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RESPONSES

Thinking About Collecting Histories: A Response to Marlowe

David W. J. Gill*

The looting of archaeological sites to provide material to be acquired by museums or collected by private individuals has both material and intellectual consequences. Archaeological contexts and assemblages are lost and destroyed and go mostly unrecorded. Contextual information that would allow objects to be dated, or perhaps regional styles to be identified, is lost. Our research, which arose from concerns about this destruction in the late 1980s, has attempted to raise awareness of the impact of collecting on both the archaeological record and the interpretation of ancient material culture.[1] The loss of such knowledge is not something bewailed by all archaeologists. Sir John Boardman, for example, has claimed that a careful study of an Athenian pot without a find-spot or context can lead to the uncovering of its inherent information.[2] And Philippe de Montebello held a similar position in his Berlin lecture when he touched upon the return of the Sarpedon krater.[3] But we would disagree with their optimism.

We feel uncomfortable with the word "provenance" and have suggested that its use be discontinued for dealing with archaeological material.[4] Instead, we have suggested the adoption of the terms "collecting histories" and "archaeology." Archaeology identifies the deposition of an object in the ground or on a monument. The collecting history maps the trail of the object once it has left the archaeological deposit and then passes through the hands of individuals or enters public collections. Indeed, it is this documented and authenticated collecting history that will ensure that the owner, seller, or potential buyer on the market will avoid those scandals that have now shadowed classical collecting since the mid-1990s. This tracking of the history of the object through its previous owners is an approach that museums should use as a norm for conducting due diligence searches on potential acquisitions. Even so, it is possible to overlook, or to be unaware of, significant elements of such histories, such as the role of Robin Symes in the handling of the archaic bronze griffin now in Cambridge.[5]

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Our starting point for research on the impact of looting was a study of third millennium BC marble figures from the Cyclades in the Aegean.[6] The careful analysis of the collecting histories and find-spots suggested that a large part of the scientific information about these figures had been lost since they became "collectibles" from the 1960s onwards. The numerous fragmentary figures from the so-called "Keros Haul" (often mistakenly described as a "hoard") adds further confusion, although recent excavations at Kavos have helped to provide some contextual information.[7] One key issue that emerged from the study was that sets of figures attributed to the hand of a "master" or "sculptor," but where no single figure came from an archaeological context, raised the possibility that these figures were modern creations, and this idea has been confirmed by subsequent studies.[8]

One New York-based dealer suggested that the study of Cycladic figures was atypical of ancient material.[9] Our response was to look at a series of public exhibitions of classical objects in private collections in both Europe and North America.[10] The analysis suggested that as few as 25 percent of the objects came from any sort of recorded or indicated archaeological context and that 76 per cent had no recorded collecting history before 1973 (the date of the Archaeological Institute of America's declaration over illicit antiquities that brought to public attention the concerns raised by the 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property [UNESCO Convention]).[11] A comparative study of material offered at auction in 1997 showed that 89 percent of the lots had no recorded collecting histories before 1973.[12]

Our study drew attention to the genuine concern about how the material represented by these collections had surfaced on the market. Our conclusions were confirmed by the subsequent revelations of the "Medici conspiracy," the photographic dossier seized from the Geneva Freeport premises of Giacomo Medici in 1995.[13] These images, joined by the seizure of further photographic and documentary evidence from Gianfranco Becchina and Robin Symes, has led directly to the identification and return of over 300 objects from North American public and private collections.[14] Two of the private collections that were analyzed for the study feature in the returns: the Barbara and Lawrence Fleischman collection (purchased by or donated to the J. Paul Getty Museum) and the Shelby White and Leon Levy collection.[15] Indeed, the bronze krater that provided the cover image of the White-Levy bronze catalogue has been returned to Greece.[16] Elizabeth Marlowe mentions the "Sicily: Art and Invention between Greece and Rome" exhibition at the J. Paul Getty Museum and the Cleveland Museum of Art.[17] She does not note that the exhibits included some of the returned material from Sicily such as the "Aphrodite" (if the identification is appropriate), the Morgantina treasure, and the gold phiale.[18] Moreover the Getty's terracotta Hades was identified during the preparation for the exhibition and was handed over to the Italian authorities.[19]

Marlowe's emphasis has been on the use of "studying, publishing and teaching antiquities that lack a secure archaeological findspot."[20] This maps onto our concerns about intellectual consequences of collecting looted material, which was a

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major strand in the research on the Cycladic figures, although the study of the classical collections concentrated on material consequences. However, the intellectual consequences of collecting classical antiquities have been expanded in subsequent studies. For example, the range of information that has been lost through the looting of the Sarpedon krater has been explored.[21] More significant is the study of the upper part of a funerary stele returned to Greece from the Shelby White collection.[22] The catalogue entry had used art historical and stylistic analysis to place the piece in western Anatolia. However, the locating of the stele firmly in a rural cemetery in southern Attica (confirmed by the excavation of the bottom half) confirms the centrality of "grounding" interpretative knowledge in archaeological contexts.

