSHC/Osteo. 773	173	15.11.2007	Te Papa Tongarewa	Te Papa Tongarewa
RCSHC/Osteo.774	173	15.11.2007	Te Papa Tongarewa	Te Papa Tongarewa
2001:492	173	15.11.2007	Te Papa Tongarewa	Te papa: To be returned to Chatham Islands late 2015
RCSOM/D 110.3	173	15.11.2007	Te Papa Tongarewa	Te Papa: To be returned to Chatham Islands late 2015
RCSOM/E 24.44	259	07.09.2011	Hui Malama I Na Kupuna O Hawai'i Nei	Returned to community for burial
RCSPC/C 20b.4	78	06.09.2001	United Synagogue Burial Society	Burial Bushey Cemetery
RCSPC/C 20b.1	78	06.09.2001	United Synagogue Burial Society	Burial Bushey Cemetery
RCSPC/C 20b.2	78	06.09.2001	United Synagogue Burial Society	Burial Bushey Cemetery
RCSPC/C 20b.3	78	06.09.2001	United Synagogue Burial Society	Burial Bushey Cemetery
RCSPC/C 20b.5	78	06.09.2001	United Synagogue Burial Society	Burial Bushey Cemetery
RCSPC/C 20b.6	78	06.09.2001	United Synagogue Burial Society	Burial Bushey Cemetery

# Appendix 3

## Example Interview Questions, Participant Information Sheets and Consent Forms

### UK Museum Interview Questions/Prompts

Questions prepared for interviews with staff at Manchester Museum

#### Introduction

- Can you tell me about your current role at the museum
  - Can you tell me about your background /training
  - How long have you been in this role/this type of work

#### Repatriation/Custodianship

- Can you tell me about the repatriation of remains from the museum collections
  - Do you remember any of the discussions about repatriation
  - How do you think repatriation is regarded by other staff in the museum
- Have you been involved with any of the repatriations
  - Can you tell me about your involvement/experience
  - Could you say something about preparing human remains for repatriation
  - Can you describe the handover ceremony
  - How did you react to the ceremony/how did being involved make you feel
- Has there been a continuation of the relationship with communities who have had remains returned
  - Do you think there would be any advantage in maintaining a relationship/contact
  - Do you think the repatriations had an impact on how the human remains collections are thought about
  - Have there been any impacts on other areas of the collection

#### Conceptualisation

- How would you describe the human remains in the museum collections
  - Can you tell me about the work you do with them
  - Can you describe how you would do X
- How do you feel about working with this material/working with the different types of Material
  - Have your feelings or approach changed over time
  - What do you think the reasons for this are

#### Policy and Practice

- How are the human remains collections stored
  - Is this different to other parts of the collection
  - Has the storage changed
  - Do you feel the storage is suitable
  - Have there been any issues over storage

- The museum human remains policy states that human remains will be cared for in a respectful manner, what does that mean to you?

- Examples of practice

- Do you remember the policy being introduced

- Did it change the approach/practice within the museum

- How do you feel about non-European human remains that are still in the collections

- What responsibilities do you think the museum has regarding these remains

- Who do you think should have responsibility for making decisions about these remains

- Do you feel the same way about the European remains in the collection

### **Documentation**

- Can you tell me/show me how the human remains in the collection are documented

- Can you tell me/show me how material that has been repatriated is documented

- Why is this information kept

- Is this information added to

Questions/other points [ ]

Feedback [ ]

Transcript Yes/No    Audio Recording Yes/No

# Australia/NZ Museum Interview Questions/Prompts

Questions prepared for interviews with staff at National Museum Australia

## Introduction

- Can you tell me about your current role at the museum
  - Can you tell me about your background /training
  - How long have you been in this role/this type of work
  - How does your work fit into the wider museum structure/remit

## Repatriation/Custodianship

- Can you tell me about the role that museum has in the repatriation of ancestral remains
  - what relationship does the museum have with the other institutions involved
- How would you describe the Indigenous remains held by the museum
  - Can you tell me about the work you do with them
  - How do you feel about working with the remains/have your feeling changed over time
  - What responsibilities do you feel when working with remains
- Does the museum have non-indigenous human remains in its collections
  - Are they thought about or treated differently - issues of consent
- Continuous Cultures, Ongoing Responsibilities recognises custodianship not ownership of Indigenous cultural material, how has this impacted on museum practice
  - Has there been an influence on how other collections are thought about
  - Do indigenous ethics/ways of thinking impact on collections practice in other areas

