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Inherited Violence: Examining Museum and Academic Relationships with the West African  
Illicit Antiquities Trade in a Post-Colonial Era

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the Degree of PhD

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## **Abstract**

This study applies postcolonial and social harms theory to analyse the perspectives of professionals involved in the discovery, identification, trade, collection and scholarship of African cultural objects. It joins the small body of work which is beginning to account systematically for the harms of trade in cultural heritage, and the even smaller body attempting to situate this in a criminological framework. Qualitative research is based on 18 semi-structured interviews, with participants falling into distinct professional groups: art historians; museum curators; archaeologists; and those who are a mix of all three. After reviewing the long history of exploitative and violent extraction of objects from West Africa, I map this field, showing schematically how museums and academics are positioned in relation to markets in a way that facilitated and legalised collection and trade of objects. This thesis presents a theoretical model for understanding how museum and academic institutions perpetuate colonialist ideologies and harm, setting out a multi-level typology of epistemic violence. The research is guided methodologically by various strands of critical discourse studies, which are employed to analyse participant perspectives. In each of these groups, participants displayed shared and distinct positions as to the ethical and practical issues of the trade in African objects and to repatriation of these, often varying according to their professional or academic discipline. Some participants adopted different strategies, which I argue are forms of continued colonial harm, to deny and deflect responsibility for ethically dubious practices like authenticating or publishing the location of objects. Some also spoke of and acted on the harms of trade, demonstrating increasing political engagement and awareness. I conclude by arguing for further work applying postcolonial and social harms theory to this topic, particularly as repatriation efforts gain ground.

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**Author's Declaration**

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Printed Name: Mary Grace Lambert

Signature:

## Chapter 1 Introduction

In the 2018 Marvel film *Black Panther*, we are introduced to the character Erik Killmonger in the West African exhibit of the fictional Museum of Great Britain. Killmonger, a Black American man, asks the curator, a white British woman, for details on three objects in the display cases. She responds in clipped tones: “The Bobo-Ashanti tribe, present day Ghana. 19th century. That’s from the Edo people of Benin, 16th century. Also from Benin, 7th century, Fula tribe, I believe.” To the latter, Killmonger responds, “Nah.” The curator balks, “I beg your pardon?” Killmonger corrects her, “It was taken by British soldiers in Benin, but it’s from Wakanda. And it’s made out of vibranium. Don’t trip. I’mma take it off your hands for you.” The curator advises him, “These items aren’t for sale.” Turning suddenly menacing, Killmonger asks her, “How do you think your ancestors got these? You think they paid a fair price? Or did they take it like they took everything else?” Warily, and beginning to show discomfort from the poison she is unaware has been put in her coffee, the curator says, “Sir, I’m going to have to ask you to leave.” Killmonger points out, “You got all this security in here watching me ever since I walked in, but you ain’t checking for what you put in your body.” The curator then collapses and, as the emergency technicians arrive, reveal themselves to be terrorists who kill the witnesses before joining Killmonger to steal the Wakandan axe. Before they leave, Killmonger sets his sights on an elaborate horned mask. When his partner asks him if the mask is vibranium too, Killmonger responds, “Nah, I’m just feeling it,” before decisively taking it with him in one last act of reclamation.

This scene touches on a multitude of political issues surrounding the existence of African objects in Western spaces, from the violent colonial history behind their acquisition, to the role of white Westerner as cultural gatekeeper to the Black audience, to the controversial question of repatriation. The Museum of Great Britain is a thinly veiled reference to the British Museum, which has long faced criticism for its retention of the court art of Benin City, in present-day Nigeria, which was stolen as war booty during the sacking of the capital city of the Edo Empire during the Punitive Expedition in 1897. The implication is strengthened by Killmonger’s choice in objects, one of which vaguely resembles the ivory masks of the Edo Queen Idia, from the 16th century, which were taken during the 1897 Expedition and now reside in numerous museums throughout the world, including the British Museum. While the

mask attributed to the so-called “Bobo-Ashanti” tribe of Ghana (in truth, Bobo-Ashanti is a modern-day sect of Rastafarianism) does not resemble the Asante art of the 19th century, it vaguely references another important metal mask, a golden trophy head owned by the 19th century Asante king Kofi Karikari, which was taken as war booty by the British during the lesser-known Punitive Expedition of 1874, and now resides in the Wallace Collection in London.

This brief interaction is a symbolic distillation of a hundred years of confrontation between Black African and diaspora communities and Western cultural institutions, in which the sterilised Western narrative surrounding cultural objects is challenged, and the challenge dismissed by Westerners with discomfort, arrogance, and anger. This scene had tremendous impact not only on media discourse surrounding the repatriation debate, but on the continued effects of colonisation within Western educational and cultural institutions and the subsequent decolonisation efforts that have been called for (Coward, 2018; D’Souza, 2018; Little, 2018; Ragbir, 2018). However, while these critiques have mentioned the dominant representation of whiteness among art historians, they have by and large focused on objects taken especially during the peak of Britain’s colonial period in the 19th century. This emphasis on colonially-dated harms lets Western institutions off the hook for what followed in post-colonial times, as American late capitalism replaced European settler colonialism as the driving force behind Western demand for so-called “primitive” or “tribal” art, leading to years of looting and theft of archaeological sites, religious shrines, and local museums. While European colonists are responsible for instigating the cultural and physical violence that Killmonger decries, more insidious and persistent forms of violence were perpetrated through the course of the 20th century by Western individuals with the best of intentions, oblivious to the harms caused by their practice or the colonial legacy inherited in their ideologies.

It is this relationship between colonially organised norms of conquest and the post-colonial development, perpetuation, and concealment of colonial ideologies that I explore in this study. In the following chapters, I will examine how knowledge/power production in museums and the academy has alternately perpetuated and challenged colonial and neo-colonial practice through discourse on the collection, exhibition, and study of illicit West African cultural objects. I explore this through a combination of historical analysis and qualitative interviews with 18 individuals who have had varied careers in museums and academia, working across

North America/Europe and Africa. My aim is to consider how inter-workings between museums, the academy, and the market can support the perpetuation and inheritance of symbolic violence that unconsciously prioritises white Western narratives whilst dismissing and distancing non-Western knowers and knowledge/power systems.

## I. Research Questions

As discussed in Chapter 4, this project was realised through a circuitous journey. It began as a fairly straightforward study mapping how academic and museum involvement and international regulation affected the illicit and licit trade in African cultural objects, situated in well-established criminological frameworks. However, in carrying out interviews originally intended to contextualise a largely quantitative project, I could not ignore the extent to which the discourse of experts often glossed over the problematic academic and curatorial histories of object ‘acquisition’ (which might also be described in many cases as theft and looting) and involvement with the trade. This raised larger questions for me about the relationship, past and present, of the ‘West’ to Africa, as well as the definition, meaning and importance of cultural objects for these two entities.

For many of those working in museums and universities, the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transport of Ownership of Cultural Property had a transformative impact when previously normalised and accepted practices (i.e., the acquisition of unprovenanced objects) suddenly became condemned. The Convention marked a clear before and after for the dates of objects one could now accept but presented greater challenges for curators and academics in navigating the legacy of harmful practices before the Convention and how to move forward in the wake of it. The concept of wrongdoing and harm amongst museum professionals and academics was thus relegated either to a specific period of time (during which such practices or attitudes were normalised, and thus accepted as typical of the era) or to very specific people in the recent past who were identified as outliers. Because universities and museums by their very nature are perceived as inherently benevolent and necessary institutions, the people who work within these institutions rarely consider that the harms of the past may still be inherited and at work within practices today.