Marlowe has suggested approaches to strengthen our methodology not least in the way that published collecting histories cannot always be used to support information about find-spots. But her concerns that we were perhaps too generous in allowing some objects to appear in relatively secure find-spots may merely serve to show that the situation was even more alarming than the picture that we had painted. We would also want to adjust our benchmark date from 1973 to 1970 (the date of the UNESCO Convention). This is important as it is clear from the North American returns to Italy that 1970 has indeed become the benchmark for such disputed material. We would also emphasize the authority behind statements concerning collecting histories. Take, for example, the marble statues of the Dioskouroi presently on loan to New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art. These are publicly stated as coming from the Mithraeum at Sidon in Lebanon, based on information supplied by the dealers who had handled the group. However, documentary evidence from the Becchina and Symes archives places the statues in Syria. Without this market evidence, the statues could have been used in an art historical discussion of the visual display of Roman Lebanon.

Our range of categories for archaeological information and collecting histories are more nuanced than Marlowe's two broad terms of "grounded" and "ungrounded." Take, for example, the bronze head in the Shelby White collection that was reported to have been found in Suffolk, England.[23] This object, in fact, appears to come from a series of classical bronzes from the small rural town of Icklingham.[24] Is this bronze and its companions part of the "grounded" archaeology of Roman Suffolk or the "ungrounded" record of Roman provincial art?

Marlowe suggests that our approach will not change attitudes and bring about change. We would beg to differ. Take, for example, the Attic red-figured volute krater attributed to the Methyse painter that had been acquired by the Minneapolis Institute of Art (MIA).[25] Did the exploration of the collecting history of the krater and its links with both Giacomo Medici ("a Swiss private collection") and Robin Symes ("an English private collection") in print, news media, and social media help to place pressure on the MIA's director Kaywin Feldman so that the krater was returned to Italy? We are also aware that one of the London auction houses has become very sensitive to criticism that it has not taken its due diligence process seriously.[26] Yet there are university-based scholars who are keen to overlook

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the intellectual consequences of dealing with recently surfaced objects. This has become apparent with the Oxford University academic who has been working on the so-called "Sappho papyrus."

Are collectors more aware? Subsequent to the publication of our article one of us had a relaxed face-to-face conversation with (the late) George Ortiz, one of the collectors discussed.[27] Ortiz was clearly aware of the issues and openly elaborated on the find-spots that had not been included in the catalogue. Marlowe cites the donation of the Walsh collection in the Fordham University Art Collection (FUAC).[28] She mentions the full catalogue of the collection but overlooks the telling fact that the title of one of the objects, a Villanovan impasto hut, had to be transferred to Italy as it was featured in the Medici dossier.[29] In addition, the collection contains a Roman imperial bronze from the sebasteion at Bubon in Turkey that may be linked to the figure in Houston.[30] There is no mention of the controversial series of inscribed (and dated) Late Antique mosaics from Apamea that the museum has acquired. The FUAC appears to be deliberately overlooking the concerns of responsible and professional museum curators and archaeologists.[31]

Are museums more aware? A study of South Italian pottery acquired by Boston in the period after the United States signed up to the UNESCO Convention shows that recently surfaced material has continued to be added to the collection.[32] The North American museum community has been catching up with museum ethics from the United Kingdom (UK) through the Association of Art Museum Director's (AAMD) adoption of slightly more rigorous acquisition policies for classical objects.[33] The launch of the AAMD's Object Registry is a nod toward more transparency, and it has led directly to the identification of fragments in the Dietrich von Bothmer collection as part of an Attic red-figured cup in Rome's Villa Giulia.[34] But the Cleveland Museum of Art has made a blistering defense in the acquisition and publication of the "Leutwitz Apollo" that can only be described as having an "ungrounded" collecting history that places it in a private collection in Saxony.[35] The extended legal case surrounding the Ka-Nefer-Nefer Egyptian mummy mask acquired by the St Louis Art Museum has demonstrated the problems surrounding court action and the importance of testing the authenticity of documentary evidence.[36]

Marlowe raises an important point. Her "ungrounded" archaeological material can serve to corrupt the research, interpretation, and teaching of the classical world. But this merely serves to support our existing position that recently surfaced antiquities, stripped of their archaeological contexts, can have "intellectual consequences" when they enter the corpus of knowledge.