## Relationships

- The First Australians gallery indicates a collaborative relationship, do you think repatriation has contributed to this
  - How do you think repatriation fits into the wider picture of Indigenous rights and reconciliation
  - NMA Australia was established 1980, do you think being a newer institution has had an influence
- Some communities continue to store remains at the museum once they have been handed back, can you tell me more about this?
  - Are those remains thought of or treated differently
  - Has there been any change in practice

## Storage

- How would you describe the human remains store – security/collections care
  - Can you tell me more about its history/why it was designed this way
- What does respectful treatment of the remains mean to you
  - Is how the remains are cared for negotiated with communities

- Who can have access to the store and who had authority to grant access
  - What types of activities occur in the store
  - Have there been any issues about storage or how the space is used
  
- How do people react to visiting the store
  - How is the store/space regarded by Indigenous communities
  - What issues has it raised
  - How do you feel about being in the store – why do you think that is
  
- There has recently been a consultation on the storage of unprovananced remains, can you tell me more about this
  - What meanings do you think a National Keeping place would have
  
- Some communities have their own or would like to establish their own cultural centres/keeping places, why do you think this is
  - What role does the museum have in supporting this type of community project

**Documentation**

- Can you tell me/show me how the remains are documented
  - Is this different to other parts of the collection
  - Who has access to the information – negotiation with communities – interest in information
  - What happens once remains are returned/returned but stored at the museum
  
- When remains are returned to the museum what happens to the accompanying information
  - How are these archives regarded by communities – how are they stored
  - What happens to these archives once remains are returned to communities

Questions/other points [ ]

Feedback [ ]

Transcript Yes/No Audio Recording Yes/No

# Community Interview Questions/Prompts

Questions prepared for interview with Edward Ayau

## Background to Repatriation

- Can you tell me more about your background and how you became involved in repatriation
- Could you tell me more about the role of your organisation (Hui Mālama) and your role within it?
- Why was repatriation something that was important to you, why did you take on this role
  - Focus and training to undertake the journey of repatriation based on traditional Hawaiian cultural values
  - Can you tell more about the meaning that ancestral remains held in museums for you and the wider Hawaiian community
- You mentioned that human remains collections involving ancestral Hawaiian bones have problematized Hawaiian well-being can you explain this further
  - Lack of consent and illegality of the collections a central issue
  - Treatment of the body after death is the prerogative of the family

## Experience of Repatriation

- Can you tell me about your experiences of repatriation
  - You have been involved in repatriation for 25 years, has the experience changed over time
  - Have there been differences between dealing with institutions in America who are governed by NAGPRA and museums in Europe, where there is no repatriation legislation?
- What are your feelings towards institutions holding ancestral remains
- What do remember about the repatriation from Royal College of Surgeons
  - How did you feel visiting RCS to collect the ancestral remains
  - In your initial response you talked about the meaningful consultation can you tell me more about this process
- If it is appropriate can you tell me about what happens once the remains are returned to Hawaii
  - What meanings do you think the recommitment ceremonies have to the community
- You mentioned the need to find a suitable location for recommitment near to where the remains were taken from; can you tell me more about this?
  - Why is place important
  - What happened if there is no province for the remains

•You mentioned that Hui Mālama has facilitated repatriation for other communities can you tell me more about this

### **Impact and Legacies**

•You have been involved in repatriation for half your life, what impact has it had on you  
-You mentioned the psychological harm of discovering ancestral remains held by institutions and the pressure and enormity of bringing them home can you tell me more

•What do you think the challenges and benefits have been for your community

•You explained that repatriation was based on traditional Hawaiian cultural values can you explain these further to me  
-In Australia some communities feel that repatriation has helped younger generations to connect with traditional culture and values, do you think this has happened in Hawaii

•Do the sites of recommitment continue to be important places  
-Do the sites have ongoing meaning

### **Documentation and Ongoing Relationships**

•Have the repatriations been documented in any way  
-Do you think there is benefit in documenting repatriation work

•What are your feelings about museums from which ancestral remains have been returned retaining information about those remains  
-Do you think museums should keep information (such as correspondence, videos, photos) about the repatriation process

•Over the 25 years you have been involved in repatriation has the relationship that Hawaiian communities have with museums changed  
-Do you think repatriation has had a role in this

Questions/other points [ ]

Feedback [ ]

Transcript Yes/No Audio Recording Yes/No

## Information sheet

### Research study: The Legacies of the repatriation of Human Remains Information for participants (UK Based Research)

**We would like to invite you to be part of this research project, if you would like to. Please read the following information carefully before you decide to take part; this will tell you why the research is being done and what you will be asked to do if you take part. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. If you decide to take part you will be asked to sign the attached form to say that you agree. You are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.**

#### Contact Details of Researcher:

Sarah Morton

School of Geography and the Environment, University of Oxford

E-mail: sarah.morton@ouce.ox.ac.uk Telephone: 0497379597

#### Background information about the project

My name is Sarah Morton and I am a DPhil research student working on a project with the Hunterian Museum that aims to explore the legacies of the repatriation of human remains from UK museums to indigenous communities. As part of the project I am interested in finding out what the impact of the repatriation process has been on how human remains are used, stored and understood within museums. I am therefore hoping to carry out interviews with museum staff and board members who have been involved with repatriation decisions and museum professionals who currently work with human remains.

