

ADALYA

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SUNA-İNAN KIRAÇ AKDENİZ MEDENİYETLERİ ARAŞTIRMA ENSTİTÜSÜ
SUNA & İNAN KIRAÇ RESEARCH INSTITUTE ON MEDITERRANEAN CIVILIZATIONS

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SUNA-İNAN KIRAÇ AKDENİZ MEDENİYETLERİ ARAŞTIRMA ENSTİTÜSÜ YILLIĞI
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J. Paul Getty's Motivations for Collecting Antiquities

Erin L. THOMPSON*

Collecting is a curious behaviour. Hardly anyone has not formed a collection, however small. And yet, for all its universality, the collecting impulse, especially the impulse to collect classical antiquities, has been surprisingly little studied. Thanks to inventory lists, household expense records, architectural plans, and other archival records, we know many of the practical facts of most major private collections of antiquities: how much collectors paid for them, from whom they purchased them, where in their homes or private museums they displayed them. Yet, answering the questions of who, when and where bring us very little closer to answering the question of why.

Part of the reason that we have made so little progress here is that observers of collecting have been unusually consistent in assuming that they already know the answer. Antiquities collectors, you will read in many scholarly texts, collect out of a desire for social prestige and have little true appreciation for the beauties of what they own.

Scholars have long studied the human habit of collecting and exhibiting objects in order to communicate one's self-image to others¹. However, there is a pervasive tendency to see collecting and displaying as a hypocritical activity, one that creates a façade of false identities to cover the true being of the collector. For example, J. Alsop, the author of what is otherwise one of the more discerning histories of collecting, insists that the "true collector" lacks any "inner relationship" to what he collects, and instead gathers together "objects belonging to a particular category the collector happens to fancy, as magpies fancy things that are shiny"². Pierre Cabanne even more reductively claims that "small countries, short men, [and] religious minorities" are especially inclined to collect because "the collections they bring together give them a reputation and add to their stature or distinction"³.

This type of analysis is reductionist, dismissive and not sufficient – it does not explain, for instance, why the collector acquires antiquities and not real estate, horses or even contemporary art, all of which could also display social prestige. And this scholarly perspective is not that far removed from the satirical criticisms levied against collectors since Roman times, which paint them as greedy, effeminate, stupid, uncultured, arriviste, sexually incontinent or all of the

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¹ Scholarship on the use of art to fashion public identities has been especially fruitful for the Renaissance period; see Greenblatt 2005; Jardine 1998; Thornton 1998; Syson 2001.

² Alsop 1982, 70.

³ Cabanne 1963, viii.

above⁴. Yet, ascertaining motivations of antiquities collectors is crucial, because these collections can shape our perception of the world, or knowledge of its past, and the course of its future⁵.

One particularly under-examined strand of the history of collecting are American antiquities collectors of the 20th century including William Randolph Hearst, J. P. Morgan, Leon Levy and Shelby White⁶. They were either born in humble circumstances or made their money in oil fields, yellow journalism, or other realms not known for their intellectual sophistication or Old World flavour. Antiquities allowed these men and women to forge new identities for themselves, as sophisticated connoisseurs who had more in common with Tiberius than Texas or with Catherine the Great than the slaughterhouses of Chicago⁷. These American collectors used antiques to display an imaginary ancestry, but, instead of a claim of literal decent, they asserted spiritual ancestry. And they displayed this ancestry to as many members of the public as they could.

Americans have long had a conflicted attitude towards classical antiquity. Like the British peerage, who found models for Parliament's gains in power at the expense of the king, Americans were also interested in using antiquity to provide prototypes for their own desired political changes. The philosophy of the American Revolution was derived from classical texts, especially those of Republican Rome, and orators, philosophers, politicians and other educated Americans steeped themselves in antiquity as they sought a justification for revolution and advice for the establishment of a new governmental system⁸. But even with growth of interest in antiquity, the Americans' experience of original ancient art was almost non-existent. Instead, they experienced it through books, prints, a few casts and buildings such as Monticello that were modelled on the antique.

In this, Americans mirrored a trend of suspicion of ancient art established by certain British thinkers and travellers. James I established a permanent embassy in Venice, cementing and creating diplomatic and trade relations with northern Italy. He also ended the wars with Spain,

⁴ Pollitt 1978, has summarised the two main positions, the "Catonian" and the "Connoisseur", taken in Roman debates about the propriety of collecting Greek art, which began almost with the first importation of conquered Greek art in the late 3rd century B.C. and lasted until the 2nd century B.C. The Catonians argued that Greek art caused a decay in Rome's moral standards. The most outspoken critic of this decay was Cato the Elder, renowned for his rejection of all foreign cultures and especially for what he believed to be the "diverse vices, avarice, and luxury" and "every sort of libidinous temptation" infecting Rome from its contact with Greece and the East (Livy Rom. Hist. 34.4.4).

⁵ For example, the history of radical restorations and modifications of antiquities can only be understood in the context of collectors' motivations, since they ordered these manipulations of fragmentary artefacts in order to shape them to their desired uses. For examples of such manipulations, see, e.g., Howard 1968; Howard 1982; Howard 1991; Picón 1983; Fejfer 2003; Marvin 2003; Zirpolo 2008.

⁶ For Hearst, see Levkoff 2008; Procter 1998; Procter 2007. For Morgan, see Auchincloss – Morgan 1990; Strouse 2000; Moore 2005. For Levy and White, see von Bothmer 1990.