ENDNOTES

1. E.g., Butcher and Gill 1990; Gill and Chippindale 1993, 2002; Chippindale and Gill 2000, 2001; Chippindale et al. 2001.

2. Boardman 2006.

3. de Montebello 2007.

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4. Gill 2010a.
5. Gill 1990, 290–91, n. 4, pl. VII(b).
6. Gill and Chippindale 1993.
7. Sotirakopoulou 2005, 2008; Gill 2007; Getz-Gentle 2008; Renfrew 2008; Papamichelakis and Renfrew 2010.
8. Getz-Preziosi 1987; Getz-Gentle 2001; Gill 2002, 2014a.
9. Eisenberg 1995.
10. Chippindale and Gill 2000; Chippindale et al. 2001.
11. Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, 14 November 1970, 823 UNTS 231.
12. Chippindale and Gill 2000, 482, table 8.
13. Watson 1997; Watson and Todeschini 2006; Silver 2009. See also Gill 1997; Gill and Chippindale 2007b.
14. Gill and Chippindale 2006, 2007a; Gill 2009c, 2010b, 2012a, 2012b, 2013b.
15. *A Passion for Antiquities* 1994; von Bothmer 1990.
16. Chi and Gaunt 2005.
17. Lyons et al. 2013.
18. Ibid., 44–46, 56–57, 140–41. For the Aphrodite, see Felch and Frammolino 2011.
19. Lyons et al. 2013, 192, figure 133.
20. See also Marlowe 2013.
21. Gill 2012c.
22. Gill 2009c.
23. Mattusch 1996.
24. Reynolds 1990; Browning 1995. For further discussion, see Cuno 2008; Gill 2009b.
25. Padgett 1983–86 [1991]; Gill 2011.
26. Gill and Tsirogiannis 2011.
27. Ortiz 1994. See also Ortiz 2006.
28. Cavaliere and Udell 2012.
29. Ibid., 134–35, n. 37.
30. Ibid., 264–67, n. 80.
31. Peppard 2014.
32. Gill and Chippindale 2008.
33. Gill 2009a
34. Tsirogiannis and Gill 2014.
35. Bennett 2013; Gill 2013a.
36. Gill 2014b.

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On Provenance and the Long Lives of Antiquities

Claire L. Lyons*

In her critique of Christopher Chippindale and David Gill's review of provenance information in selected antiquities catalogues, Elizabeth Marlowe poses challenging questions about the epistemology of ancient art.[1] Refining their tabulations, which range on a six-step scale from named and alleged places to origins that are unknown or based on style, she proposes an alternative approach, using the appropriate archaeological terms "grounded" (with and without bibliographic citations) and "ungrounded" (with and without comparisons to objects found on sites). Putting the archaeological evidence front and center, her conclusions are sobering. In the seven catalogues under consideration, only 3–5 percent of the nearly 1,400 objects have a specific find-site or are backed up by references to excavated artifacts. Marlowe's is a timely reminder that provenance data needs to be regarded with a critical eye, as it is often unclear whether the information refers to a discovery location, a place of purchase, a stylistic analogy, or a cultural affiliation. Due caution should be given to new and unfamiliar objects as much as to canonical, textbook works of art that we know very well—or do we?[2]

When taken as the main criterion (at 219), however, grounding raises some of its own epistemological, methodological, and—I would venture—ethical issues. Tracing provenance, which refers to the movement of objects by sale, donation, and bequest through successive private or institutional owners, is a staple of art historical research. Archaeologists tend to draw a sharper distinction between the ancient past and the modern era. For antiquities, the chain of custody should ideally stretch back to the original site, monument, and stratigraphic layer, although all too often the links are broken. Some scholars adopt the alternative term "provenience" for the place where an object is found but retain "provenance" to map an object's later journeys. David Gill prefers to avoid the semantic subtlety (at 237) and firmly distinguishes between collecting history and archaeology.

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RECOVERING OBJECT BIOGRAPHIES

Rosemary Joyce, a museum anthropologist and Mesoamerican archaeologist, visualizes provenance as a series of coordinates along an object's itinerary, each of which privileges different research agendas. She stresses the concept of cultural biography, which can help to bridge the divide among disciplines and how each understands the term.[3] Taking provenance in its broadest sense, she extends the trajectory from the sourcing of materials and creation to an object's use, deposition, and modern afterlife. Within this life span, the archaeological find-spot constitutes a discrete segment. Cultural biography acknowledges the multiple communities that have a stake in antiquities. Their interests, methods, and findings are interdependent. Analysis by scientists and conservators can tell us from where the raw materials that were used to make an object were extracted, how it was manufactured, and what deterioration occurred subsequently; in some cases archeometric data can narrow the realm of potential origins. Excavation establishes the function, date, and meanings of objects and any associated features and artifacts. Embedding things in a specific geographical matrix and time period conveys the precision that guarantees authenticity and supports historical interpretation. Far from merely describing a superficial affinity, style reflects artistic personalities and their creative processes. It informs seriation and design, the pillars on which typologies and chronologies of ancient material culture rest.[4]