Interviews made it clear that the past and present cannot be neatly separated. The views towards people and communities across Africa not infrequently betrayed continuities between an unapologetic colonialist ideology and a modern day progressive, if limited, recognition of harms done to Africa and Africans. I began to see in innocuous and sympathetic comments a form of symbolic violence that was connected to historical violence, which deserved focused examination. Therefore, my project shifted radically from one where museum and academic experts were assisting my analysis focusing on harms committed by others, to one where they became the objects of my research so I might explore the harms they themselves were unaware they were enacting.

My research questions thus became:

1. How has colonialist ideology influenced the structure/production of knowledge in regard to the acquisition/exhibition/study of objects in the Africanist field up to the present day?
2. What harms have been produced, perpetuated, and challenged as the Africanist field has responded to a) change through the latter half of the 20th century and specifically to b) the illicit African art market specifically?

With some important exceptions, colonialism has not been a dominant focus within criminology, and I have had to forge new pathways in applying postcolonial theory to a criminological project (see Chapter 3). The criminological work which does engage with colonial ideologies has rarely been applied to the specific field of cultural heritage. Hence, a good deal of this study is also concerned with mapping the Africanist cultural heritage field (and its key components of museum, market, military and academy) and placing this within applicable criminological frames, the focus of Chapters 2 and 3. The work that has brought criminological perspectives to bear on cultural objects trade has focused on illicit markets and networks. What has not yet been studied in any great detail, and where I hope this research makes a contribution, is to locate the legal, as well as straightforwardly illegal, trade in African culture within a theory of harm that is connected to and analogous with the profound harm caused to those in Africa in years past. In the next section, I review how the commodification of African cultural objects have been studied thus far, mainly as part of the

wider scholarship on trade in illicit antiquities with some criminological interventions.

Following this, I overview the structure of the thesis and the key messages of the chapters that follow.

## II. Existing Literature

Much of the discourse here centres on the impact of the illicit antiquities trade, which predominantly constitutes the illicit theft, transit, and collection of archaeological objects. The majority of literature on the trade focuses on the effects of looting in specific geographic locations, namely in Central and South America (Gutchen, 1983; Luke and Henderson, 2006; Matsuda, 1998; Smith, 2005), in Europe (Fernandez Cacho and Garcia Sanjuan, 2000; Roosevelt and Luke, 2006a; Roosevelt and Luke 2006b; Gill and Chippindale, 1993; Migliore, 1991; Van Velzen, 1996; Hardy, 2011; Thomas, 2012) and the Middle East (Stone, 2008a; 2008b; Hanson, 2011; Hritz, 2008; Contreras and Brodie, 2010; Brodie and Contreras, 2012; Brodie, 2008; Brodie, 2011a; Kersel, 2006). Until quite recently, research on the illicit trade has been dominated by concerned archaeologists and lawyers, who have written widely on the impact of looting on archaeological sites and understanding (Brodie and Renfrew, 2005; Renfrew, 2000), the form and effects of laws and regulations (Chippindale and Gill, 2000; Mackenzie, 2005; Vitale, 2009) and the role and effects of collecting on the art market (Bell, 2002; Elia 2001; Norskov, 2002; Chippindale and Gill, 2001). Despite the relevance of the topic, criminology has been a relative latecomer to illicit antiquities research, with much existing work focusing on the transnational criminal market (Chappell and Polk, 2011; Alder and Polk, 2002; 2005; Bowman, 2008; Davis and Mackenzie, 2015; Dietzler, 2013; Mackenzie, 2005; 2007; 2015; Mackenzie and Yates, 2017a; 2017b; Polk, 1999; 2000; 2009; 2014; Proulx, 2011a; 2011b; 2013; Tsirogiannis, 2016b) and powerful actors, such as collectors and dealers (Mackenzie, 2006; 2011a; 2011b; Mackenzie and Green, 2008; 2009; Mackenzie and Yates, 2015). To a lesser extent, there is also an increasing body of work on wrongdoing within educational museums, such as museums and universities (Brodie 2009; 2011a; 2011b; Brodie and Bowman Proulx, 2013; Brodie, 2016; Tsirogiannis, 2017; Yates, 2016).

Comparatively, research on the illicit antiquities trade within West Africa is thin on the ground. The most prominent research drawing attention to the issue of looting in the 1980s

and 1990s was done by archaeologists Roderick McIntosh and Susan Keech McIntosh (McIntosh and Keech McIntosh, 1986; McIntosh, Togola, and Keech McIntosh, 1995), whose work at Djenne-Djenno in Mali drew critical attention to the extent of the destruction done by illicit digging. This was aided by the journalism undertaken by Michel Brent (1994), and the issue was quickly taken up by fellow archaeologists (Insoll, 1993; Togola, 2002) and lawyers (e.g., Shyllon, 2003). The most significant texts on these issues at this time were found in the book *Plundering Africa's Past* (1996), which was edited by archaeologists Rod McIntosh and Peter Schmidt and included essays from prominent art historians, archaeologists, and curators. Since the turn of the century, more substantial research has been undertaken regarding the extent and effects of looting in West Africa (Darling, 2000; Kankpeyeng and DeCorse, 2004), with particular emphasis on Francophone West African countries (Panella, Schmidt, Polet, Bedaux, 2005; Mayor, Negri, Huysecom, 2015). Additionally, the role of the market and collectors' influence has come under increasing scrutiny (Nemeth, 2011; Steiner, 1994; Forni and Steiner, 2018; Stoller, 2003), with greater attention brought to the legal and human rights issues behind the collection and retention of African art (Martin; 2010; Shyllon, 2007) and, significantly, the role of colonialism in building African art collections in the West (Corbey, 2000; Coombes, 1994; Lundén, 2016).

While these studies provide important history and contextualisation of individual events and institutions, almost no research exists that ties together the events of the 20th century in order to explain the ubiquitous link between colonial looting and the modern-day antiquities trade. The aim of this study is to capitalise on this wide-ranging literature in order to create a more cohesive picture surrounding the role of organisational culture in establishing, perpetuating, and challenging unconscious harmful practices and explicit wrongdoing. Generally, much critical work seeking to expose, confront and address issues of illicit trade has failed to consider that the institutions within which many authors of this literature work might be perpetuating and facilitating furthering white supremacy and European imperial authority. This lack of attention now sits in opposition to modern goals of social justice and decolonisation. It is my hope that this study will illuminate the ways in which our colonially-founded institutions inhibit these goals so normative practices may be consciously addressed in order to prevent continued harm moving forward.

### III. Structure of the Thesis

This study consists of nine chapters. Following this Introduction (Chapter 1), Chapter 2 summarises the history of the West's fascination with and appropriation of African cultural objects. In order to make the connection between colonial looting and the modern antiquities and art trade, it is necessary to establish a historical framework through which we may contextualise the simultaneous evolution and inherent interconnectedness of the African art market, academic research, and museum collection and display. This further reveals the deeper ideological and structural evolution of the field of Africanist research through the 20th and 21st centuries.