#### Taking part in the project

Between April 2015 and August 2015 I would like to carry out an informal interview with you. The interview would be arranged for a time and place convenient to you and will take approximately 1 hour. If you currently work with human remains If possible and time permitting would also like visit the the areas in your institution where human remains are stored, studied and conserved.

Part One: During the interview we will talk about your work with human remains and/or your experiences of repatriation. You will be asked to reflect on the meanings and values that human remains collections have for you, the impact engagement with indigenous groups may have on your views and approach and what you think the potential benefits and issues of the repatriation are. We will also discuss current policies on human remains and how they impact on your practice.

Part Two: Ideally the second discussion will take place in the areas human remains are worked with and stored within your institution could involve a tour of work and storage areas or a discussion about particular specimens you may wish to show me. During this time we can follow up on some of ideas and concepts that we talk about in the first part of the interview and consider the impact of repatriation on the practicalities of working with the collections.

The interviews will be informal with questions being intended as prompts for discussion, however if you do not wish to discuss a certain topic there is no obligation

to do so and at the end of the interview process there will be an opportunity for you to give feedback or raise any issues not covered. Audio recording of the interviews will be made and if possible reference photographs and video taken of the stores and work rooms we visit.

### **Use of your data**

Your interview data (the audio recordings, interview transcripts and images) will be used in the 'Legacies of the Repatriation of Human Remains' research project and direct quotations from you may be used in reports, publications, and presentations. It is your choice if you want your real name and professional position used or if you would prefer not to be identified. If you would like copies of the audio recordings and/or interview transcripts arrangements will be made to send these to you.

### **Preserving your data**

As this project is part of a collaborative research partnership with the Hunterian Museum at The Royal College of Surgeons of England (RCS) you can opt for your interview data to be deposited in the RCS archives for use in future projects and research. If you would like to donate your data but would prefer not to be identified then the information can be anonymised so your personal details remain confidential to the 'The Legacies of the Repatriation of Human Remains' project.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet, hopefully it has answered your questions about the project. I would be happy to discuss its contents or any other areas of concern or questions that you may have.



## Consent form

**Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and/or listened to an explanation about the research.**

**Title of Study:** The legacies of the repatriation of human remains

**Name of Researcher:** Sarah Morton

**Thank you for considering taking part in this research. The person organizing the research must explain the project to you before you agree to take part. If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet or explanation already given to you, please ask the researcher before you decide whether to join in. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time.**

Please tick the relevant statements

- I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
- I understand that if I decide at any other time during the research that I no longer wish to participate in this project, I can notify the researchers involved and be withdrawn from it immediately.
- I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study. I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and stored securely. 
  - I do not want my name to be associated with my data and understand that I will not be identifiable from any data or quotes used.
  - OR
  - I consent for my real name and professional position (if applicable) to be used in this research. I understand that this means my name may appear in reports, articles and presentations linked to this research.
- I consent for the audio recordings to be made of the interviews in which I take part
- I consent for the use of images in which I appear to be used in this research and understand that this means I may be identified and anonymity cannot be guaranteed.
- I consent for the use of video in which I appear to be used in this research and understand that this means I may be identified and anonymity cannot be guaranteed.
- I consent for my data to be deposited in the archives at the Royal College of Surgeons of England for the purposes of further research. 
  - I do not want my name to be associated with my data and understand that I will not be identifiable from the data deposited.
  - OR
  - I consent for my real name and professional position (if applicable) to be used in conjunction with the deposited data. I understand that this means my name may appear in future research that uses my data.

**Participant's Statement:**

I \_\_\_\_\_ agree that the research project named above has been explained to me to my satisfaction and I agree to take part in the study. I have read both the notes written above and the Information Sheet about the project, and understand what the research study involves.

