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How to cite:

Harvey, Graham (2004). Endo-cannibalism in the making of a recent British ancestor. *Mortality*, 9(3) pp. 255–267.

For guidance on citations see [FAQs](#).

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Version: Accepted Manuscript

Link(s) to article on publisher's website:

<http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.1080/13576270412331272866>

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Endo-cannibalism in the making of a recent British ancestor

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(Received 12 November 2002; first comments to author 11 January 2003; finally accepted 18 May 2004)

ABSTRACT *Following his death in 1975, the ashes of Wally Hope, founder of Stonehenge People's Free Festival, were scattered in the centre of Stonehenge. When a child tasted the ashes the rest of the group followed this lead. In the following decades, as the festival increasingly became the site of contest about British heritage and culture, the story of Wally's ashes was told at significant times. His name continues to be invoked at gatherings today. This paper discusses these events as 'the making of an ancestor', and explores wider contexts in which they might be understood. These include Druidic involvement in the revival of cremation, Amazonian bone-ash endo-cannibalism, and popular means of speaking of and to dead relatives. In addition to considering the role of 'ancestors' in contemporary Britain, the paper contributes to considerations of 'ancestry' as a different way of being dead, of a particular moment in the evolution of an alternative religious neo-tribal movement, of the meanings of 'cannibalism', and of the ways in which human remains might be treated by the bereaved and by various other interested parties.*

KEY WORDS Cremation, ancestors, Druids, cannibalism, Amazonia

Introduction

In concluding a discussion of the legal case following William Price's cremation of his son, named in Welsh Iesu Grist (Jesus Christ), in 1884, Stephen White notes that the reason for the decision was 'that anything is lawful which is not expressly prohibited' (White, 2002: 185). He goes on to 'take two extreme examples to test the point: necrophilia is not in itself unlawful; nor, probably, is cannibalism'. I am happy to have nothing to contribute to any debates about necrophilia. However, this article arises from a single example of a specific type of cannibalism among those for whom Stonehenge became important in the 1970s and beyond. In addition to enriching understanding of British subcultures and alternative spiritualities, the discussion contributes an answer to a provocative question, 'is there any evidence that there are real cannibals?' However, it uses cannibalism as an entrée to its central purpose which is to consider what it might mean to refer to

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someone as ‘ancestor’ in Britain and how such an appellation might aid understanding and/or critique of other facets of contemporary culture.

Wally at Stonehenge

In the late 1960s and early 1970s the British alternative festival scene mushroomed and flowered but never without contest and rarely without confrontation. Phil Russell had a vision of a free festival at Stonehenge and began to distribute leaflets and posters and gained some support from Radio Caroline (Abbott, 2000). In 1974, a festival took place. Phil was better known as Wally Hope and stayed on at Stonehenge after the festival with a small group who named themselves collectively as ‘the Wallies’ and individually as, for example, ‘Tim Wally’, ‘Kris Wally’, ‘Jake Wally’, ‘Phillip Wally’, ‘Kevin Wally’, ‘Sir Walter Wally’ and even ‘Wally Woof’, the dog. The adoption of one name by many people is known in other carnivalesque and revolutionary counter-cultural movements (Ayers, nd). After an eviction later in the summer (entertainingly reported in *The Times*, 13 August 1974; also see Rimbaud’s website, nd), the Wallies moved, first into a neighbouring field and then into Amesbury where they had been befriended by the Catholic Priest, Father Tom Curtis-Hayward. Plans for a further People’s Free Festival at Stonehenge were made. Following the suppression of Windsor free festival in 1975, Stonehenge became a larger gathering. However, by then Wally had been arrested and sectioned under the Mental Health Act. On his release he visited some friends, the punk band Crass, who were greatly disturbed by his changed character: he was a broken, frightened, tired and sad man. He then lived for a while with his legal guardian, John Snagge of the BBC. On 3 September 1975 Wally died, choked to death on his own vomit. The festival continued in following years, as did the legal and State opposition. In 1985 the ‘Battle of the Beanfield’ (see Lodge, nd, Goodwin, nd) may be considered to have ended the festival. In fact all it achieved was the dispersal of the would-be festival-goers who set up other smaller gatherings, focused their attention on the celebration of solstices and other cosmic events, and linked themselves with a host of activist causes such as the anti-roads campaigns of the late 1980s and 1990s. Attempts to convene a festival and a solstice gathering have continued, with some success. In many of these alternative events, Wally’s name continues to be invoked.