⁷ Of course, there is a long history of collecting antiquities in order to craft and express a new or modified identity. See, for example, the *bovattieri*, "cattlemen," a new class of elites that arose in Rome in the 14th century. Their wealth came from banking and the cloth and spice industries, and they collected antiquities in a quest to counter their provincialism by "proving" their noble origins by displaying antiquities to support fabricated family lineages. See Christian 2010, 68-74. One should also mention the collecting activities of Thomas Howard, the Earl of Arundel, whose habits of collecting set the pattern for centuries of subsequent British and then American collecting: the use of a private antiquities collection to display wealth and power; the preference for imported rather than the local antiquities of Roman Britain; the heavy restoration of any works in less than perfect condition; the willingness to obtain antiquities both through purchases from existing collections and through new excavations; and, above all, the belief that the collector was in a better position to appreciate and cherish the antiquities than the current possessors, and thus that the collector was justified in circumventing export restrictions and all other manner of laws and regulations in order to acquire his antiquities. See Howarth 1985 and Scott 2003.

⁸ Dyson 1998, 4. See also Mullett 1939.

allowing the English to travel in the south. The intensity of English distrust of the papacy and the power of the Inquisition lessened, and the pan-European political situation increasingly favoured travel after the end of the Thirty Years' War in 1636 and the War of the Spanish Succession in 1713. More and more, young Englishmen began to follow Arundel's example and make what became known as the Grand Tour: a slow progression across the continent, culminating in a stay in Italy, to mark the completion of their university education.

Most Grand Tourists passed through the Roman forum after the English Civil War, the execution of Charles I, and the Glorious Revolution had firmly established that ultimate power in England resided in its Parliament, not in its king⁹. English philosophers and politicians from the late 17th through the 18th centuries eagerly sought historical models and justifications for political systems ruled by a parliamentary body. Englishmen had long read Sallust, Livy, Tacitus and other Roman Republican political thinkers during a traditionally heavily classical education. Thus, it is not surprising that the newly powerful English oligarchy justified their power by comparing themselves to the senators of ancient Rome. The model was so useful that both Tories and Whigs identified themselves with the Roman Senate¹⁰.

The English elite displayed their claimed links to Rome not only in their writings and speeches¹¹, but also by commissioning portraits of themselves in Roman garb and displaying antiquities, both original and casts, in their homes and gardens. Such continuing reminders were necessary, because the idea of Republican Rome was not important merely as a one-time justification for oligarchic rule. Rather, the English elite remained concerned that their power could be undermined, either through invasion by pro-royalists from the Continent or, as happened in ancient Rome, through infighting and decadence among the aristocracy that gave rise to civil war, to be stopped only through the rise of an emperor. Rome provided a cautionary model as well as one to emulate.

This reluctance to take in without question everything that antiquity had to offer extended to art as well. Lord Tavistock declared he would 'not give a guinea for the finest torso ever discovered'¹². And Lord Chesterfield ordered his son, travelling in 1749, not to run through Italy '(to use a ridiculous word) *knick-kanckically*... I beseech you; no days lost in poring upon almost imperceptible *intaglios* and *cameos*; and do not become a virtuoso of small wares'¹³. And those who did purchase antiquities, either on or after their Grand Tours, showed an overwhelming preference for portrait statues and busts, since these would bring the model personages of Rome back to life, without being subject to the criticism of participating in the merely luxurious.

By contrast, very few Americans travelled to Europe until the early 19th century, when the end of the Napoleonic Wars meant made travel within Europe easier, regular steamship service made crossing the Atlantic quicker and safer, and a growing and increasingly educated American middle class began both to feel the importance of first-hand exposure to European culture and to be able to afford it¹⁴.

⁹ For the impact of this history on Grand Tourists, see Ayres 1997.

¹⁰ The same would later be true in the United States, whose Revolutionary thinkers were similarly eager to adopt the Roman Republic as a model; see Gummere 1963, viii.

¹¹ For example, see Oldmixon 1730, iv-v, describing the Whigs as *patres patriae*; see also Montagu 1759; Lee 1681; Addison 1712.

¹² Jackson-Stops 1985, 47.

¹³ Quoted in Scott 2003, 109 (emphasis in the original).

¹⁴ For the early history of American relationships to antiquities, see Dyson 1998.

And not all of the Americans who made the trip were equally impressed with ancient art. Ralph Izzard Middleton of South Carolina wrote home during his 1836 visit to Rome, after having seen the Belvedere Torso, to comment that artists should go look at it, but for people ‘who could not model a dog out of a piece of wax (among which I enroll myself) to go and spend hours together in the middle of winter in the Vatican constantly exclaiming how beautiful, how beautiful, when they are all the while thinking how cold, how cold, this I think utterly absurd’. In the same letter, he huffs that ‘triumphal arches and old tottering columns, the dilapidated statues and smoked frescoes, all these are fudge’¹⁵.

Middleton’s attitude was characteristic of many 18th and 19th century Americans. Having formed a nation on the belief that America was capable of producing all that it needed, without assistance from the Old World or its false claims of superior culture, many Americans must have thought it incongruous to form large-scale collections of antiquities. Such collections were possessed by the aristocracy, and, for Americans, would have been especially associated with the same 18th century English elite against whom they had rebelled. Thus, for example, even Hearst and Morgan, both seemingly insatiable collectors of all variety of artworks, accumulated only a relatively few number of antiquities, and these mostly minor objects such as terracotta vases.