In Chapter 3, I set out my theoretical framework, which combines two distinct and so far unconnected theoretical traditions, post-colonial theory and social harms theory, in order to develop a single post-colonial criminological approach toward understanding how Western scholarly knowledge systems have emerged from and continue to support the hegemonic power structure of European colonialism and American late capitalism. I spend some time in this chapter developing concepts of 'harm' and 'violence'. Of particular importance for this study is the need to provide an account of symbolic and structural forms of violence, and to understand how criminology – a discipline preoccupied with physical forms of isolated encounters of interpersonal violence can begin to grapple with these. I then re-visit the mapping of the Africanist field presented in Chapter 2 through this lens harnessing the theoretical perspective of Diane Vaughan (who had figured significantly in my original research design), whose work at the meso level of organisational structure and process has been useful.

In Chapter 4, I describe my methodology for this research, which employs a critical discourse studies-informed method, drawing particularly from the tradition of the discourse historical approach. This approach views language as a form of social practice through which ideology and power are manifested through the production and progression of discourse. This perspective provides an ideal framework through which to apply post-colonial and social harms theory, whilst maintaining the transparency of my positionality as a Western researcher

engaging critically with these discourses. In addition, I offer an extended account of how the project shifted focus and provide information about the participants involved in the research.

The analysis of the data I collected is presented in and divided into four chapters, which each explore a different discipline (museums/education; art history; museum curation; archaeology) within the Africanist field. Chapter 5 introduces the perspective of three early Africanists who began their careers in the immediate post-colonial period of the 1950s-1970s. While all are staunchly in opposition to the illicit antiquities trade, their discourse illustrates the varying extent to which colonialist ideology and norms either remain unconsciously held or have been consciously challenged, thus revealing a disparity in approaches that challenges younger generations' belief in this generation's monolithic acceptance of colonial ideals. Chapter 6 explores the perspective of Africanist art historians, most of whom began their careers in the late mid-century period between the late 1970s and early 1990s and currently practice in the United States. These scholars demonstrate the extent to which their practice has been influenced by market involvement, which was used in large part to validate African art history as a legitimate field within the art historical canon in the 1970s and 1980s. Chapter 7 investigates the perspectives of African art curators working within the United States. Discourse within this group is dominated by how curators conceptualise their role in speaking for West Africans about West African objects, and the extent to which collaboration with or consideration of West African voices informs their practice.

Finally, Chapter 8 explores the perspectives of archaeologists, a group with a markedly different and more openly critical stance, compared to the others. They are also actors who entered the field most recently, and so reflect, as I argue, the influence of postcolonial scholarship that has supported newer professionals into more activist and reflective modes. Most of the individuals within this group subscribe to what I describe as a 'service-oriented' philosophy that drives their practice, which incorporates political engagement and activism with day-to-day research. These scholars also are embedded in a more permanent way, compared to the others into the respective African communities where they base their research and have a stronger sense of indigenous and local concerns and rights over cultural debate and trade. This service-oriented practice is heralded as a clear example for the ways in which the Africanist field as a whole can confront and address the inheritance of harmful norms in order to conscientiously decolonise art historical and curatorial practice. In my conclusion, I explore

what these findings may contribute as we enter a new era of decolonisation, in which there is an increasing likelihood for the mass repatriation of colonially appropriated and recently stolen African objects to their countries of origin.

## Chapter 2

### African Cultural Objects in the West: A Short History

#### I. Introduction

African cultural objects have been a source of fascination, revulsion, attraction, and passion in the West since the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The presentation of this history is invariably skewed towards the Western experience of these interactions, in which an age-old “discovery” narrative centres Western actors’ roles in recognising or lending value to objects hitherto unknown to Western audiences. Such narratives reveal a great deal more about Western attitudes and biases than they convey about the original meaning or use of the objects themselves. In the process, they silence Indigenous peoples’ experiences with Western appropriators, thus allowing ensuing discourse to conceal the harmful power structures that support and define it.

In this chapter, I set out a historical framework and brief literature review in order to contextualise and challenge the bounds of this Western-focused narrative and develop a historic framework in which to place the events within this study. In the first section, I explore the Western interest in and commodification of African cultural and art objects from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, paying particular attention to the role Western power structures played in defining and de-contextualising non-Western objects. In the second section, I outline how the Africanist field developed throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and how it is currently structured in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in order to lay the groundwork for themes that will be explored in the following chapters.

#### II. The Commodification of African Cultural Objects

##### a. Early Colonial Ventures: Europe and Africa between 15<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries

Early relationships between Europe and Africa were characterised primarily by trade. Portuguese traders first arrived on the Senegal River, between modern-day Senegal and Mauritania, in the 1440s. West Africa provided raw materials not readily available in Europe, such as gold and ivory. At the time of this initial contact, late medieval Europe and West

African kingdoms were economically comparable in terms of absolute wealth. However, the determined and sustained movement of European traders and explorers provided them a tactical advantage, quickly gaining traction through the trade and inter-linked exploitation of Africa and the Americas (Thornton, 1992). After the invasion by European traders and settlers, indigenous people of the Americas were subject to widespread disease and abuse, thus becoming a rapidly diminishing and unsuitable workforce for European opportunists. The Atlantic slave trade thus developed out of the need for cheap labour in colonizing the Americas. As the 16<sup>th</sup> century progressed and Portuguese powers lost their monopoly on West African trade, European powers as a whole transferred their interest from trade in West African raw materials to trade in West African slaves in order to support the exploitation and settlement of American colonies (Green, 2011).

The collection of African objects in the early years of trade appears to have been a common practice, though motives varied and the types of objects collected were not the wooden or ceramic figures prized by 20<sup>th</sup> century collectors (Bassani, 2000: xxii). The collection and appropriation of African objects by Europeans prior to 19<sup>th</sup> century colonial occupation has been most diligently recorded by Africanist art scholar Ezio Bassani in *African Art and Artefacts in European Collections 1400-1800* (2002), in which Bassani attempts to identify pre-colonial collections of African objects still in existence, as well as those that have been destroyed, repurposed, and lost. One third of the objects identified by Bassani (266 in total) are recorded or presumed to have been in Europe by the end of the sixteenth century. In this context, objects now known as Afro-Portuguese ivories are the main group, and the popularity of this category of item came to generate a trade in itself.

Between the end of the fifteenth and the end of the sixteenth centuries, Afro-Portuguese ivories were commissioned for export to Europe by artists from what are now the West African countries of Sierra Leone, Benin, and regions of Nigeria, as well as the Congo (Bassani, 2000: xxv). Of the 315 ivory art and artefacts recorded by Bassani, he determines 213 were carved for European export. They consisted of saltcellars, spoons, forks, pyxes, dagger or knife handles, and oliphants, and combined African iconographic and formal elements with those of clearly European origin (ibid). Ivories enjoyed immediate acceptance into the collections of art and marvels of European royalty, indicating their valuation as precious works of art and the high esteem in which African carvers were held. However, this

appreciation was most likely due to the fact that the ivories conformed to European tastes and were made for use in European contexts. They did not resemble or represent African objects used for African cultural or religious purposes. As such the only African objects to be so highly valued by Europe until the early twentieth century, were not really African at all, in the sense of being indigenous materialisations of local culture and art (ibid).