Signed:

Date:

**Investigator's Statement:**

I \_\_\_\_\_ confirm that I have carefully explained the nature, demands and any foreseeable risks (where applicable) of the proposed research to the volunteer

Signed:



## Information sheet

### Research study: The Legacies of the repatriation of Human Remains Information for participants

#### **Researcher:**

**Background:** My name is Sarah Morton and I am a DPhil Research Student in the School of Geography and the Environment at the University of Oxford. I am also currently a Visiting Research Student at the National Centre for Indigenous Studies at Australia National University.

#### **Contact Details:** Sarah Morton

School of Geography and the Environment, University of Oxford

E-mail: sarah.morton@keble.ox.ac.uk Telephone: 0044 (0) 7921712372

#### **General Outline of the Project:**

**Description and Methodology:** Although there has been a great deal of debate on whether or not human remains held in museum collections should be repatriated there has been less research into the process and legacies of repatriation for the museum and recipient community. The aims of this project are to explore the different meanings and values that reparation has created for those involved and gain a better understanding of the impacts of the process on indigenous communities and museum practice. To explore these issues I am hoping to carry out in depth interviews with museum staff and members of Indigenous communities who have been involved with repatriation of ancestral human remains.

**Participants:** As this is a collaborative project with the Hunterian Museum at The Royal College of Surgeons of England (RCS) the participants will be from museums and communities who have received ancestral remains repatriated by this institution. Four museums and three-four community groups will be involved and approximately 20 interviews carried out.

**Use of Data and Feedback:** The data from this project will be used in my DPhil thesis and related publications. You may also consent to donate your data to the Royal College of Surgeons Archive for use by future researchers. If you choose to participate you will also receive a summary of the research findings.

#### **Participant Involvement:**

**Voluntary Participation & Withdrawal:** Participation in this research project is voluntary. You should only agree to take part if you want to; it is entirely up to you. If you chose not to take part there won't be any disadvantages for you and you will hear no more about it. If choose to take part in the project who are still free to withdraw and without giving a reason up until the point the research is prepared for

publication. If you choose to withdraw from the project your data will be destroyed. If you have taken part in a group interview your data will not be included in the research but will be retained until the end of the project.

**What does participation in the research request of you?** For this research I would like to carry out an interview with you. This may be an individual interview or you may be asked to take part in a group discussion and, if you consent, an audio recording will be made. You will have the option to have your name associated with your data or to be anonymised. The interview will then be transcribed and you will receive a copy of the transcript which you are free to revise. If any direct quotations from you are to be used these will also be sent to you for revision. The audio recordings will remain confidential to this project unless you consent that you are willing to share your interview data with other researchers for use in other projects. If you indicate you are happy for your data to be used in this way it will be deposited in the RCS archives for the purposes of further research. It is your choice whether or not you donate your data to the RCS archive and you do not have to give a reason for your decision.

**Location and Duration:** The interviews will be arranged to suit you and are expected to last for about an hour for individual interviews and two hours for group interviews. As you will also be asked to review your transcript the total time requested of you is two to three hours.

**Risks:** The repatriation of ancestral human remains is an emotive subject and you may therefore find participation in this project distressing. Before the interview you will be informed of people/services you can contact for support and there also be an opportunity to discuss any issues or give feedback at the end of the interview. If you should also be aware that if you have chosen for your data to be anonymous there is still a risk you may be identified although care will be taken to avoid this.

**Benefits:** It is expected that this research will contribute to a better understanding of the complexities, issues and benefits of the repatriation process and impact on the repatriation practice in UK museums. By following the journey of ancestral remains repatriated by the Royal College of Surgeons I also hope that this project will present a more nuanced understanding of the diversity of Aboriginal Society than is currently found in the UK repatriation debate.

**Confidentiality:**

**Confidentiality:** Your data will remain confidential to this research project and only the researcher and immediate project supervisor will have access to the data. If you want your data to be anonymous it will be coded so your details are not associated with any published data. If you take part in a group interview you should be aware that your contribution will be known to the other people taking part and so may not remain confidential.

**Data Storage:**

**Where:** Your data will be stored on a secure server at the University of Oxford during the analysis and publication phase of the project.

**How long:** On completion of the project your data will be stored on a secure archive server at the University of Oxford for five years. If you have consented to deposit your data in the RCS archive it will be stored indefinitely.

**Destruction of Data:** At the end of the storage period data, both hard copies and digital copies, will be destroyed



## Consent form: Group Interviews

Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and/or listened to an explanation about the research.

**Title of Study:** The legacies of the repatriation of human remains

**Name of Researcher:** Sarah Morton

**Thank you for considering taking part in this research. The person organizing the research must explain the project to you before you agree to take part. If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet or explanation already given to you, please ask the researcher before you decide whether to join in. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time.**

Please tick the relevant statements

• I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

• I understand that if I decide at any other time during the research that I no longer wish to participate in this project, I can notify the researchers involved and be withdrawn from it immediately.