Especially early in the 19th century, the first Americans to bring home classical souvenirs from their European travels acquired relatively few and minor antiquities. Exceptions were treated with suspicion. The captain of the U.S.S. Constitution purchased a Roman sarcophagus in Beirut in 1839 and presented to the American government to serve as a resting place for Andrew Jackson. Jackson, at that point two years out of office and with six more years to live, agreed with the government that an ancient sarcophagus had too imperial of a flavour, and it was donated to the Smithsonian Museum instead¹⁶.

J. Paul Getty (1892-1976) was one of the first private American collectors to both recognise and crave the imperial qualities that had led to the rejection of works like the sarcophagus (as opposed to the separate history of antiquities collecting by American museums, which took a distinct path)¹⁷. Getty grew up in the quintessentially American settings of the scraped-together oil boom towns of the Great Plains in the late 19th century and the brand new expanses of Los Angeles in the early 20th century. He made his first million by the time he was 24, in 1916, prospecting for oil in Oklahoma as he had learned to do from his father. He promptly retired, declaring that he would henceforth live a life of enjoyment of beaches and fast cars.

This California idyll proved so tiresome for Getty that he began to work again after little more than a year. He worked for the rest of his long life, travelling constantly, sleeping little, trusting few, and accumulating a vast fortune – somewhere around two billion dollars by the time of his death, thanks to Getty Oil’s worldwide network of oil production and distribution. Most crucially, he negotiated a concession to drill in lands belonging to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Oil had never been found there, but Getty suspected, quite correctly, that he would strike it.

Getty had two amusements: women and art. Along with constant long- and short-term affairs, he married and divorced five times, all to strikingly beautiful women, all in their late

¹⁵ Middleton 1836.

¹⁶ Perkins 1958; Dyson 1998, 22.

¹⁷ For Getty’s collecting, see Hewins 1960; Getty 1965a; Getty 1965b; Le Vane – Getty 1955; Getty 1968; Getty 1986; Lapatin 2011.

teens or early twenties when they married the increasingly older Getty, and all effectively abandoned when they became pregnant and Getty lost interest. His heart was more constant with art, possibly because he treated collecting as if it were a business.

Getty wrote frequently and self-analytically about his collecting. He gives us a complete history of the development of his collecting habit, which he traces back to visits to the Louvre and the London National Gallery while travelling with his parents in his late teens, although neither 'made much of an impression on me'¹⁸. Nor did the many European museums he saw while a student at Oxford. His first art purchases were two bronzes and some carved ivory acquired in China when he was twenty, but it would be eighteen years before he purchased any more art. Then came the Great Depression:

Now, many of the strong hands that formerly held some of the finest examples of art on the face of the earth were forced to relax their grip. Many choice items became available for purchase, and art prices, like all other prices of the time, dropped.... As I became aware of this, my long-dormant urge to collect things of beauty and examples of fine art finally awoke¹⁹.

Getty made a second burst of purchases from European collectors selling their collections for low prices just before and during World War II²⁰. And then, 'having been infected by the virus, I proved to have a chronic disease'²¹. He kept collecting, even as prices rose in a recovered post-war art market. He called himself 'an apparently incurable art-collecting addict', and noted that he had vowed to stop collecting several times, only to suffer 'massive relapses'²².

He even published a book, *The Joys of Collecting*, in 1965, in which he claims: 'I continued collecting until 1964, when I more or less stopped. I felt that I had acquired enough, that I had assembled a collection of which I could be proud, and that I should leave the field to others'²³. But in a 1976 autobiography, he ruefully noted that as 'the history of my art collecting activities between 1965 and 1975 [proves], when it comes to collecting, I am also a chronic prevaricator', for he continued to make substantial purchases²⁴.

Though Getty joked about his 'addiction' to collecting, he also evolved a philosophy of collecting that inextricably linked art to business and business to immortality. He began from the conviction that 'great wealth is generally due to imagination', since a businessman will be successful only if he has enough imagination to see or create new ways of investing and risking his capital, ways unexploited by others²⁵. Getty thought that an appreciation for culture was key to developing this imagination in several ways.

First was the merely practical: the American must feel comfortable navigating other cultures in order to negotiate business transactions with foreign partners, or else 'American businessmen will allow their fears to paralyze them and stop expansion and trade'²⁶. Getty

¹⁸ Getty 1965a, 11.

¹⁹ Getty 1965a, 12.

²⁰ Getty 1968, 97.

²¹ Getty 1968, 98.

²² Getty 1986, 256-257.

²³ Getty 1965a, 12.

²⁴ Getty 1986, 258.

²⁵ Quoted in Hewins 1960, 360.

²⁶ Quoted in Hewins 1960, 366.

was consumed with his self-imposed goal of fluency in other cultures. He could have easily afforded the best translators, but he learned languages from records, practicing alone late at night in his hotel rooms. Languages were not the only way he sought to blend in to the different cultures through which he travelled. He 'did not mimic manners and mannerisms. He assumed them', as one of his wives describes, calling the result his 'perfect coloration'²⁷. Getty even purchased and stored a different wardrobe in various European capitals so that he would not stand out by wearing, say, a Spanish-made suit in Berlin.