Toward the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the late Renaissance, the European ruling classes' collection and commission of art and architecture were transformed by a burgeoning interest in universality, referring to an orderly world as designed by an all-powerful deity (Findlen, 2002). This can be seen in the collecting ethos that emerged in this period that began with an interest in the medieval approach to arts, in which beauty and virtue were conflated, with depictions of the natural world serving to reinforce the perceived order and meaning of the universe as designed by God (Shelton, 1994). The princely collections of domestic art gave way to cabinets of curiosities, collections of extraordinary objects that sought to categorise and represent the universality of nature and art throughout the world. These collections were the precursor to encyclopaedic museums, used by some as an allegory for the symmetry and beauty of divine order and by others as secular illustration of "a perfect and completed picture of the world." (id; 185) The objects within these collections ranged from geological and botanical specimens to archaeological artefacts and ethnographic objects from faraway, recently colonised regions. The ultimate aim in assembling these collections was the publication of a catalogue, the completion of which would allow the collector to make a high profile donation of his collection to a university.

Through this era, African objects saw a decline in their European interest and value. The rise of the slave trade drastically altered perceptions of Africa and Africans, who were now regarded as inferior, and thus incapable of refined workmanship or artistry (Bassani, 2000). Consequently, African objects were often mislabelled as being from non-African origins, such as Afro-Portuguese ivories that were recorded as Oriental or Turkish (id). Despite this, some Dutch painters and writers displayed an admiration for African objects. Bassani notes that Akan swords were featured in works by Dutch painter Jan van Kessel (in an allegory of Africa painted in 1665-6), Cornelis de Man (in *Interior with a collection of rarities*), and Rembrandt (in *Saint Paul in meditation* from 1630). In complete opposition to this artistic interest, a decidedly negative view of African works can be found in the catalogue *Exoticophilancium*

*Weickmannianum*, a document from 1659 published by Danish merchant-collector Christof Weickmann. This work discusses the “repugnant” animal and human figures carved by Yoruba or Aja artists on two ivory bracelets and on a wood Ifa divination tray. The objects, originally from the ancient kingdom of Alada or Ardra in present-day Republic of Benin, were admired by the catalogue’s author for the skill and sensibility of the decoration, but were nonetheless deemed “hideous, demonic images”. (Bassani, 2000: xxxv)

Bassani notes that through the eighteenth century, the number of African objects in collections did not increase greatly or see any more precise descriptions of their origins. However, the philosophical and scientific revolution of the Age of Enlightenment saw perception of existing collections transformed from mere curiosities to scientific artefacts, which “caused a change of status for some of the artefacts, which were transformed from tokens of creativity or otherness of distant peoples into natural history exhibits.” (2000: xxxvi) During this time and through these processes, perception of African peoples as primitive and uncivilised took hold, based on early scientific attempts to prove the inferior, deviant nature of people of colour.

#### b. Colonial Violence: Europe as a colonising force at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century

It can be seen that even from its earliest relationship to African art, the West has sought to influence its form and value, and at the same time its meaning has come to reflect Western perceptions of the value of the peoples of Africa. In this section, I bring the history of this relationship nearly to the present. Where in earlier periods I have pointed out the trade and colonial aspects of the relationship, the following discussion shows the development of military interventions in Africa as a source of ‘collecting’. This serves to emphasise the reciprocal relationship that developed between the military and the academy, in which the military provided objects for the academy to study and the academy provided justifications for military involvement based on the perceived racial, moral, and evolutionary inferiority of African peoples, and their consequent inability to properly look after themselves or their natural resources.

Through the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the slave trade out of Africa was abolished, though the trade within countries such as the United States, Brazil and the West Indies remained in effect until the

1860s. Despite abolition in Europe, the European presence in Africa increased, with competition between colonising powers eventually necessitating the Berlin Conference in 1885, through which African territories were divided and claimed by burgeoning European empires.

Throughout colonial exploration and settlement worldwide, occupying forces seized cultural objects and monuments for export back to Europe as war booty, personal trophies, and gifts for European leaders. Arguably the most famous example of wartime looting by the British colonial forces was the Punitive Expedition of 1897, which involved the sacking and looting of Benin City. The immediate political reasoning for it was the killing of an unarmed British party that had attempted to reach Ovonramwen, the Oba (king) of Benin during his isolation while performing the Ague ceremony, a ritual based on the agricultural cycle of yams which involved a period of intense personal denial in order to sanctify one's self and the land following harvest. Acting British Consul-General James R. Phillips and nine others were killed under circumstances that are still hotly debated today (Coombes 1994: 59). The deaths of the Phillips party provided the long-sought opportunity to dispose of the Oba, whose monopoly on the sale and movement of palm oil was a source of great frustration for British traders. In February 1897, 1,500 British soldiers captured Benin City, the capital of the Benin empire. Ovonramwen was sent into exile while the city, a feat of engineering laid out according to fractal design, was burnt to the ground. The walls surrounding Benin City are estimated to have been four times longer than the Great Wall of China, but did not survive British destruction (Koutonin, 2016).

In the course of the sacking, hundreds of cultural objects were looted and architectural features obtained by British soldiers. These were shipped back to London, where they were proudly exhibited at the British Museum in September. Over 300 bronze plaques, now famously known as the Benin Bronzes, were viewed with a great deal of awe by scholars and public alike. It was initially believed by experts that the Benin bronze objects were too skilfully rendered to have been created by the Edo people, and it was determined that they must have been created or designed by Portuguese traders. This was not disputed until the following year, when Ling Roth published *Notes on Benin Art* (1898). He identified two phases or periods of Benin casting and questioned this presumption of Portuguese origins, arguing that no such

work was recorded as existing within the Iberian peninsula at the time of the bronzes' creation (Coombes 1994: 44-45).

A public auction of the bronzes took place in 1898 in order to cover the expense of the Expedition. Only a small portion of the artefacts exhibited originally remained at the British Museum, much to the chagrin of museum staff. In fact, a great deal were purchased by Germany, whose budget and priority for ethnographic materials far eclipsed that of the British Government. When it was discovered just how much of the Expedition loot had been obtained by the Kaiser, the British press took up the cry of "national heritage". There was a subsequent period of nationalist indignation against the government, who had let slip these potent symbols of British power over Edo barbarity (Coombes, 1994).

### c. Modernism and Anthropology: Commodification and Degradation of "the Other"

The circulation, perception, and valuation of African cultural objects in the twentieth century saw a marked contrast from the previous five hundred years. The burgeoning Modernist art and philosophy movement in Europe and the United States sought to dismantle the last four hundred years of formal design aesthetics in order to better reflect the state of humanity in the midst of the modern industrialist age. In the process, European artists developed an interest in non-Western cultural objects, which they transformed through alteration of the objects themselves, as well as through aesthetic and cultural abstraction in painting and sculpture, to represent ideals of pre-industrial, pre-civilised modes of expression and imagination that would pose political challenges and breathe new life into Western forms and philosophies. Within the first few decades of the twentieth century, objects such as masks and sculptural figures saw rapid commoditization and artistic valuation alongside the development of modern art, while more mundane day-to-day objects remained firmly classed as ethnographic articles. Distinctions in perceived function and artistic merit created a new divide in collections and collecting practices, separating those with an ethnographic focus from those of pure art and aesthetics.

The mythos of African art's acceptance into Western culture is a widely repeated tale of French discovery and artistic consecration. Despite the fact that African objects had been on

display in France since at least the 1890s, artist Maurice Vlaminck claimed to have “discovered” the aesthetic genius of African art in a bistro near Paris around 1904-05, though his first recorded purchase of African sculpture did not take place until 1906 (Flam and Deutch 2003: 3). This same year, Modernist artists such as Andre Derain and Pablo Picasso began to look carefully at non-Western art, inspired by the “freer sense of plastic inventiveness” it evoked, as well as by the potency of political expression such forms offered (ibid).