Marlowe's insistence on paying attention to documented origins rather than to inference or rumor will find no argument here. Her assertion that the archaeological find-spot should be the sole criterion of an object's "reality," however, is debatable (at 229). She is concerned that there are harmful consequences to studying, publishing, and teaching works of ancient art that are not connected to an excavation. This stance is an article of faith among some archaeologists but should be rejected. Objects are not fixed entities; they are always "on the move" and mutate as they inhabit different social settings. Failure to investigate them holistically diminishes their scientific, artistic, and cultural values beyond the final archaeological moment and hampers the prospects of uncovering clues about their backgrounds.

Professional archaeology is a recent phenomenon by comparison with the long-standing antiquarian tradition. Restricting study to grounded examples not only strands objects that have stories to tell but also cordons off countless others that are significant works of ancient art in their own right. Recent antiquities collections would be segregated, but so too would be innumerable collections formed between the Renaissance and the twentieth century. Should one really exclude from the curriculum a large percentage of European and North American museum holdings of antiquities, whose excavation records have been lost or languish unpublished? Epistemologically, best practices call for an inclusive life story, not least because it can fill gaps in fragmentary narratives. All available tools should be used to understand the physical remains of the past, casting a skeptical eye on

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conventional wisdom and unverified claims. Projects that trace ownership histories and find-spots are proving to be extremely worthwhile, a point to which I will return shortly.

SHAKY GROUNDS

First, a word on methodology. Building on their seminal work on the consequences of lost contexts due to the illicit trade in Cycladic marble figures, Gill and Chippendale reveal the meager percentage of archaeological contexts recorded in seven catalogues published in the 1990s: three exhibitions dedicated to private collections (the Barbara and Lawrence Fleischman collection, the Shelby White and Leon Levy collection, and the George Ortiz collection) and four thematic displays that included substantial numbers of objects from private collections.[5] Marlowe demonstrates that their categorizations undervalue legitimate stylistic analogies and are occasionally overly generous or inaccurate. Assessing the degree to which provenance rests on solid foundations promises a more impartial way to identify an object and vouch for its legitimacy. Spotlighting collections of recent vintage was intended as an indictment of acquisition practices. Using those same catalogues to quantify groundedness (and to critique curatorial practice), however, is a self-fulfilling prophecy.

In Marlowe's Appendix B, two more recent catalogues from the Art Institute of Chicago and Fordham University are analyzed. Both present many privately owned objects, and it comes as no surprise that they are also thin when it comes to archaeological information. A third, the 2013–14 international exhibition *Augusto*, drew together some 200 iconic, well-documented works from the great European public collections and stands in a league apart from the others. Needless to say, catalogues of exhibitions that center on specific sites, cultures, and genres of ancient art could have been chosen that would have produced more encouraging results. Of the hundreds of exhibition catalogues on the ancient Mediterranean world published over the last 25 years, those whose main purpose was to showcase a private collection are a distinct minority.

Does the absence of provenance information in a catalogue tombstone or gallery label—or, for that matter, in academic monographs—mean that none exists or that origins have not yet been fully researched? Marlowe is right to call for a clear accounting of what is known or can be reasonably inferred. When objects have been disconnected from excavated find-spots, the next best step is to frame them by reference to archaeologically valid comparisons. The exhibition catalogues that Chippindale and Gill analyze are obviously lacking in this respect. One problem is the practice of organizing exhibitions around privately owned antiquities, when there is no overarching theme beyond the taste and opportunities of the collector. The reality is that few concerted efforts have been made to investigate the foggy origins of many antiquities in museum collections and to make this information public.

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Marlowe considers the catalogue *Sicily: Art and Invention between Greece and Rome* as "radically incomparable" to those typically published in the 1990s, but a closer look shows that the caption information cannot be taken at face value.[6] *Sicily* was a companion volume to a 2013 exhibition of the same title. Not all of the objects in the book were shown at the museum venues. Most were chosen by the authors of the essays, which oriented toward history and archaeology. By my rough count, 70 percent of the 141 objects illustrated (excluding those still on site) are grounded and 30 percent are ungrounded or are "said to be" from a place. In the exhibition, by contrast, 47 percent of the 141 objects on display were grounded in a general location or specific excavation site and 6 percent were "said to be" from the region but seemed credible. About 46 percent were ungrounded, comprising 57 objects with a pre-1970 provenance (the great majority coins) and 10 with a post-1970 provenance. If establishing groundedness through a generic attribution to a city or region is considered informative, then 52 Sikeliote coins hailing from nineteenth-century collections could fall into the plausible "said to be" column because they were minted in, and circulated mainly around, Sicily (but not exclusively). Such broad-brush criteria would not satisfy archaeologists and numismatists, who rely on the critical information supplied by coins found *in situ*.