More mystically, Getty saw a crucial role for appreciation of past culture in the life of a businessman. He thought that an interest in the past would stimulate other interests, 'invigorating the individual and adding breadth and depth to his whole existence'²⁸. He repeatedly stressed that, 'notwithstanding all the demands made on my time and energies, I have consistently striven to live a rounded existence, to avoid becoming bogged down in a narrow groove.... Any such one-dimensional course would, I am sure, have proven fatal to my career – to say nothing of my individuality'²⁹. He believed that if he 'concentrated on business to the exclusion of all else, I would soon lose my sense of perspective and proportion. I would atrophy and lose whatever capacity I possessed to decide and direct'³⁰. In other words, the pleasures of collecting were essential to his business.

Getty's beliefs about the importance of art to business were so strong that they led him to found a museum, first opening his California home and its collection to visitors, then constructing a special building, the Getty Villa, to house the collection, and ultimately leaving the bulk of his fortune to a trust to fund the museum's continued operation (much to the disappointment of various mistresses)³¹. He explained his impulse to open his collection to the public as a product of 'conscience pangs':

After acquiring a large number of examples of fine art, one develops conscience pangs about keeping them to himself. The difference between being a barbarian and a full-fledged member of a cultivated society is the individual's attitude toward fine art. If he or she has a love of art, then he or she is not a barbarian. It's that simple, in my opinion. Tragically, fifty per cent of the people walking down any street can be classed as barbarians according to this criterion. Twentieth-century barbarians cannot be transformed into cultured, civilized human beings until they acquire an appreciation and love for art. The transformation cannot take place until they have had the opportunity to be exposed to fine art – to see, begin to understand and finally to savour and marvel. These were among the many reasons why the Getty Collection 'went public'³².

Getty, characteristically, exaggerated his collection's importance, since Los Angeles was hardly bereft of art or museums: the Los Angeles Museum of History, Science and Art, later the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, was founded in 1910, and the Natural History Museum of

²⁷ Quoted in Hewins 1960, 212.

²⁸ Getty 1968, 105.

²⁹ Getty 1968, 16.

³⁰ Getty 1968, 40.

³¹ Getty's writings point out, at exhaustive length, the cost of constructing his museum. He claims that he paid out of his own pocket nearly 17 million dollars to construct the Getty Villa (he also gives the total as a pre-tax amount), and calculates its annual maintenance costs of 1.5 million dollars as a per-visitor amount of \$10; Getty 1986, 268.

³² Getty 1986, 259-260.

Los Angeles County opened in 1913. But, regardless of the true state of their exposure to art, Getty wanted to transform the 'barbarians' of southern California not because he believed in the value of art for art's sake, but because of the last tenant of his personal philosophy of art and business. After exercising his imagination to find investment opportunities, the truly great businessman would not, Getty thought, rest content to have made his own fortune. Instead, as Getty did after emerging from his premature retirement, a businessman should continue to expand his existing enterprises and create new ones in order to create jobs for as many people as possible:

I most decidedly do not view my fortune as money that is exclusively mine, nor do I regard my holdings as my personal property. To me they are businesses and industries which produce goods or perform services for the benefit of the entire public. So that they will contribute to the progressive movement of the economic cycle, they must remain productive and whenever possible, expand. I look at my business interests in terms of thousands of jobs which make possible homes, cars, and comfortable living for my associates and employees. Any wealth that comes to me comes from the working partnership of us all. I supply capital and direction and, if I may say so, the inspiration and stimulus. This adds up to a very real partnership. The loyal work of my employees deserves my utmost effort for their welfare, prosperity, and security³³.

Getty's philosophy concludes with the conviction that the benefits provided by this employment should then rightly render a businessman famous: 'I believe that the able industrial leader, who creates wealth and employment, is as worthy of historical notice as the politician or soldier who spends an ever increasing share of the wealth created by industrial initiative and courage'³⁴.

In Getty's philosophy, an interest in art could not be merely passive to give the full effect of 'invigorating' imagination. Getty was thus intensely personally involved in his collection and every decision surrounding it. He did not use agents to make purchases, and he even bid on his own behalf at auctions, although he knew that he would be recognized and thus probably pay higher prices. He scrutinized all of the plans for the Getty Villa, even though, phobic of airplanes and too busy for a ship or rail passage, he never visited California after its construction. He also spent long hours researching both potential purchases and objects he had already acquired. And, most strangely for a hard-boiled oil tycoon with a constant press of business, he also wrote and published several short stories about antiquities in his collection.

The longest of these, 'A Journey from Corinth', features Getty's favourite antiquity, the Lansdowne Hercules (named after its former owner, the Marquess of Lansdowne)³⁵ (Fig. 1). In the story, a Greek landscape architect named Glaucus emigrates from Corinth to the Bay of Naples in 147 B.C., a year before Corinth's conquest by Rome. He finds employment working for a Roman aristocrat, Lucius Calpurnius Piso, on the construction of his new home in Herculaneum, the Villa of the Papyri. As part of his work, Glaucus attends an auction of the spoils from the sack of Corinth and purchases a statue of Hercules – the very one by which he had sat while courting his wife in Corinth's agora. After adorning Piso's villa for a time, the story records the statue's subsequent fate as a gift to the emperor Nero, who 'took a great fancy to

³³ Quoted in Hewins 1960, 373.

³⁴ Quoted in Hewins 1960, 360.

³⁵ For an analysis of this story, see Lapatin 2011, 275-277.

the young Herakles, and used this young man of marble as his audience when rehearsing roles he was going to play in the theatre³⁶.