The advent of Primitivism as a form of Modernist expression within the early work of European artists must be contextualised as a political, rather than purely cultural, response to the imperialism that drove European governments. Representations of Africa and Africans were steeped in fantastical, reductionist, and racist visual and literary representations in popular press through the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as explorers, missionaries, and soldiers brought back grotesque and grotesquely misconstrued tales of savage customs. Such images were brought alive with particular cruelty through living zoos, in which African peoples, supplied to organisers by wild animal importers, were exhibited as exotic anthropological curiosities (Leighten, 1990).

These representations were characterised by a subtle duality, in which some Africans (principally those from the Kingdom of Dahomey, in what is now the country of Benin) were viewed as “noble savages”, existing in a state from which Europeans had since evolved; other Africans (largely those from the French and Belgian Congo) were viewed as degenerate savages, who needed to be saved through the civilising powers of colonialism. Presumably, such thinking was used to rationalise the abuses undertaken by white colonialists in their environmental and physical exploitation of the Congo. Where romanticised visions of the noble savage were well-accepted by Europeans during the Dahomean Wars of the 1890s, exposés of the abusive labour conditions in the Congo drew outrage, particularly in Paris.

As anarchists, artists like Picasso, Vlaminck, Guillaume Apollinaire, and Alfred Jarry were also outspoken anti-colonialists. However, while their anti-colonialism rejected the popular simplistic dualism of noble savage versus degenerative savage, their philosophising around non-Western art objects was far from racially progressive. Modernists at this time were in a process of rebellion against the Renaissance tradition of naturalism and, spurred by the

advances made by Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, were drawn to the aesthetic novelty and political charge of non-Western imagery. It was believed that African art “continued prototypes that had remained unchanged since time immemorial,” an idea that persisted until the 1980s (Flam and Deutch, 2003: 4). Patricia Leighton explains, “Picasso and Jarry implicitly reject both positions [noble vs degenerate savage] by pointedly reveling in ethnic difference, by evoking ‘tribal’ life and art, which they saw as irrational, magic, and violent, and by embracing precisely the symptoms of its so-called degeneracy.” (1990: p 621)

Thus, the highly abstracted and African mask-like forms employed by Picasso in works such as *Les Femmes d'Alger (O. J. R. M.)* (1907) would be unquestionably associated with European exploitation in the Congo and concepts of “savagery” shared by both black and white populations (Leighton, 1990). While works such as these were indeed anti-colonial in their own way, they did not serve colonised peoples as much as they served the artist’s own political and artistic ambition. Primitivism was thus born, acting as the hinge upon which Modern art swung forward.

Primitivism as a Modernist movement remained distinct from the general umbrella of “primitive” art but was crucial to its marketability. The attention brought to African art by European Modernists did not long stay confined to Europe. Only a few years later in 1914, Marius de Zayas organized an exhibition at the “291” Fifth Avenue Gallery in New York, the first to show African art solely from an aesthetic perspective. The objects exhibited came from renowned collector and dealer Paul Guillaume, and were presented without cultural identifiers; a significant development in their acceptance as art objects in their own right (Flam and Deutch, 2003: 73). The next year, Carl Einstein published *Negerplastik* (1915), the first book-length study of African art, and Paul Guillaume published *Sculptures nègre*, the first French book on African art.

By 1920, the incendiary nature of the early Modernists’ interest in African art had been transformed by its market success. Ending the second decade of the twentieth century, Guillaume and collector André Level organized the “Première Exposition d’Art Nègre et d’Art Océanien” at the Galerie Devambez, which consisted of objects from French-occupied territories. This event marked a turning point in attitudes toward non-Western art objects, and formally introduced “primitive” art as a fashionable part of French culture (id, 13). The

popularity of non-Western objects had grown so much that Parisian anarchist and art critic Félix Fénéon conducted a survey questioning whether “primitive” art should be admitted into the Louvre, which drew mixed responses from the art world (id, 12).

As the trend crossed the Atlantic on the back of Modernism, it took on new significance in light of the United States’ active oppression of Black and non-Black people of colour. Segregation of Black Americans existed in various legal forms until it was formalised and upheld in law in 1896. The devastatingly restrictive Jim Crow laws in the Southern states ultimately drove Black Americans northward, with six million Black Americans moving from the rural south to urban spaces in the Northeast, Midwest, and West from 1916 to 1960. This influx of Black communities into densely populated (and still largely segregated) city spaces sparked a new artistic and political revolution, known then as the New Negro Movement and now as the Harlem Renaissance.

The leader and philosophical architect of this Renaissance was Alain Locke, the Black American writer and first African-American Rhodes Scholar. Locke received his education in Europe, first at Oxford University and then the University of Berlin, at the height of the Modernist emergence in the 1910s, and would ultimately go on to mentor such esteemed authors as Zora Neale Hurston. In 1924, he published an essay in *Opportunity, A Journal of Negro Life*, entitled “Note on African Art”, in which he voiced apt concern for the direction of African art (“African art is now in danger of another sort of misconstruction, that of being taken up as an exotic fad and fashionable amateurish interest”) and suggested that African art might offer the Black American a source of inspiration removed from the dominant European tradition (“...we must believe that there still slumbers in the blood something which once stirred will react with peculiar emotional intensity toward it.”)

The next year, his anthology of fiction, poetry, and essays on African and African-American art and literature, *The New Negro*, included a follow-up in the form of “Legacy of the Ancestral Arts”, in which he argued more forcefully that African art offered a potent cultural and technical legacy upon which the Black American artist could build (“But what the Negro of today has most to gain from the arts of the forefathers is perhaps not cultural inspiration or technical innovation, but the lesson of a classic background, the lesson of discipline, of style, of technical control pushed to the limits of technical mastery.”)

*The New Negro* was the closest that the writers and artists of the Harlem Renaissance ever came to issuing a manifesto. Though most of the writers featured were Black Americans, it also included the works of some particularly support white individuals, including prominent art collector and millionaire Albert Barnes. The previous year, the Barnes Foundation became the first organisation to permanently display African objects as fine art (Berzock, Clarke 2011: 7). Barnes considered himself, in the words of Mark Helbling, “one of the true white friends of black Americans,” though his associations with some of the most prominent figures of the Harlem Renaissance were often strained (Helbling, 1982: 57). His contribution to *The New Negro* may explain why, as he vaguely and sweepingly describes African-American art as being “a sound art because it comes from a primitive nature upon which a white man’s education has never been harnessed.”

His grand and paternalistic allusions to primitivism echo Modernist narratives, in which praise for African art and Black individuals (ie, praise for a perceived purity of imagination achieved only through the inheritance of a primitive state) is unfailingly yoked to a decrying of white European and American limitations in a seemingly self-deprecating and ultimately self-serving expression of racial prejudice. This contradicts Locke, who used “Note on African Art” (1924) to dispel the use of “primitive” from his vocabulary (“This so-called ‘primitive’ Negro art,”) and to argue, “What the cubists and post-expressionists have seen in it intuitively must be reinterpreted in scientific terms, for we realize now that the study of exotic art holds for us a serious and important message in aesthetics.”