Wally’s ashes

In 1975 Wally’s ashes were brought to Stonehenge to be scattered. Participants included some of Wally’s Wallies and some of the focal members of the festival movement. Various artefacts of Wally’s were brought to the event along with the box that contained Wally’s ashes. (There is a photo of the box, now empty of ashes, at a Stonehenge gathering on Lodge’s website, nd.) The ashes themselves were passed around the group, each person taking a handful and scattering them on the ground. Nigel Ayers says he ‘took a handful of ashes out to sprinkle on the Heel stone, and as I did so, a breeze blew up and I got a bit of Wally in my eye’

(Ayers, nd). More dramatically, and of more lasting impact, a small child dipped his finger in the ashes and put it in his mouth. Others followed the example. At least, this is the story told in later years. That it is not told in every source interested in Wally is interesting, but it is the community of those among whom the story is told that is significant in the present discussion.

Events in the 1980s ensured that the scattering of Wally's ashes became more than an isolated but powerful moment initiatory only to participants. The years 1984 and 1985 were marked by heavy-handed police actions against various popular movements and events, including the miners' strike (especially at Orgreave) and Notting Hill carnival. For some years after the assault on those attempting to get to Stonehenge, it became difficult and sometimes illegal to get near Stonehenge around the summer solstice. In 1987 I was with a group who had camped near Cholderton on the Wiltshire/Hampshire border. Following a provocation by a particular police officer, an apology was offered by the Wiltshire constabulary, who said that they would try to negotiate permission for us to walk to the road between Stonehenge and its visitors' car-park. On reaching the site, we were permitted entry to the circle. An amazed and quietly joyful group of pilgrims entered the temple and spontaneously sat down. Syd Rawles, central to the festival movement, then living in a tipi in Wales when not travelling, told the rather awed group about the scattering of Wally's ashes. Certainly there were some there who had no idea about, and probably no previous interest in, the founder of the festival. But this moment was central to the wider process of the melding of disparate interests into something much more like that envisioned by Wally: a spiritual and cultural gathering that could possibly contribute significantly to the wider culture. In the process, Wally became not merely a remembered founder of a movement but an ancestor present in gatherings of a popular movement.

Wally's presence, becoming ancestral

Wally is invoked in various gatherings, especially at Stonehenge and Avebury during celebrations of the eight annual Pagan calendar festivals (the solstices, equinoxes and four quarter days, see Harvey, 1997). Sometimes this takes place in the course of a ceremony or when people are explicitly greeting those who have died but are considered to be present. The cry 'WALLY!' may also be heard during quieter moments when people are waiting for sunrise, meeting friends, or engaged in other less ritualized and more sociable periods during gatherings. Conversations about Wally are far from rare. Interestingly, some of these act as initiatory narrations of a founding myth: e.g., perhaps as those who have joined a solstice gathering for the first time are almost casually introduced to Wally as older participants chat about the 'old days'. The scattering and consumption of the ashes event is not often told, but those who know hold this as core. That is, Wally is important in varying degrees to various constituencies on a continuum from a core group for whom Wally's interests are central to identity construction and performance to more peripheral individuals who may be considered visitors to or entertainment seekers at solstice gatherings.