Much of the story is impossibly anachronistic. Piso was not born until sometime around fifty years after the sack of Corinth, and the Lansdowne Hercules, whose history Getty imagines in the story, was not carved until after the eruption of Vesuvius, nearly two hundred years after that. Moreover, a closer inspection shows that much of the story is influenced by Getty's life, with Glaucus as his alter-ego. Glaucus purchases the Hercules, as Getty did, and designs the landscape surrounding the Villa of the Papyri, as Getty would design the details of the Getty Villa, whose plans he ordered to be based on the Villa of the Papyri. Glaucus and his fiancé Daphne marry in haste in order to leave the threatened Corinth, just as Getty had married T. Lynch, his wife at the time of the writing of the story, in haste in Rome on the eve of the declaration of war between Italy and America.

However, other aspects of the character of Daphne seem to be wishful thinking. By contrast to the independent Teddy, who lived apart from Getty for most of their marriage in order to pursue an opera career, Daphne is described as 'rather a shy young woman, she was never anxious for any company other than that of her husband. Strangers made her nervous.' And much of her dialogue consists of praising Glaucus with statements such as 'How wise you are, dearest. And how silly I am'³⁷. During his voyage to Italy, Glaucus offhandedly invents the idea of navigation by means of noon readings of the sun's position, echoing Getty's pride in his wartime training in naval navigation. Glaucus also spouts Getty's unmistakable politics, instructing Daphne that the 'Romans are hated by the mob because Rome protects the rule of the propertied classes, doubtless because she deems them less likely to take risks and cause trouble'³⁸. Anyone familiar with the career of the historical Piso's son-in-law, Julius Caesar, would doubt that the propertied classes of the late Roman Republic, with their habit of raising private armies and engaging in protracted civil war, were so little likely to cause trouble. The story even faithfully reflects Getty's obsession with financial minutia: the reader learns the amount of the fare for Glaucus's passage to Italy, how much he gave each sailor on the ship as a tip, and the charge for the customs duties he paid upon arrival in Italy, and his exact financial status upon arrival when Glaucus and Daphne's 'joint capital consisted of personal belongings of no great intrinsic value and about five thousand drachmae in cash'³⁹.

Getty knew that such detailed speculations about the history of the objects in his collection were best framed as fiction: 'We [collectors] begin by reading a brief catalogue description of our treasure. Then we elaborate on it. And the next thing we know we're reconstructing its life – creating a history, plus'⁴⁰. His use of the word 'reconstruction' to describe his activities means that he did not regard himself entirely as a fabulist. He believed in the truth of his reconstructions, even if he knew that he could not prove them. After all, he had arrived at them by conducting extensive research, consulting the most eminent of artists, and using his imagination. And imagination, to Getty, was not the flighty and unreliable tool that it so often proves to be for most of us. Instead, it was the source of the investment ideas that had produced billions

³⁶ Le Vane – Getty 1955, 325.

³⁷ Le Vane – Getty 1955, 313-314.

³⁸ Le Vane – Getty 1955, 287.

³⁹ Le Vane – Getty 1955, 310.

⁴⁰ Le Vane – Getty 1955, 68.

for him. Why not trust this evidently uniquely capable imagination to discern true from false in the world of antiquities, just as it had so successfully discerned bad from good in the realm of investment opportunities?

Because, as the benefit of hindsight proves, Getty knew oil better than marble. His purchase of a number of what now seem to be obvious forgeries shows that the skills he learned as a child, as an unreconstructed American, were stronger than those he acquired as he attempted to turn himself into an art historian later in life. For example, Getty believed that a torso of Venus he purchased in 1939 from an Italian art dealer, who told him it was found in the sea just off the coast near Anzio (ancient Antium), came from the villa the emperor Nero built there. This belief was partially due to his consultation of an expert, the antiquities dealer, who provided him with the information about where a fisherman had dived to find the work; partially to his research, which showed that the changing coast line meant to that villa site was now underwater; and partially to his imagination. In a short story written in the early 1950's, 'A Stroll along Minerva Street', Getty describes the emperor Nero purchasing a statue of Venus in Pompeii and installing it in his villa. Although the story is presented as fiction, the tone shifts in the last paragraphs, when Getty writes of his purchase of the torso and asks:

Is it too far remove from the realm of possibility to suggest that this torso... might be the remains of a seven-eighths life-sized status of Venus, bought by the Emperor Nero from the dealer Trimalchio of Neopolis, nineteen centuries ago? After all, she *was* found in the sea. And on the exact site where Nero's great villa, which time and the elements have since destroyed, once stood⁴¹.

Unfortunately for Getty's imagination, while the realm of possibility might have allowed the torso to have been a possession of Nero if it were in fact found 'on the exact site' of his villa, the dealer was lying. The torso is a 19th century forgery⁴².

Getty bought several expensive works from the Roman dealer in question, A. Barsanti, and he seems to have known his client's tastes well, and especially that, for Getty, the most important thing about a potential purchase was that it could be connected to an eminent former owner. Even Nero, the emperor generally known for his bloodthirstiness, depravity and insanity, could be sufficiently rehabilitated to provide an illustrious provenance. Before it enters into the reconstructed description of Nero's purchase of the statue, Getty's 'A Stroll Along Minerva Street' begins with a nonfictional defence of the character of Nero. At least, Getty claims, Nero was a pacifist, his taste in art was 'discriminating', and 'his seizure of property is also modest when compared with the deeds of contemporary confiscators'⁴³. By 'contemporary confiscators', Getty probably means the Internal Revenue Service. His writings are filled with complaints about the amount of taxes he had to pay, thus allowing the money to be wasted by the inefficiencies of government instead of turned into new jobs by supporting Getty's further investments⁴⁴.