Unfortunately, Locke’s optimistic hopes for the progression of the study of African art were slow to manifest amongst his white colleagues, and the well-meaning but ultimately simplistic and paternalistic narrative put forth by men like Barnes dominated American discourse. In 1924, the Art Institute of Chicago introduced African art to its collection as part of its Children’s Museum; however, this addition was not in line with Modernist appreciation of “primitive” forms, but with a racist narrative typical of the time which painted primitive art and its makers as having a childlike mentality. However, Modernism’s influence gradually converted American museums. In 1929, the Cleveland Museum was the first American museum to establish a Department of Primitive Art, while on the east coast, the Brooklyn Museum began to shift the display of its African art from ethnographic to artistic (id, 8).

Concurrent with Modernist growth, European military and scientific forces continued to establish a settled presence in sub-Saharan Africa whilst exploiting archaeological and cultural sites for ethnographic and art collections in Europe. Declaration II of the Hague Convention of 1899 strictly forbade the looting of any town or place in the course of war, thus limiting the role the military was able to play in amassing collections. It is no coincidence that, not long after, colonial administrations developed funding for scholarly expeditions, in which European academics conducted early ethnographic research on African peoples and historical sites whilst assembling research collections for export to European institutions. Among these was famed German ethnologist Leo Frobenius, who led twelve expeditions to Africa between 1904 and 1935.

Marcel Griaule's Dakar to Djibouti expedition from 1931-33 has been lauded as one of the most important expeditions due to its patronage by the French state, the number of objects collected (roughly 3,500), and the controversial methods used by the leading ethnographer. Over the course of two years, the group travelled through fifteen countries from West to East Africa. Methods of object collection were at times simply theft: the mission's archive secretary Michel Leiris recounted how Griaule and other mission members would steal artefacts and violate sanctuaries through deception, betraying the trust of villages and committing sacrilegious acts. Many of these objects became a part of the Musée de l'Homme, which was established in Paris in 1937. (Sidibé 1996: 79-80) The expedition garnered such admiration that the second issue of the Surrealist periodical *Minotaure* devoted an entire issue to the objects and exploits of Griaule and his team (Flam and Deutch 2003: 15).

Demand for African art excelled through the 1930s. In 1935, the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York City held the exhibition, "African Negro Art." The exhibition was the first time African art was shown at MOMA, and was influential in establishing the dominant, Modernist-inspired aesthetic of African art in the Western world. The focus was on figural works with "strong formal qualities and a high degree of abstraction viewed in isolation and devoid of what were considered extraneous layers of contextual information about the objects." (Berzock, Clarke 2011: 8) Alain Locke praised the exhibition as "the finest American showing of African art", paying particular compliment to the way in which he saw "deductions leading to the glorification rather than the belittlement of African art." (1935)

African art specifically, and Primitivism more generally, were formally introduced to academic discourse through the 1937 doctoral dissertation of Robert Goldwater, future director of the Museum of Primitive Art. The dissertation, completed at New York University's Institute of Fine Arts, contradicted the trends set by the market and the MOMA exhibition through the proposition that an understanding of the cultural context of objects is essential in order to understand their significance as art works (Berzock, Clarke 2011: 10). The next year Goldwater published *Primitivism in Modern Painting*, the first scholarly book-length study of the subject, which greatly influenced scholarly perspectives (Flam and Deutch 2003: 17).

The market for primitive art paused abruptly with the beginning of World War II. Throughout the 1940s, museums and collections experienced catastrophic loss due to bombing. The Hamburg Museum für Völkerkunde lost a total of 70,000 pieces during wartime, and the Leipzig Museum für Völkerkunde lost 30,000 pieces in a single day during bombardment on December 4, 1943 (Corbey 2000, 49). However, the precedent that had been set by Primitivism did not falter: African art objects, once taken to the West, became part of a larger conversation in which their original makers and users were not welcome.

#### d. Capitalism and Neo-Colonialism: The Western market for African objects in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century

As the dust of World War II settled, the African art world wasted little time in recovering. The 1950s saw a succession of events that set up a thirty-year boom for the African art market, which was marked by systematic looting, theft, and illicit exportation of objects out of West Africa. This period, from the 1950s through the 1970s, was marked by two major transitions. First, as countries across Africa became independent from their European colonisers, late capitalism (by which I mean, the capitalist system that has been in place since World War II) replaced colonialism as a colonising force within West Africa, with the market rapidly establishing itself in power systems recently vacated by colonial administrations. Second, as the consumer-base for African art expanded to the US, so too did the locus of knowledge/power production that surrounded African art history transition from European institutions to American ones.

In 1950, French art dealer and adventurer Pierre Langlois travelled to the Dogon territory of Mali and, over a four-year period, collected artefacts left by the Tellem people who inhabited the area around the fourteenth century and had since disappeared. Langlois sold the artefacts to several European galleries, igniting a trend for the centuries-old objects (Corbey 2000, 79). By 1954, Islamic dealers from Bamako, Mali began buying Tellem figures directly from the Dogon peoples (ibid). At the opposite end of the market, powers shifted. In 1955, British auction house Sotheby's opened their first New York office at Bowling Green, near Wall Street. Three years later, primitive art dealer John Hewett joined Sotheby's Antiquities and Primitive Art Department to great effect. Through increased advertising and more frequent number of sales, he raised the annual turnover within a decade from £34,000 to £250,000, ushering in an economic and cultural boom for African art (MacClancy, 1988).

The market was thus primed for the transition of power that occurred in the 1960s, as West African countries declared independence from the United Kingdom and France. By 1965, the Tellem caves of Mali had been emptied due to high demand. Dealers were driven to commission copies from Dogon smiths that were based on published authentic pieces. Sacrificial patinas of animal blood and suet were applied in order to suggest authenticity. Business was so successful for some Bamako dealers that they were able to relocate to Paris (Corbey 2000, 79). In 1966, Sotheby's New York office (now Sotheby's Parke-Bernet after acquiring the local auction house) sold the landmark collection of American cosmetics tycoon Helena Rubinstein, which "pioneered sales in this category." (id, 99). The next year saw the onset of the Nigerian-Biafran War, which resulted in a boon for dealers as looted Nigerian objects flooded the market.

At this time, the Africanist field established itself in two veins. First, following the course set by colonial settlement, British social anthropology and archaeology flourished in sub-Saharan Africa. Anthropologists, archaeologists, and art historians such as Kenneth Murray, Bernard Fagg, and Thurstan Shaw worked to establish new museums and universities in West Africa whilst supporting the continued development of British collections and research. They were particularly instrumental in the design of local museums and archaeology departments, which were linked to a broader colonialist agenda to foster a sense of nationalistic belonging and responsibility among a diverse population of ethnic groups. These academics rarely made

African communities their permanent home, often returning to the UK within ten years. Post-Independence, despite the lack of official British connection to African institutions, scholars maintained important ties with British museums and universities, which benefitted from both the collections assembled or donated through fieldwork and from the expertise of the scholars themselves when they returned to the UK. British museology had a massive impact on museum development in West Africa, particularly within Nigeria, which continued a form of ideological colonisation for years to come. However, this particular knowledge/power system became an increasingly insular world with a very direct chain of knowledge and object transference. The growing market found an unpredictable relationship with African-based European scholars, who were on the one hand fierce protectors of legal exportation, and on the other eager partners in fulfilling market demand.