Even knowing this material well, it is not always feasible to launch an exhaustive inquiry into the archaeological find-spots that over time attach to older finds. Digging deeper, grounding is a point of departure, and other scholarly tools inevitably must be brought to bear to shape an interpretation. For instance, the Biscari *kouros* head's discovery in Lentini is mentioned in an eighteenth-century Latin inventory, but corroborating evidence that it joins a torso uncovered outside Lentini in 1902 (based on hearsay) was invalidated when the two pieces were juxtaposed in the exhibition and understood not to belong together.[7] Similar issues surround the bronze Herakles statuette, which was found in a riverbed in Contrada Cafeo, Modica, near a possible sanctuary where it must have once stood but not in an archaeological stratum. While it is a useful hint to know that something was probably found in the vicinity of a site, it is more enlightening to pin it down. Local religious rituals were brought to life by a votive statuette of Demeter displayed alongside a small jug of carbonized seed offerings, both from the north room of Building XII on the acropolis of Gela. By contrast, the discovery of the unparalleled sculpture of a charioteer amid the rubble of a defensive berm on Mozia secured its temporal and geographical coordinates. This secondary or tertiary reuse informs us of its fate, but less so of its creation, cult identity or civic role, and original context—for that we need to bring in marble analysis, sculptural style, and literary sources to compose likely narratives.[8]

By unpacking the *Sicily* exhibition object list in this granular way, my intention is to second Marlowe's call for archaeologically fixed commentary as well as for complete collecting histories. But I also want to underscore the challenges of parsing ambiguous records. What our exercises make patently clear is that systematic research on the provenances of classical antiquities is largely just beginning.

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Should works of art with faulty or missing documentation be studied and taught? By all means, so long as the evidence is evaluated objectively and the "said to be" information is taken *cum grano salis*. Notably, several *Sicily* objects formerly of unknown provenance and find-sites—the Morgantina silver treasure, to be precise—joined the ranks of their grounded fellows, due only to the fact that they had been displayed and published.[9] Grounding ancient art and artifacts in archaeological contexts must be refined and expanded because what we value when we talk about provenance depends on the questions being asked.

TRACING PROVENANCE

Posting the chain of custody for works of art online forges ahead at several institutions, including the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the Saint Louis Art Museum, and the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles. Auction catalogues more regularly cite ownership history, which brings a premium on the art market.[10] Collecting has been the province of those who study the history of museums, display, the socio-political roles of art, and the influence of antiquity on later generations of artists. This field is enjoying a surge now that more primary sources are being digitized, and, consequently, there is a rich bibliography. Provenance took on greater urgency due to the need to document potential acquisitions prior to 1970. It is a required element of due diligence, both to establish good title and to assure that works of art considered cultural patrimony have not been illegally exported or imported, pillaged from monuments or archaeological sites, or stolen during World War II. Questions still surround numerous works of art acquired between 1970, the date of the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, and the adoption of policies (mainly in the 2000s) that acknowledge this "bright line."[11]

Provenance research involves collating internal records, checking references to sales catalogues, inventories, and antiquarian publications, and deciphering inscriptions and labels that sometimes adhere to artifacts. Having to contend with poor record keeping and eccentric attributions helps develop an intuitive grasp of the antiquities trade and the personalities that operate within it. Often the trail goes cold before the most recent purchase. Links to alleged locations can be frustratingly ambiguous. Archaeological find-spots will remain obscure until new information emerges, dealers' records are released to public scrutiny, and archives become searchable online. Among the challenges is the fact that although there are abundant publications and databases for individual collectors and genres (classical sculpture, gems, coins, Greek and South Italian vases, and so on), there is no parallel effort so far to track provenances of ancient art as has been undertaken for European paintings and Holocaust-era assets. Assembling structured information ("large data") would enable complex queries, visualizations, and insights into the ecosystems of antiquities markets.[12]

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Recent investigations of objects in the Getty Villa collection, for instance, show how productive a focused project can be. Several antiquities supplied with minimal data at the time of acquisition actually led unsuspected earlier lives:[13]