Though Nero would do, Getty above all preferred to acquire antiquities previously owned by the emperor Hadrian or by 18th century English aristocrats – or, ideally, by both, as he

⁴¹ Le Vane – Getty 1955, 337 (emphasis in the original).

⁴² Lapatin 2011, 277.

⁴³ Le Vane – Getty 1955, 330.

⁴⁴ Getty also published one further short story in this genre, 'The Emperor's Birthday', which provides a speculative history for his bust of the empress Livia, claiming that it might have been a birthday gift for her husband, the emperor Augustus, from the citizens of Nola, his birthplace.

believed was the case for the Lansdowne Hercules⁴⁵. He purchased this sculpture from the noble English Lansdowne family, which had possessed it since its purchase in 1792 by the first Marquess of Lansdowne, after it was reportedly excavated at the site of Hadrian's Villa in 1790. Getty elevated this claim, which may have been merely part of the sales pitch offered by the 18th century dealer, into a direct connection with Hadrian: 'There is evidence to suggest that this ... statue was a great favorite of the Roman Emperor Hadrian, who was the most sophisticated of all ancient Roman emperors'⁴⁶. He thrills that his purchase of it means that 'this magnificent marble sculpture, which once delighted the Emperor Hadrian and for a century and a half was a pride of Britain, is now completely "Americanized" – on view for all to see at the Getty Museum'⁴⁷.

Getty repeatedly claimed that he bought from collections of well-known connoisseurs in order to avoid forgeries, but the attraction of acquiring works with a distinguished provenance went far deeper than that⁴⁸. Getty remarked to one confidant that:

I have always felt I had a great deal in common with two people widely separated in time – [William] Randolph Hearst and Hadrian. I can scarcely be a reincarnation of Mr. Hearst with his being a contemporary of mine, but I have wondered for many years why I have for so long felt such a close affinity with Hadrian. When I read about him and his villa and his life, I feel I already know it all and understand why he made the decisions he did. I would very much like to think that I *was* a reincarnation of his spirit and I would like to emulate him as closely as I can... Hadrian, Hearst and I are alike – we have all liked things on a grand scale⁴⁹.

Getty thought that Hearst, the newspaper magnate and great art collector, 'lived like a Roman emperor', and Hearst's estate at San Simeon reminded him of Hadrian's villa⁵⁰.

Getty's belief in his close ties – whether of reincarnation or not – to Hadrian and the Hadrian-like Hearst were a product not just of their shared interest in art, but also of their shared power over the economic lives of their dependents:

...I feel no qualms or reticence about likening the Getty Oil Company to an 'Empire' – and myself to a 'Caesar'. In fact, I'm willing to go so far as to argue that Getty Oil is more of an 'Empire' than Exxon or a great many other oil companies far larger than Getty Oil. This is because there *is* a 'Getty.' That fact is known to

⁴⁵ Getty is not the only American collector to have especially sought out antiquities from aristocratic British collections. See, e.g., the collection of Gilbert M. Denman, Jr., who, later in the 20th century, would purchase a Trajan a Marcus Aurelius, and a Cupid and Psyche from the Lansdowne collection, a Sleeping Ariadne and a bust of a woman from Wilton House, a statue of Athena possibly from the Hope collection, a fragment of a sculpture of two men cooking a boar from Lowther Castle, and a seated philosopher from Wentworth Woodhouse; see Hoffmann 1970, 34, 100, 104.

⁴⁶ Getty 1965a, 17.

⁴⁷ Getty 1965a, 18.

⁴⁸ Getty purchased most of his antiquities through dealers or directly from collections, but he also obtained a few works by acquiring and privately excavating several ancient villa sites on Italian coast. However, Italian law prohibited him from exporting most of the objects he uncovered. It is greatly to be regretted that the museum he founded did not similarly limit itself to purchasing antiquities with full provenance histories. Instead, the museum purchased a number of antiquities that had been recently looted, with the result that it has so far repatriated around 40 antiquities worth around \$44 million to Italy; see Getty Trust 2007a; Getty Trust 2007b; Rosenbaum 2013.

⁴⁹ Lapatin 2011, 283.

⁵⁰ Getty 1986, 234.

and by every employee of Getty Oil, by every member of the 'Empire.'. And every Getty Oil employee knows that he or she can always make a final and direct appeal to Caesar – to an individual named Getty who is not only the president of the company, but who also owns or controls the majority of the company's stock-shares⁵¹.

Getty modelled his life on Roman and European aristocracy, not only through the power of his rule over the Getty Empire, but also by activities characteristic of the leisure-time interests of these aristocrats, including his extensive travels, the construction of the Getty villa, and, most importantly, his art collecting. But why was it so important for Getty to reinforce his belief in his true spiritual ties to the aristocracy? Why did the famously cheap Getty – who installed a pay phone in his English country manor to prevent guests from sticking him with charges for long-distance phone calls – spend millions on his collection and museum?