• I consent to take part if a group discussion and for the information from that discussion to be processed for the purposes of this research study. I understand that information will be treated as strictly confidential and stored securely.

• I do not want my name to be associated with my data or any quotes used but I understand that in taking part in a group discussion that my data will be identifiable to the other participants.

OR

• I consent for my real name and position (if applicable) to be used in this research. I understand that this means my name may appear in reports, articles and presentations linked to this research.

• I consent for the audio recordings to be made of the groups discussions in which I take part

• I consent for the use of images in which I appear to be used in this research and understand that this means I may be identified and anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

• I consent for the use of video in which I appear to be used in this research and understand that this means I may be identified and anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

• I consent for my data to be deposited in the archives at the Royal College of Surgeons of England for the purposes of further research.

• I do not want my name to be associated with the deposited data and understand that I will not be identifiable from the data deposited.

OR

• I consent for my real name and position (if applicable) to be used in conjunction with the deposited data. I understand that this means my name may appear in future research that uses my data.

**Participant's Statement:**

I \_\_\_\_\_ agree that the research project named above has been explained to me to my satisfaction and I agree to take part in the study. I have read both the notes written above and the Information Sheet about the project, and understand what the research study involves.

Signed:

Date:

**Investigator's Statement:**

I \_\_\_\_\_ confirm that I have carefully explained the nature, demands and any foreseeable risks (where applicable) of the proposed research to the volunteer

Signed:

Date:



## Consent form: Interviews

Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and/or listened to an explanation about the research.

**Title of Study:** The legacies of the repatriation of human remains

**Name of Researcher:** Sarah Morton

**Thank you for considering taking part in this research. The person organizing the research must explain the project to you before you agree to take part. If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet or explanation already given to you, please ask the researcher before you decide whether to join in. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time.**

Please tick the relevant statements

• I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

• I understand that if I decide at any other time during the research that I no longer wish to participate in this project, I can notify the researchers involved and be withdrawn from it immediately.

• I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study. I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and stored securely.

• I do not want my name to be associated with my data and understand that I will not be identifiable from any data or quotes used.

OR

• I consent for my real name and position (if applicable) to be used in this research. I understand that this means my name may appear in reports, articles and presentations linked to this research.

• I consent for the audio recordings to be made of the groups discussions in which I take part

• I consent for the use of images in which I appear to be used in this research and understand that this means I may be identified and anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

• I consent for the use of video in which I appear to be used in this research and understand that this means I may be identified and anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

• I consent for the interview data to be deposited in the archives at the Royal College of Surgeons of England for the purposes of further research.

• I do not want my name to be associated with the data and understand that I will not be identifiable from the data deposited.

OR

• I consent for my real name and position to be used in conjunction with the deposited data. I understand that this means my name may appear in future research that uses my data

**Participant's Statement:**

I \_\_\_\_\_ agree that the research project named above has been explained to me to my satisfaction and I agree to take part in the study. I have read both the notes written above and the Information Sheet about the project, and understand what the research study involves.

Signed:

Date:

**Investigator's Statement:**

I \_\_\_\_\_ confirm that I have carefully explained the nature, demands and any foreseeable risks (where applicable) of the proposed research to the volunteer

Signed:

Date:



## ORAL CONSENT SCRIPT for Participants

### **The Legacies of the Repatriation of Human Remains**

You have read the Information Sheet about the research project.

Was this information clear?

Do you have any questions about the project?

Do you agree to participate in this project?

Do you understand that if you no longer wish to participate in the project you can withdraw at any time up until the research is prepared for publication?

Do you agree for your personal information to be processed as part of this research?

Do you want your name to be associated with this research or do you want the data to be anonymous?

(a) Do you understand that if your name is used it may appear in reports, articles and presentations linked this research?

(b) Do you understand that even if you data is anonymous there is still a chance you may still be recognised?

Do you agree for this interview to be audio-recorded?

Do you agree for any photos in which you appear to be used?

Do you agree for and videos in which you appear to be used?

Would you like your data to be deposited with the Royal College of Surgeons Archive in England for use by other researchers?

Do you want your name to be associated with the data or do you want the data to be anonymous?

Would you like your data to be deposited with the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Studies Archive for use by other researchers?

Do you want your name to be associated with the data or do you want the data to be anonymous?

Would you like your data to be deposited with your community/organisation archive?

Do you want your name to be associated with the data or do you want the data to be anonymous?

May we start the interview now?