In the US, the market found a much more willing ally. Africanist art history established itself through the work of leaders such as Roy Sieber, who in 1957 became the first person in the US to earn a doctorate in African art history. This event is generally regarded by Africanists as the inauguration of African art history as a distinct field of study (Berzock, Clarke 2011: 10). In 1961, Indiana University founded the interdisciplinary African Studies Program, which provided the catalyst to hire Sieber. This partnership established Indiana University as a centre of expertise on African art thanks to Sieber, who contributed significantly to the university's art collection. (ibid). At this time, scholars such as Sieber were instrumental in creating connections between dealers and collectors in order to facilitate both private and academic collection growth. This interconnectedness with the market played a critical role in establishing the legitimacy of Africanist art history within the wider canon of art history. Collectors needed scholars' expertise to navigate the development of African art connoisseurship, and scholars needed access to collectors' collections.

Additionally, the increasing market value of African works bestowed a commercial legitimacy to objects as "art", rather than as ethnographic objects. In 1963, the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) created the Museum and Laboratories of Ethnic Arts and Technology, now the Fowler Museum. The project was fostered by university chancellor Franklin Murphy's interest in "ethnic arts", which was informed by his relationship with LA dealer Ralph Altman. Altman was subsequently appointed as the museum's first curator (id, 11).

In 1966, Robert Farris Thompson became the second person in the US to complete a PhD in African art history. The following year, *African Arts*, a scholarly journal for African art historians and museum professionals, began publication in autumn at UCLA, featuring a plethora of advertisements for private galleries and dealers. In 1968, Hampton University hosted the first Symposium on Traditional African Art. This scholarly gathering has continued every three years to the present under the Arts Council of the African Studies Association (id, 10).

1970 introduced events that would forever alter the relationship between the market, the museum, and the academy, though the effects were not immediately felt within the Africanist field. The 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transport of Ownership of Cultural Property initiated a slow-burning paradigm shift across the Western world in how collections were built, how objects were assessed, and how ownership was determined. Though signing and ratification by countries did not occur immediately, the Convention set a precedent in which acquisition of objects that left their country of origin after the 1970s came to be widely recognised presumptively as a form of looting or illicit trafficking.

Some US institutions were quicker to embrace the change than others; that same year, the University of Pennsylvania Museum director Froelich Rainey presented the famous Pennsylvania Declaration, marking this museum as the first to cease collection of archaeological objects that were looted or of dubious provenance. The Africanist world was not exempt from this progressive atmosphere. In 1973, the African art market was rocked by what remains the most famous restitution of an African art object. The Afo-a-Kom, a highly sacred statue of the Kom people of Cameroon, was stolen from Ngumba House, Laikom, a village of the Kom Kingdom in Cameroon in 1963. It was sold in a town in east Cameroon for \$100, exported, and later sold to an American art dealer who sold it to the New York-based Furman Gallery. It was recognized in 1973 by a Kom scholar at Dartmouth College while on loan from the Furman gallery. Cameroon officials were immediately informed and demanded restitution. Aaron Furman, the owner of the gallery, initially refused. He only consented after a group of businessmen agreed to cover the expenses of repatriation (Chechi, Bandle, and Renold, 2012).

That same year, twelve African states sponsored the first United Nations General Assembly resolution on the subject of cultural property, titled, “Restitution of works of art to countries that are victims of expropriation”. Its preamble condemned, “the wholesale removal, virtually without payment of objects d’art from one country to another, frequently as a result of colonial or foreign occupation.” It advocated “the prompt restitution to a country of its works of art, monuments, museum pieces and manuscripts and documents by another country, without charge”, which would constitute “just reparation for damage done.” (Shyllon, 2000: 2) Just a few years later in 1979, the National Commission of Museum and Monuments (NCMM) created in Nigeria, made it illegal for anyone other than an authorized person to buy or sell antiquities within Nigeria or to export an antiquity without a permit from the NCMM.

Of course, such resolutions were easily ignored. Throughout the late seventies, art museums embraced the increasing boon of African art donated by collectors. In 1977, the Musée Barbier-Mueller was founded in Geneva, Switzerland, founded upon the original collection of Swiss collector Josef Mueller. The same year, collector Lester Wunderman donated most of his collection, including many Tellem and Dogon pieces, to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. In 1978, the Met expanded its collection even further with the absorption of the Museum of Primitive Art, which closed two years earlier, into the department of the Arts of Africa, Oceania, and the Americas (Berzock, Clarke 2011: 11). The most sensational market activity at this time was the 1978 collector George Ortiz’s sale of his primitive art collection through Sotheby’s Parke Bernet, which he did in desperation to raise ransom money demanded by his daughter’s kidnappers.

e. Nationalism and Universalism: Challenges to the market and colonial legacy at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century

The art market boom of the 1960s and 1970s burst in the early 1980s. Gradually, pointed questions were asked about the altruistic motives and reciprocal relationship between art market, museum, and academy. The radical anti-colonial and civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s had altered the transatlantic political landscape, bringing desegregation to the United States, independence to African nations, and an international awareness of the rights of indigenous peoples recovering in the wake of (and, in the case of American Indian peoples, in the continuing midst of) colonial oppression. In the 1980s and 1990s, these discourses found

their way specifically and explosively to issues of ownership and representation in museums. As major institutions curated comprehensive collections, the art world was increasingly inundated with questions about how and why non-Western art was displayed in Western settings. A global, multiculturalist discourse that had been building throughout the century, via the sustained work of Indigenous and diaspora activists, finally broke through in Western academic and public spaces, posing a direct challenge to the stakeholders and institutions dedicated to maintaining normalised practice.

The decade began confidently enough with the 1980 sale of the Schwarz collection by Sotheby's, thought to be the best collection of Benin bronzes in the world. For the first time, representatives of a non-Western state attended the sale in order to buy back objects. More than ten of the Schwarz items went for over £100,000 each, with the Nigerian government buying the three most expensive items (MacClancy 1988). However, sales in following years proved disappointing and the market became more subdued. In light of this challenge, London-based dealer Peter Adler took the opportunity to diversify. In 1983, he switched to buying African textiles and household objects. The next year, he encouraged Sotheby Parke Bernet to follow suit and auction off textiles and furniture principally from his collection. The sale of these items, deliberately aimed at decorators, designers, and contemporary art collectors, was considered a great success and broke ground in broadening interest beyond more conventionally collected masks and figures (MacClancy 1988).

Overall, however, it was the decade of the museum. In 1982, the Met opened its permanent galleries dedicated to the arts of Africa, the Americas, and Oceania, the majority of which was sourced from the dissolved Museum of Primitive Art in New York (Berzock, Clarke 2011: 11). A couple years later, Susan Vogel, former curator of African art at the Museum Primitive Art, founded the Center for African Art, also in New York, now known as the Museum for African Art. Over the next two decades, the Center/Museum “played a critical role in casting a self-reflexive light on the business of collecting and exhibiting African art in the West.” (Ibid) However, the most groundbreaking event of the eighties, and of 1984 in particular, was the MOMA exhibition, “Primitivism’ in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Art: Affinities of the Tribal and the Modern”.

The exhibition itself was not particularly new or groundbreaking in its approach, but found infamy in appearing oblivious to changing times. This was an obliviousness that the Africanist field was in turn oblivious to; just two years prior, National Director of the Nigerian Department of Antiquities and esteemed Africanist Ekpo Eyo published a defence of his criticism of the catch-all term “primitive art”. In his review of Eyo’s *Two Thousand Years of Nigerian Art*, fellow Africanist Herbert Cole had questioned the necessity for Eyo’s critique, arguing that surely such terms were by then outdated. Eyo’s response to Cole posited that, unfortunately, this was simply not the case and refutations of terms like “primitivism” and “tribality” remained woefully relevant (Eyo, 1982). “Primitivism” soon proved Cole wrong.