This was because he wanted to display his collections to the public to fix the dangerous weakness he saw at the heart of American society, one that he explores over and over again in his writings: the 'cultural illiteracy so often displayed by Americans and particularly by American men'⁵². Getty believed that Americans thought that culture is 'for women, long-hairs and sissies', with the result that 'the moment the average American male steps through the doors [of a museum], he assumes a truculently self-conscious half-strut, half-shamble that tries to say: "I don't really want to be here. I'd much rather be in a bar or watching a baseball game"⁵³. Getty argued for a far different view of the relationship between masculinity and culture:

Far from emasculating or effeminizing a man, a cultural interest serves to make him more completely male as well as a more complete human being. It stimulates and vitalizes him as an individual – and sharpens his tastes, sensibilities and sensitivity for and to all things in life. The cultured man is almost invariably a self-assured, urbane and completely confident male. He recognizes, appreciates and enjoys the subtler shadings and nuances to be found in the intellectual, emotional and even physical spheres of human existence – and in the relationships between human beings. Be it in the board room or a bedroom, he is much better equipped to play his masculine role than is the heavy-handed and maladroit... barbarian⁵⁴.

In other words, Getty believed himself to be essentially masculine, felt threatened in this masculinity, and turned to the past for role models to help him forge a persona that would reconcile his self-perceptions with his circumstances.

Getty's beliefs about antiquities had far-reaching consequences for the antiquities themselves. We might simply dismiss Getty's 'reconstructions' as harmless storey-spinning by an involved collector, but the tales told by the founder of a museum do not disappear so easily.

For example, in 1953, Getty purchased a much-damaged fragment of a low relief, showing the head and neck of a horse being led by a now-missing bridle by a young man, part of whose upper body remains (Fig. 2). The Getty's website describes the relief as a Greek work from around 500 B.C. and describes its history as follows:

⁵¹ Getty 1986, 315.

⁵² Getty 1965b, 158.

⁵³ Getty 1965b, 158-159.

⁵⁴ Getty 1965b, 172.

In 1911 a farm laborer in Cottenham, near Cambridge, England, dug up this relief, known as the Cottenham Relief. How did a Greek antiquity end up in the English countryside? An antiquarian named Roger Gale lived in Cottenham in 1728, and this relief probably belonged to him. How it came to be lost or disposed of by him and then buried remains unknown.

Despite substantial advances in scholarship and opportunities to re-examine the work, the Villa's dating and description of the relief exactly follows Getty's own thoughts about the work, down to the rhetorical question:

How did this sublime example of archaic Greek art reach England and become 'lost' and 'found' there? The precise details will never be known, but an entirely satisfactory skeleton of the explanation can be readily reconstructed.... Somehow, possibly during the moving of [Roger Gale's] effects into or out of the house, the fragment was dropped on the ground.... It is even within the realm of possibility that the fragment was left behind and thrown away by the subsequent occupants⁵⁵.

Getty drew his information about the finding of the relief and the possible connection with Gale from the first publication of the work in a 1917 article by the respected scholar Arthur Bernard Cook. Cook reports that he was informed by one Arthur Bull, a landowner and amateur archaeologist interested in Roman Britain, who brought him the relief, that a labourer working on Bull's farm in 1911 had uncovered the relief 'at a depth of some eighteen inches below the present surface of the soil'. Since the relief 'appears to be an isolated relic, thrown out in all probability from a house formerly existing in the neighbourhood', Cook speculated that 'it is at least possible that this relief' had belonged to Gale, 'acquired by him one cannot guess when or where' and had 'at some later date, and by some less instructed owner, been cast away as a broken and worthless bit of marble'⁵⁶.

There is much in this account to inspire scepticism, if one is not as eager as Getty or the Getty Villa to acquire or possess a work from one of the highest periods of Greek art. Cottingham is the name of both a village and a parish, and we do not know the exact location within it of Gale's manor, or whether this manor was relatively close to or distant from Bull's farm. Gale died in 1744, and it seems improbable that something removed from his manor at that time would remain within eighteen inches of the modern soil surface over 160 years later – or that something, even if deposited much later, would not soon be disturbed, lying at such shallow depth on a farm in one of England's most-cultivated agricultural districts.

And if we, like Getty, want to exercise our imaginations to reconstruct an object's history, why not speculate that Bull, seeking to make a splash in his circle of amateur historians, fabricated both the relief and the story of its finding? It would have been relatively easy to obtain a slab of Greek marble and carve this small work, just under eleven inches across. Every forger needs inspiration; conveniently, the British Museum has had in its collections, and published illustrations of it in its catalogues, an exactly similar relief since 1805 (Fig. 3).

This story of forgery might be true or might be false, but it is certainly 'within the realm of possibility', as Getty was so fond of writing. Now so distant from the time of the finding of the relief, we are unlikely to uncover any more evidence than what we have. And the current state

⁵⁵ Getty 1965a, 19.

⁵⁶ Cook 1917, 116.

of scientific testing tells us simply that the marble is as old as any other piece of marble, but not when it was carved. But the Getty Museum has not challenged the wisdom of its founder, and very few visitors, reading the text next to the relief, will think to question the story it presents as a certainty.

The treatment of this relief is an example of the ways in which Getty's attempts to transform his own past continue to transform our contemporary perceptions of the ancient past. More broadly, it is also an example of what this article has argued is the importance of engaging in deeper scholarship in both the nature of the impulse to collect classical antiquities and the effects that such collecting has had on the record of the past, from forgeries to restorations to illicit digging to the privileging of certain cultures, interpretations, and types of artefacts. Collectors like Getty play a role in how we encounter the past long after their death, and it is much to be hoped that these influential collectors receive the scholarly attention that they deserve rather than the facile dismissing of the importance of their activities that they have so often received.