In interviewing a range of people including those who were Wallies, hippies, or festival-goers in the early days, and those who have joined more recently, I have been offered stories that make it clear that Wally is considered present in at least four ways. First, those who know about the consumption of his ashes sometimes speak of Wally's physical or metaphysical presence in his people, his tribe. Secondly, some speak of Wally as continuing to live at Stonehenge, welcoming respectful visitors and acting as a kind of 'tour guide from the other world'. One Druid chief illustrates the ancient Druid belief in the transmigration of souls by referring to Wally's occasional gift of a glimpse of what happened at Stonehenge in ancient times. Since it is held that Wally resides at Stonehenge, sometimes, temporarily, his 'soul' is said to enter other people's physicality in order to inspire them. The third sense in which Wally is present is when artefacts belonging to or associated with him are displayed. These are typically greeted with further invocations of Wally's name in celebration of his presence. Finally, the presence of Wally's ashes in the soil of Stonehenge is seen as a charter of the festival and solstice-celebration. Since the founder is there, the tribe should be there.

In these events, Wally is the consumed ancestor who constructs his people, and their mutual continuing relationship is consummated in gatherings that further Wally's vision. The implications and resonances of the term 'ancestor' will be discussed more fully following brief consideration of the wider Druidic and Pagan context of these events and discourses and a more detailed summary of debates about cannibalism.

Wally's antecedents

As noted in Stephen White's discussion of the role of William Price's cremation of his son and of the following legal decision (White, 2002), there is a history of druidic involvement with cremation. Price's own cremation followed in 1893. In 1905, another Druid group, the Church of the Universal Bond, attempted to bury the ashes of one of their members inside Stonehenge. In a surprisingly proleptic event in 1926, Druids 'actually stormed the fences to gain entry, after being banned from the site following a row with the authorities over their refusal to let them bury the ashes of two more of their members inside the monument'. Then, 'For a fortnight every solstice during the next few years they maintained a Camp of Contemplation on a disc barrow on Normanton Down' (Worthington, 2001). Both carnivalesque popular gatherings and somewhat quietist Druid celebrations took place annually at midsummer throughout the twentieth century. Rites of passage (especially child blessings and weddings, and less commonly the dispersal of ashes) were part of the evolution of more explicitly Pagan Druidry and more open and diverse forms of popular Paganism.

Wally's principal context is, of course, the alternative or counter-cultural scene: a trajectory of movements that encouraged creative exploration of ways of being human. Wally's historical role may turn out to have been a bridge between the hippy 1960s and the punk 1970s, but he and these movements are also ancestral to various protest and traveller communities and movements of the 1990s. What will

emerge in the new millennium is still uncertain, but we should anticipate a slogan to match the following (listed by McKay, 2001):

1960s: Be reasonable: demand the impossible

1970s: Reality's a substitute for utopia

1980s: Fight war not wars, destroy power not people

1990s: Go and commit a senseless act of beauty.

If this establishes the parameters in which Wally's pre-mortem life might be understood, the following section provides an even wider context for understanding his transition into ancestor.

Cannibalism: fiction or fact?

William Arens provoked a storm of abuse (e.g. Sahlins, 1979; Vidal-Naquet, 1987, 1992; Lestringant, 1997) but very little careful thought (but see Hulme, 1998) when he published *The Man-Eating Myth* (Arens, 1979). Careful statements to the effect that the book, subtitled *Anthropology and Anthropophagy*, was an examination of academic theorising about cannibals, testing the validity of the evidence adduced, have largely been ignored. Arens asks why anthropologists are so convinced by evidence that, he argues, is flimsy, often blatantly fictional or inconsistent. Arens does not deny the possibility of cannibalism but questions whether any real evidence of the kind normally required by scholars rather than novelists has yet been provided.

In a more recent article, Arens (1998) continues to question the continuing presentation of cannibalism in media as diverse as academic monographs, journals, popular magazines, novels and Microsoft's *Encarta*. However, he does accept that there is good evidence that 'pulverised body parts were sold by apothecaries for medicinal purposes in Europe and America until the turn of the twentieth century' and that some 'middle class urban Americans' engage in 'placentophagic activity', eating placenta (Arens, 1998: 47, citing Gordon-Grube, 1988, and Janzen, 1980). He also accepts that there is good evidence for 'bone-ash cannibalism' in which the bones of deceased relatives are cremated to ash, mixed with honey and consumed (Dole, 1974). It is this that provides a partial parallel to the events surrounding the dispersal and consumption of Wally's ashes and permits the thought that cannibalism might, at times and in some places, be a respectful and decent way of treating people.