- Bear hunt mosaic (72.AH.76), acquired in 1972 on the Swiss art market. Archives in the Naples Archaeological Museum record the pavement's unearthing in Baiae near the so-called "Stufe di Nerone" in 1901. The Ministry of Public Instruction in Naples authorized its sale by property owner Schiano Muriello in 1902.[14]
- Etruscan cinerary urn (71.AD.293), acquired from Royal Athena Galleries in 1971. Research uncovered a catalogue entry for the urn at Stendahl Gallery in Los Angeles, which received it by exchange with the Ministry of Culture in Rome in 1963, from the collection of Evan Gorga (1865–1957). Three other urns decorated with the same scene, all found in Chiusi, offer grounded comparisons.[15]
- Three votive heads (71.AD.304, .305, and .306), acquired from Royal Athena Gallery in 1971. Archival documents reveal that the terracotta heads had been placed on long-term loan at the Smithsonian in 1894 by Elizabeth Magruder, returned to the family in 1965, and sold at auction soon afterward. Grounded siblings from the same mold series have been excavated in Cales and Capua.
- Venus Genetrix (96.AA.213), gift of Barbara and Lawrence Fleischman, acquired at Phillips in London on 18 November 1986 (lot 117). The auction catalogue's vague statement that the torso came "from the bed of a lake in the grounds of a 17th-century house" could not be verified until the colorful background story surfaced: statuary at Russborough, an eighteenth-century country house in County Wicklow, was damaged during the Anglo-Irish Civil War (1922–23). Considered beyond repair, pieces were discarded in a lake, dredged up in the mid-1980s, and sold clandestinely by estate staff. The Russborough provenance verifies that the Venus was bought in Rome by Joseph Leeson, 1st Earl of Milltown (1711–83) on his 1744–45 or 1750 Grand Tour.[16]
- Statuette of a draped female, perhaps Selene (96.AB.38), acquired by Barbara and Lawrence Fleischman from Numismatic Fine Arts in Los Angeles in 1987. An inventory card from the Munich Central Collecting Point, 1945–47, reveals its chain of ownership from Hans Posse in Dresden and the Bachstitz Gallery in Den Haag to F.L. van Gans, prior to 1921.

To sum up, intensive archival research has brought to light prior chains of ownership, some of which allude to possible areas of discovery or actual find-spots. Alas, some antiquities with seemingly solid historical provenances do not stand up to such scrutiny. Objects deriving from the Samuel Schweizer and Karl Haug collections, for example, should raise a red flag, since these associations frequently prove to be unverified or fictitious. What our experience makes plain is that provenance research must proceed case by case. Not all apparent dead ends are hopeless. Objects of uncertain backgrounds or from suspect galleries should not be automatically written off as the products of post-1970 looting. Archives are

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divulging the deeper documentation of fieldwork and collecting during centuries past, and with luck, can add a chapter or two to an object's life story.[17]

At the beginning of all life stories is the act of creation, starting with the media and craft traditions through which objects take on form and meaning. Collaborations between conservators, scientists, and archaeologists have focused on sourcing clay, stone, and metal alloys; techniques and tool work; dating and decay; and the telltale handiwork of restorers.[18] Space does not permit the full consideration that their fundamental perspective warrants, but when it comes to grounding, materiality should be on a par with archaeology. Petrographic analysis of the limestone used for the cult statue of Demeter at Morgantina suggests that it is consistent (or, in the usual parlance, "not inconsistent") with local limestone from a vein quarried in nearby Ragusa.[19] Physical evidence is usually needed to reconnect objects with sites. A terracotta head of a god, acquired in 1985 from the Templesman collection, was thought to represent Zeus and to have been made in Magna Graecia. A notation in the acquisition correspondence that it was "said to be from Morgantina" was not given credence at first but later proved to be accurate. A fragmentary curl unearthed in 1978 in the Demeter sanctuary at San Francesco Bisconti (near Morgantina) was published in 2007 and displayed in the archaeological museum in Aidone.[20] The similarity of the curl and its distinctive blue pigment to the blue-bearded god spurred Sicilian archaeologists, American staff of the Morgantina excavation, and the Getty to collaborate on finding and matching four fragments with the Getty head's beard and hair. Learning the findspot demonstrated beyond any doubt that the head belonged to a rare cult statue of Hades, god of the underworld, found *in situ* with a wealth of votive dedications.[21]

Beyond pragmatic requirements and scholarly goals, there is an ethical dimension to the concept of grounding. Tracing provenance over the longue *durée* is essential to a complete knowledge of works of art and artifacts. Museum curators, scientists, conservators, and archaeologists have professional obligations to share the results of their research in collections, the lab, and on site. All antiquities should be in the public domain, regardless of their backgrounds, gaps, and puzzles. From the perspective of someone who has excavated in the field and works in collections and archives, open access is the key. Without transparent cataloguing, publication, and exhibition, little progress will be made toward writing the cultural biographies that works of art and artifacts deserve.