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Özet

J. Paul Getty'nin Eski Eser Koleksiyonu Yapma Nedenleri

Eski eserler, 20. yy. Amerikalı koleksiyonerlerin Avrupa ile ruhani bağları bulunan sofistike duayenler olarak kendilerine yeni bir kimlik oluşturmalarını sağladı. Bu sayede, 18. ve 19. yy.'ların Amerikalılarında görülen, istedikleri siyasi değişimler için Eski Çağ'dan prototip aranma şeklindeki çelişkili tavırdan büyük bir sapma yaşandı. Fakat bunun yanı sıra büyük çaplı eski eser koleksiyonu yapmayı da genelde reddettiler çünkü Amerika'nın ihtiyacı olan her şeyi, Eski Dünya'nın yardımı veya daha üstün kültür iddiaları olmaksızın üretecek gücü olduğu inancıyla kurulan bir ulusun bunu yapmasının uygun olmayacağı kanısı yaygındı. Bu makalede, petrolcü ve koleksiyoner J. Paul Getty'nin (1892-1976) Amerikan koleksiyonculuğunda dönüm noktası olması irdelenmektedir. Getty, klasik antikalara atfedilen emperyal ve elitist özelliklere olumlu bir gözle bakan ilk Amerikalı koleksiyonerlerdendir. Kendi başına milyarder olan Getty, varlığının çoğunu sanata ve Kaliforniya Los Angeles'ta Getty Müzesi ve Vakfı'nı kurmaya yatırıyordu. Kendi koleksiyonculuğu üzerine sık sık ve kendi kendini analiz eder şekilde yazıyordu; koleksiyonculuğa Büyük Buhran ve II. Dünya Savaşı sırasında koleksiyonlarını ucuzatan Avrupalı koleksiyonerlerden faydalanarak başlamıştı. Zamanla bir koleksiyon toplama felsefesi geliştirdi ki, bu felsefe sanatı işe ve işi de ölümsüzlüğe içinden çıkılmaz şekilde bağlıyordu çünkü sanata maruz kalmanın hem iş hayatında başarı için gerekli 'hayal gücünü' artıracığına hem de Amerikalı işadamlarının bu sayede yabancı ortaklarla iş yaparken ihtiyaç duyacağı kültürel akıcılığı sağlayacağına inanıyordu. Getty'e göre, yatırım fırsatları bulmak için kendi hayal gücüne egzersiz yaptırdıktan sonra, gerçek büyük bir işadamı kendi dünya varlığını yapmış olmakla tatmin olamazdı. Bilakis, bir işadamı mümkün olduğunca daha çok kişi için iş yaratmak üzere mevcut girişimlerini büyütmeye ve yenilerini ortaya çıkarmaya devam etmelidir ki, bir Sezar kadar ünlü olsun. Ne var ki, Getty'nin felsefi inançları eski eser alırken onu sahte eser konusunda, özellikle satıcı ilgi çekici bir öykü anlatıyorsa, korumasız bıraktı çünkü Getty için yapılacak alımda en önemli husus, eserin daha önce, tanınmış bir sahibi bulunmasıydı. Her şeyden önce Getty, daha önce İmparator Hadrianus'un veya 18. yy. İngiliz aristokrasininin, ya da ideal olarak her ikisinin sahip olduğu eski eserleri satın almayı tercih ediyordu – tıpkı Lansdowne Heraklesi örneğinde olduğu gibi. Getty, hayatını, hem Getty İmparatorluğu üzerindeki egemenliği aracılığıyla hem de kapsamlı gezileri, Getty villasının inşası ve de en önemlisi sanat eseri koleksiyonculuğu dahil olmak üzere Romalı ve Avrupalı aristokratların tipik boş zaman etkinlikleri aracılığıyla söz konusu aristokratlara göre biçimlendiriyordu.



Fig. 1 Roman marble statue of Hercules (Lansdowne Herakles),
c. 125 A.D. The J. Paul Getty Museum (70.AA.109.1).
(Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program)



Fig. 2 Marble votive relief (Cottenham Relief).
The J. Paul Getty Museum (78.AA.59).
(Digital image courtesy of the Getty's Open Content Program)

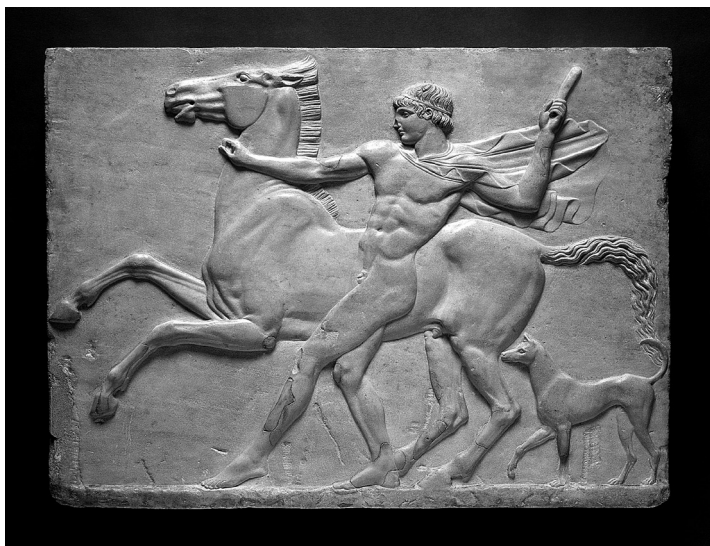


Fig. 3 Roman marble relief of a boy with horse, c. 117-150,
purchased by Charles Townley in 1768. British Museum (1805,0703.121).
(© Trustees of the British Museum)