Foremost among the anthropologists who argue that there is sound evidence for the existence of institutional and cultural cannibalism is Beth Conklin (Conklin, 2001). She provides a detailed discussion of the evidence for what anthropologists have labelled endocannibalism and exocannibalism, the eating of members of one's own social or kinship group and the eating of enemies. She concentrates on endocannibalism among the Amazonian Wari' which she calls 'compassionate

cannibalism'. It is worth noting this in some detail because both similarities and differences become evident in paying attention to what Wari' did before colonization and what Wallies, hippies and Druids did at Wally's dispersal.

Until sometime between 1956 and 1969, Wari' ate the dead bodies of their in-laws (affines). They did so out of compassion for the deceased and their immediate family, to please the former and console the latter. The deceased went on in the round of life, becoming 'water spirits' and then white-lipped peccaries, and the bereaved eventually came to terms with their loss and got on with living without being continuously made sad by the presence of a body in the cold earth. In the following eloquent exchange a Wari' couple convey everything of importance.

'I don't know if you can understand this, because you have never had a child die,' Jimon Maram said quietly. 'But for a parent, when your child dies, it's a sad thing to put his body in the earth.'

His wife, Quimoin, turned away, bowing her head over the baby girl cuddled in her lap. Two years earlier, they had buried the child before this one, a two-year-old son.

'It's cold in the earth,' Jimon continued, and Quimoin's shoulders trembled. 'We keep remembering our child, lying there, cold. We remember, and we are sad.' He leaned forward, searching my eyes as if to see whether I could comprehend what he was trying to explain. Then he concluded:

'It was better in the old days, when the others ate the body. Then we did not think about our child's body much. We did not remember our child as much, and we were not so sad.' (Conklin, 2001: xv.)

Contrary to the pervasive notion that cannibals eat human flesh in the same way as others eat animal flesh, Wari' cannibalism was not about sustenance or protein. Wari' did not need human meat in order to survive. 'Wari' emphasize that they did not eat [humans] for self-gratification; indeed the decayed state of many corpses could make cannibalism quite an unpleasant undertaking.' However, the 'duty of eating the corpse at a funeral was a social obligation among affines, one of the reciprocal services owed to the families with whom one's own kin had intermarried' (Conklin, 2001: xvii). This duty is predicated on pervasive Amazonian understandings that physical forms can be both matters of perspective and transformable: shamans train to see whether a peccary is in fact a human ancestor and dead humans might become peccaries (Viveiros de Castro, 1992, 1998). Cannibalism entails both perspective and transformation:

Kinsfolk continue to see the loved one in the corpse . . . and for this reason were unable to eat the body, while non-kin perceived clearly that they were no longer confronted with a human being, *wari*?. The service which they rendered to the deceased's kin . . . was that of forcing the kin to share their vision: the corpse was no longer a person. (Vilaça, 2000: 94, as cited by Conklin, 2001: 235).

In Wari' compassionate cannibalism, all of the flesh and the sweetened bone-ash could be eaten. Often, however, only part was eaten, especially if it had become 'nearly too decayed to stomach', and the rest cremated. Whether all or little was consumed, the 'handling, preparation and consuming of [human] corpses' was performed with conventional gestures that differentiated Wari' from animals, corpses from meat (Conklin, 2001: 89). Nonetheless, animals too are considered cultural persons whose willing offering of themselves to be consumed is a 'transaction that is an exchange in an ongoing dynamic of rivalry and exchanges between hunters and hunted' (Conklin, 2001: 182). When, for example, white-lipped peccaries give themselves to hunters they reveal themselves to be ancestors giving food to their relatives. In doing so, they continue the culturally central practice of food giving that is furthered as hunters bring food home to be cooked and distributed, and mothers give food to their children (Conklin, 2001: 206–7).