ENDNOTES

1. Marlowe 2016; Chippindale and Gill 2000.
2. Marlowe 2013, 2015.
3. Joyce 2012, 1–4.
4. Conkey 2006.
5. Gill and Chippindale 1993.
6. Lyons et al. 2013. The majority of ungrounded objects came from northern European and US lenders. Some ungrounded loans came from Sicilian museums, because they also accession objects from old family collections and poorly recorded sources.

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7. The archaeologist Paolo Orsi's report on the 1902 find was based on a conversation with a landowner, who recalled that flooding in the countryside unearthed the torso. Thus, both the head and the body are not strictly grounded, even though the sources (Orsi and Biscari) are taken to be highly credible. See Panvini 2009, 393–96.

8. Lyons et al. 2013, 54, 68–69, 84–85, 160–61.

9. The provenance of the silver hoard in the House of Eupolemos at Morgantina has been convincingly argued by Malcolm Bell, but the site of Arpi in Daunia has also been proposed. For an account, see Stone 2015, 458–61.

10. Silvia Beltrametti and James V. Marrone, "Market Responses to Changing Legal Standards: Evidence from Antiquities Auctions," 31 January 2016, http://ssrn.com/abstract=2725666 (accessed 8 August 2016).

11. UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, 14 November 1970, 823 UNTS 231.

12. See the databases at http://www.getty.edu/research/tools/provenance/index.html (accessed 8 August 2016). Five case studies explore the 1.5 million records contained in the Getty Provenance Index, http://dhbasecamp.humanities.ucla.edu/gettydata/ (accessed 8 August 2016). At the Carnegie Museum of Art, the Art Tracks project aims to convert provenance records into structured, searchable data. See http://www.museumprovenance.org/ (accessed 8 August 2016).

13. Provenance research is the priority of an online scholarly cataloguing initiative underway at the Getty Villa since 2013. I am grateful to David Saunders, Judith Barr, Nicole Budrovich, and colleagues in the Antiquities department for uncovering the backgrounds of several objects described in this article.

14. On its discovery, see Pisapia 2012; Lapatin 2016. The mosaic circulated among several Italian owners up until 1948. Its whereabouts between 1948 and 1971, when it was offered for purchase by Kunst der Antike in Zürich, are undocumented, but the vendor's claim that it had been outside of Italy since 1938 does not square with the archival records.

15. On the Gorga collection, see Capodiferro 2013. Having amassed around 150,000 objects, Evan Gorga was buying on a mass scale in Rome between the 1890s and 1930s; very few of his sources were registered.

16. Laffan and Monkhouse 2015, 218–19, n. 30.

17. In the field of Greek figured vases, see, e.g., the study of Apulian tomb groups in Montanaro 2007; Brownlee 2003; Petrakova 2016. A surprisingly large number of collectors and art traders active in Rome during the early 1900s are indexed in the John Marshall Archive Project, led by the British School at Rome, http://www.bsrdigitalcollections.it (accessed 8 August 2016).

18. Lazzarini and Marconi 2014; Kästner and Saunders 2016.

19. Rosario Alaimo, Renato Giarrusso, Giuseppe Montana, and Patrick Quinn, "Petrographic and Micropalaeontological Data in Support of a Sicilian Origin for the Statue of Aphrodite," *Cult Statue of a Goddess: Summary of Proceedings from a Workshop held at the Getty Villa*, 9 May 2007, http://www.getty.edu/museum/pdfs/workshop_goddess.pdf (accessed 8 August 2016).

20. Raffiotta 2007, 102, no. 138, pl. 27. Illustrated in an inverted photo, the author described the curl as a lock of hair from a near life-size female statue or bust.

21. Ferruzza 2016, cat. 60.

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Notes on Marlowe's "What We Talk about When We Talk about Provenance"

Malcolm Bell, III*

Elizabeth Marlowe is justly concerned about the matter of the provenance of antiquities in museum and private collections. Her emphasis on the importance of knowledge of origins for our understanding of an ancient work is admirable and correct. For students and scholars, she raises the epistemological question of how to proceed when provenance information is insufficient, untrustworthy, or entirely lacking. The study of what one might call compromised antiquities requires both skepticism about unreliable information that may have accrued from self-interested dealers or reticent owners and the regular use of comparanda with well-established sources. She makes a valid defense of stylistic analysis as a legitimate tool for placing and dating works without provenance. Such knowledge is based on generations of learning and should not be discarded as unscientific or devalued by distrustful designations such as "by affinity."