At the same time as human bodies were consumed, accompanied by crying, singing and other expressions of grief, the dead person's home and belongings were burnt. For Wari', the eating and cremation of deceased relatives was only part of their destruction. The notion that cannibalism was a means of comforting the bereaved should not be taken lightly, and certainly not sentimentally. Instead, the Wari' did something similar to what Aboriginal Australians do in ceasing to use the names of the dead, and moving away from their homes: they dismantled sites of social identities and made necessary the construction of new life. People have bodies that are made by their connections with other embodied people: that they are parents, for example, means that their bodies are formed and utilized in particular, 'parenting', ways. Bodies are constructed from, by and as the many relationships they literally embody. At death, Wari' destroy the body and its possessions so that the relationships of which it had been comprised can cease: 'The eradication of the corpse was intended to help loosen the ties that bind the living and the dead too tightly.' To destroy is to de-story. Simultaneously, the destruction entails the creation, at least potentially, of new relational, embodied, lived and performed identities. New stories begin. In cutting the body into smaller and smaller pieces and making it more and more *like* animal meat, Wari' funeral customs 'made graphic statements about the loss of human identity and the destiny of the human spirit, and about meat-eating and the relations among people, and between humans and animals, through which food is produced and exchanged'. The spirits of the dead joined the community of animal spirits, and then sometimes returned as white-lipped peccaries that 'offer themselves to be hunted to feed their living loved ones. Thus, Wari' engaged in a kind of double cannibalism, consuming the flesh of their dead first as human corpses at funerals, and later as animal prey' (Conklin, 2001: xxi). Finally, as Conklin notes, most Wari' 'seem to have given no more thought to the question of why their society preferred cannibalism than most North Americans and Europeans give to the question of why our own societies permit only burial or cremation' (Conklin, 2001: xvii). While a Druid cremating his son initiated the legitimation of cremation in modern Britain, perhaps an alternative act of cannibalism might not bring about the legitimation of any kind of cannibalism. However, it might

encourage consideration of some very different ways of treating the dead, especially those who are becoming ancestors.

Defining ancestors

The Wari', the Amahuaca and some other Amazonian indigenous people ate the honey-sweetened pulverized bone-ash of their deceased kin. They did so out of respect both for the dead and the bereaved. Their actions were part of the radical dismantling of the embodied relationships that form people and enabled the reconstitution of humans into 'spirits' and 'ancestors'. The former of these terms bears so many meanings in English discourses that its use may result more in confusion than comprehension. Also, the term is too closely entangled with dualisms that privilege 'spirit' over matter, inner over outer, mind over embodiment, culture over nature and so on. Seeing no easy resolution to this problem and no easy realignment of these associations, I prefer to abandon the term. However, although the term 'ancestor' is also used in various conflicting ways, it has the potential to enrich understanding of phenomena that might, without debates that utilise the term, be invisible or marginal.

It may be true that ancestors are dead people, but only if it is understood that being dead is not a state of non-being, an absence or a negation of life-long relationships or relationality. That is, 'ancestor' is a term applicable to those who have died but continue to be in relationship with their descendants. In most indigenous contexts in which ancestors are significant, 'ancestor' typically says little about death and dying. Certainly there are transitional and transformatory rituals in which those who have died become or are made into ancestors and, in the same process, the bereaved are transformed into people with a new ancestor. In many African cultures, ancestors are engaged with fairly intensely for around four generations following their deaths, slowly becoming more distant, and eventually being treated ritually as a relatively amorphous and anonymous community. In Polynesian societies, considerable effort is expended in remembering and reciting genealogical lineages of considerable duration and complexity. (These and other diversities are discussed in Friesen, 2001.)