In her discussion of exhibition catalogues that do not provide accurate provenance information, Marlowe raises the question of the responsibility of museums and collectors to be open and forthcoming about what is known of the history of an object or a work of art. One might assert (going beyond Marlowe) that the object from a remote past has a right to as much of its history as can be known—from manufacture to discovery—and that it is unethical for an owner to withhold information that is essential to such a full understanding. Data on provenance should in fact always be sought out at the time of acquisition, always be prized, and always be made known in publication and to the enquiring public. This requirement also means that there should be corresponding candor if a work lacks provenance. If museums today continue to accept gifts of antiquities without provenance (as is happening, for instance, at the Art Institute of Chicago and the Metropolitan Museum of Art), the absence of knowledge about origins should at least be honestly stated, both in publications and in exhibition cases—if only to make clear to the

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public and possible countries of origin that the museum is conscious of the moral issues raised by the illegal market. Due diligence calls for museums and collectors to try actively to recover the full histories of acquired works and to make such information known openly and forthrightly.

In her concern for accuracy of information on provenance, Marlowe is wary of rating systems that quantify degrees of reliability provided by museums and collectors. She expresses this position in criticizing the categories devised by Chippindale and Gill in their excellent and well-known article published in 2000.[1] In Marlowe's view, their six categories are at once insufficiently skeptical and lacking in precision in the evaluation of published information. Even the highest rating p1 accepts unreliable assertions. She seems to be concerned that the Chippendale–Gill categories will be widely used by students and scholars to determine the reliability of provenance information, and she proposes instead that the simpler categories of "grounded works" (provenance known) and "ungrounded works" (provenance unknown) be employed. In their analysis of seven exhibition catalogues from the 1990s, Chippendale and Gill describe in detail the extent and consequences of the trade, employing the six-level scale to categorize the amount and nature of information on provenance provided for approximately 1,400 objects. The authors state that the information on actual archaeological provenance (what we should really be concerned about) was exceedingly rare. Their system was intended to demonstrate (or, more accurately, resulted in demonstrating) that a very large majority of the total number of objects had little or no secure data on origins and, consequently, that those works were likely to have been looted. It was an effective ad hoc scale invented for the purpose of the article, with no indication that it was intended to become a future standard of reference either for the objects in the seven catalogues or for application to other materials by other students and scholars. Marlowe's demand for higher standards of evidence in the study of the history of an antiquity is an epistemological issue; Chippendale and Gill's scale was a useful and effective investigative tool, and her dissatisfaction with it is unconvincing.

The root cause that lies behind the matter of inaccurate data on provenance remains the looting that deprives archaeological sites of their material record and stolen works of their functional history. A truly "grounded" work is one recovered through legitimate excavation; knowledge, however secure, that an object was found in Rome or Antioch is not an acceptable indication of provenance. The problem of looting offers at least some practical solutions. The sites can be effectively protected by civil authorities, and looters can be apprehended. Authorized excavations can be encouraged, and local museums and storerooms established for the exhibition and preservation of antiquities. Archaeology often produces economic benefits in employment and tourism, and active efforts to preserve and study an archaeological site can demonstrate its significance and value to local populations. School programs and organized tours foster pride in local monuments and sites.

As for the trade in antiquities, it can be discouraged both by international agreements and by the refusal of collectors and museums to enter into it. Here, even

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Chippendale and Gill were in my view insufficiently firm on the need for rigorous application in the countries of origin of existing legal protection for antiquities and sites.[2] The antiquities market is not some preternaturally legitimate phenomenon; museums and collectors do not have supra-legal rights to possess illegally excavated and exported antiquities. Critics like James Cuno find fault with "retentive" legal regimes that protect sites and limit the export of antiquities, without recognizing both the potentially destructive effects of a more open market fueled almost entirely by works recently removed from the earth and the serious responsibilities of nation-states to protect their heritage.[3] The antiquities market should itself become a thing of the past. The proper course (in addition to the abstention of buyers) lies in restricting the illegal trade, as exemplified in the national import controls resulting from the 1970 UNESCO Convention, in repatriations, and in the recent widespread restrictions in many countries on the import of near eastern antiquities that have entered the market because of disorder in Syria and Iraq.[4]

Although not directly related to the issues raised by collecting, the recent intentional destruction of ancient monuments for ideological reasons, which erases both sites and works, is in its nihilistic effects certainly an even worse phenomenon than looting. The consequence of iconoclasm is the loss of unique products of human imagination and achievement, of looting valuable knowledge about such works. For the human past to be preserved and understood in its richness and complexity both of these lamentable practices should be strongly combatted.

ENDNOTES

1. Chippindale and Gill 2000.
2. Ibid., 505.
3. Cuno 2007, 10.
4. Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, 14 November 1970, 823 UNTS 231.

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