Generally speaking, what distinguishes 'ancestors' from other categories of dead people is that ancestors are not only remembered as a generality, but are revered by name, related to as being present to some extent, involved in gift exchanges. That they are known and knowing is formative not only of ancestral identity but also of group and individual identity in succeeding generations. That is, ancestors define their relational communities at least as much as they are defined by their descendants. Ancestors are constituted not only by memory, nor even by remembrance, but by continuing relationality.

Much of this is true too of all human societies in relation to their dead. For example, it may be interesting to consider patterns of cemetery visiting and *in memoriam* columns in newspapers as evidence of ancestor reverence in contemporary Britain. While interest in genealogy, even when called 'ancestor hunting', can be motivated primarily by attempts to understand one's self, it may

signify continuing engagement with 'the dead' in some contexts. Genealogical interest among Irish Americans and the Latter Day Saints demonstrates that these engagements and motivations can vary enormously. In short, many individuals and families express considerable affection and interaction with recently deceased close relations of recent generations. However, apart from the aristocracy, modern British society is rarely explicitly constructed by reference to relationships with ancestors. For something like this, perhaps we have to look to the culture-constructing role of those who died in the World Wars. British multi-culturalism, however, does include other sub-cultures within which ancestors and ancestor-veneration are centrally constructive and constitutive of identity. These include indigenous and Asian diaspora communities, but now also include the neo-tribe (a temporary association or elective and affectual mode and expression of sociality, see Shields, 1996; Hetherington, 1998; Letcher, 2004) constructed in relationship with Wally Hope. The consumption of Wally's ashes, the telling of that story (even if it proves to be a fiction) and the invocation of Wally at significant events, constitute Wally as ancestor and the narrators, listeners and invokers as a community related by communion with an ancestor.

Wally becomes ancestor

Wally's flesh was not eaten by his tribe. Had the authorities not cremated his body (with suspicious haste according to some of my informants) his post-mortem fate may have been very different. He might have been forgotten by all but a few close friends, and even by them after a while. Instead, his ashes were scattered and partially consumed within the sacred circle of Stonehenge and he became an ancestor.

The scattering of Wally's ashes, though hardly a large or well-known event at the time, became of increasing significance as it was told and re-told. The story became part of the stresses and strains in the evolution of an event that some critics insist, echoing medieval denigration of popular festivities by the elites of the day, is only a hedonistic or aggressive affront to decent society. Meanwhile, others would prefer the summer solstice to be celebrated quietly and soberly. Yet there are those who see the continuing events as the uneasy unfolding of Wally's vision. This was big enough to embrace hippies, bikers, punks, air-stewardesses, royalty, farmers, travellers, locals and many more. It included a musical gathering, religious pilgrimages and social celebrations. There are websites which call Wally a hero and a legend. But the more appropriate word for Wally is ancestor.

Wally's ancestry is not the same as that of indigenous ancestors. It is not the same phenomenon as that mislabelled 'ancestor worship' and more properly identified as veneration. It is not even like the ancestry of those greeted at birthdays in some *in memoriam* columns. In these more traditional styles of ancestry it is of vital and definitive importance that the person who dies is acknowledged by the relations who survive them, who make gifts to them and whose identities are received from them. Although not all the dead become

ancestors, the importance of continuing kinship is central. Wally's ancestry is, perhaps, more like that of the War Dead who are referred to as foundational of a way of living, a culture and/or a community. However, if it is more general than the ancestry of many 'traditional' ancestors (i.e. those familiar from ethnographies of indigenous peoples) it is more localized and specific than that of the War Dead as remembered in national events. Of course, various more immediate relationships with the war dead are made evident when comrades, widows and descendants visit war graves. Wally is not ancestor of a family nor of a nation, but of a neo-tribe. In this, he is not alone: the impact of modernity and its diasporas means that the term 'ancestor' is gaining a wider range of meaning than it once had. Ancestors are different people. They are being asked to serve and be served by wider communities than those with whom they share blood and bone, names and nativity.

Each cultural community has specific means of making and recognizing ancestors. Among the Wari', cannibalism and associated forms of decomposition freed the deceased and the bereaved to re-compose themselves in new relational and material forms. Among the Stonehenge community, the consumption and scattering of Wally's ashes is part of the discourse by which a neo-tribe composes itself in relation to a contested place and a contested mode of celebration. For the Wari', cannibalism was intentional and deliberate. For Wally's people, cannibalism became meaningful only as and after it happened, and even more so in each telling to each group that hears the story for the first time. That is, the cultural and contextual differences between the two kinds of cannibalism are more matters of performance than of meaning. In both, the key thing is the locally meaningful process by which ancestors and their communities are formed, maintained and continued.

Challenging alternatives

Recognition of Wally and of the ancestors of indigenous, diaspora and other ordinary families and groups not only contributes to discussions about the varying sub-cultures of modernity, it also casts an interesting light on another usage of the term that might otherwise be mistaken for unambiguous and un-contentious or objective description.

Two examples of this other usage may be taken as representative. Firstly, the popular TV archaeology programme 'Meet the Ancestors' and secondly, a heading within a newspaper article contesting moves to have human remains repatriated from museum collections. In the former of these, 'ancestors' are either merely dead or technologically virtual. Human remains and associated artefacts, all treated as inanimate, are dug up and imaginatively re-constructed in virtual forms that can be broadcast. In contrast to the likely intention of those who buried their dead, archaeologists separate not only persons from artefacts but even bone from bone. In contrast to indigenous discourses, TV audiences may 'meet' but are not provided with a means to greet the dead. Another aspect of the understanding that underlies this archaeological and media performance

towards the dead is illustrated in the second example. In support of an article by Chris Stringer (head of Human Origins at London's Natural History Museum), the *Telegraph* heads a column of similar voices 'Our ancestors have so much to teach us' (Stringer, 2003). In this response to the report of the Working Group on Human Remains (Department for Culture, Media and Sport, 2003), Stringer and his colleagues talk about 'human remains', 'skeletons', 'heritage', 'collections', 'specimens' and so on. However, the added heading powerfully demonstrates that what is at stake is opposed understandings not only of ancestors but of ancestry and identity. On the one hand, various communities request the repatriation of ancestors who are deemed to be part of themselves, their culture and their community. On the other side is a community of people who seek to retain human remains to benefit 'humanity' by pursuing objective and universal matters that they take to be of greater value than local, particular and relational interests. Human remains have become artefacts and objects. They have no say because neither TV archaeologists nor museum scientists have a means of listening. Since they reject or vigorously contest alternative voices, a resolution seems unlikely without mediation.

Perhaps, then, it might be helpful to recognize that when people write to their deceased relatives in *in memoriam* columns, or address them at war graves, they represent an alternative vision of possible ways to engage with ancestors. The scattering of Wally Hope's ashes and the consumption of his ashes may not justify the regular practice of bone-ash endo-cannibalism in Britain, but it might offer a radical illustration of an alternative vision of respectful engagement with ancestors.

This discussion of issues surrounding Wally Hope's death is intended to initiate or contribute to consideration of 'ancestry' as a different way of being dead, of a particular moment in the evolution of an alternative religious neo-tribal movement, of the meanings of 'cannibalism', and of the ways in which human remains might be treated by the bereaved and by various other interested parties. It is intended to further the kind of debate initiated in Steven Friesen's edited volume, *Ancestors in Post-Contact Religion* (Friesen, 2001) about the role of ancestors as indicators of change and tradition in changing societies, which must include contemporary Britain.

Acknowledgement

I am grateful to King Alfred's College, my previous employer, for funding the short research project on which this article is based. Further discussion of interviews with Wally's people is in preparation. I am grateful for the openness of various informants who have been willing to talk about their memories and veneration of Wally. Just in case White is wrong about the legality of cannibalism, and pursuant to the Data Protection Act, I have kept no personal details of my sources, but they—and their ancestor—know who they are and that I am grateful.

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