The exhibition’s traditional exploration of the relationship between Modernist and “primitive” art incited violent criticisms from academics outwith Africanist research, who took issue with views expressed in the show that, by this time, had come to feel dated and offensive. Writers such as Thomas McEvelley and James Clifford attacked what they perceived to be a curatorial effort to showcase the superiority of classical modernism over non-Western art, a failure to demonstrate the supposed essential affinity between Modernism and “primitive” art, and a distinct and disturbing lack of acknowledgement of issues such as race, gender, and power within the broader cultural appropriation of non-Western art objects (Flam and Deutch 2003: 18). Responses such as this were representative of a growing population of academics and artists who had come to see such views in increasingly post-colonialist terms, favouring the alternative of a multiculturalist discourse and a redistribution of epistemic power.

The massive response to the “Primitivism” exhibition marked a turning point with global ramifications. In 1985, Mali recognized issues of looting within its own borders and introduced laws to regulate the protection and promotion of cultural heritage as well as archaeological excavations, the profession of traders and the commercialization of cultural possessions (Shyllon 2011: 139). In 1986 Musée Dapper, specialising in African art and culture, was founded in Paris, followed in 1987 by the opening of the National Museum of African Art at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. (Berzock, Clarke 2011: 11). With the publication of the ICOM Code of Professional Ethics and Sally Price’s *Primitive Art in Civilized Places* (1989), the decade marked a more inclusive, culturally sensitive, and reflective turn.

In 1990, a documentary aired on British and Dutch television titled *The African King*, in which social anthropologist Walter van Beek traced the looting of archaeological material in Mali to the authentication, sale, and exhibitions of looted works in Europe. Featured was the Oxford University Research Laboratory for Archaeology and the History of Art (RLAHA), which provided commercial authentication services that were used by dealers to contribute to the laundering of objects. In the documentary, then-director of the lab, Michael Tite, justified the commercial thermoluminescence dating services for their usefulness in bringing in funding for academic research that was then thin on the ground.

The timing of the documentary's release was unfortunate for Oxford, coming not long after the 1990 meeting of the Society of Africanist Archaeologists in Gainesville, Florida, in which a resolution was passed to ban thermoluminescence dating of illicit artefacts (McIntosh, 1991, 1996). The archaeologists at Oxford took immediate action with a letter-writing campaign, led by Chris Chippindale and Ray Inskeep (Chippindale, 1991: 6-8; Dembélé and Van der Waals 1991; Inskeep, 1992). Two years later, the Oxford University Committee for Archaeology passed a resolution forbidding the lab from commercial authentication of West African objects without proper export permits (McIntosh, 1996). It wasn't until 1997 that RLAHA discontinued commercial authentication altogether, at which point the scientist responsible for thermoluminescence dating, Doreen Stoneham, left Oxford. She established her own company, Oxford Authentication Ltd., which continued offering a commercial service to the antiquities trade.

The effects of the documentary were explosive, setting in motion an activism among archaeologists and some art historians that continued through the decade. It brought particular attention to the ways in which the academy and the market supported one another; a rare instance in which academic involvement in the illicit trade became subject to intense scrutiny and criticism. Through the mid-1990s, the extent of looting in West Africa gained prominence. In 1993, the US took emergency action to impose import restrictions on archaeological material from the Niger River Valley region and the Tellem burial caves of Bandiagara. In 1994, archaeologist Patrick Darling discovered large-scale looting had commenced in the Nok area of Nigeria. The same year, the International Council of Museums publishing *Looting in Africa*, part of its One Hundred Missing Objects Series (Shyllon 2000: 4).

It wasn't just archaeological sites: West African museums suffered numerous thefts. The National Museum of Ile-Ife of in Nigeria suffered 30 thefts in one year, with the last consisting of an inside job in which 11 display cases were smashed and \$200 million worth of objects were stolen (Labi and Robinson, 2001). By 1995, Patrick Darling alleged that two main local traders had established themselves in the Nok area, with each able to employ roughly 1,000 diggers (Darling 2000; 17). The issue had become such a lightning rod within the Africanist community that *African Arts* magazine dedicated an entire issue (Vol. 28, No. 4) to "Protecting Mali's Cultural Heritage."

Meanwhile, some Western museums continued on in their relatively unexamined, unreflective exhibitions of African art. In 1995, the Royal Academy of Arts in London held the exhibition *Africa: The Art of a Continent*, which was part of the wider *africa95* festival in the UK before travelling on to the US. Its production was not without controversy; revered Africanist archaeologist Thurstan Shaw withdrew from the Royal Academy's exhibition catalogue committee when he discovered the inclusion of an Igbo-Ukwu vessel that he himself had excavated and knew to be stolen from the University of Ibadan (Picton, 1996). The exhibition organisers were forced to address the inclusion of works known to have been looted, balancing their emphasis of the importance of damning the illicit antiquities trade with the argument that the line "must be drawn somewhere", as they justified ignoring any case which occurred before the ratification of the 1970 UNESCO Convention or the introduction of pertinent national legislation (Royal Academy of Arts, 1995). The same year, collector, dealer and museum consultant Jacques Kerchache curated the exhibition *Picasso/Afrique: Etat d'esprit* at the Centre George-Pompidou in Paris. The exhibition capitalised on the near-legendary relationship between Picasso and African art, perpetuating Eurocentric narratives surrounding African cultural objects and consecrating the interpretation of these objects by Picasso. The exhibition proved particularly popular with then-president of France, Jacques Chirac (Corbey 2000).

The changing landscape of market, museum, and academic relationships gained clarity in the late 1990s, particularly with the 1997 bilateral agreement between the US and Mali to restrict the import of Malian archaeological materials. Most critically, investigative journalism sunk its teeth into the art world. Peter Watson's *Sotheby's: The Inside Story* (1997) detailed

Watson's five-year investigation into the famed auction house and his resulting discovery of numerous illegal practices, particularly the facilitation of smuggling and sale of antiquities known to have been looted. Soon after, both Sotheby's and Christie's moved their tribal art departments out of London, with Sotheby's transferring to New York and Christie's to Amsterdam. (Geismar, 2001). In West Africa, Belgian journalist Michel Brent conducted groundbreaking investigations into the illicit market, particularly for terracotta figures, covering both the process of illicit digging and commodification inside West African countries, such as Mali, and the laundering and eventual sale of looted items by European galleries and auction houses (Brent, 1994). One of his most notable works in English was an article detailing his five-year investigation into the faking of West African terracotta sculptures, many of which found their way into major museum collections (Brent, 2001).

By the early 2000s, looting remained widespread and market participants remained remarkably unbothered. In 1998, the French government bought three Nok and Sokoto terracottas from a private dealer, all of which featured on ICOM's Red List of African Cultural Objects at Risk. Eventually, France was forced to acknowledge Nigerian ownership, but they were allowed to keep the items on loan for a renewable period of 25 years (Shyllon 2011: 138). In 2000, the Louvre opened the Pavillon des Sessions, a satellite for the Musée du Quai Branly, marking the first time "tribal art" was included within the Louvre (Corbey 2000, Musée du Quai Branly website). In the early 2000s, Nok terracottas of uncertain authenticity had become plentiful in the US, available from Nigerian traders in Manhattan, from uptown galleries, and through the internet (Labi and Robinson, 2001; Brodie, 2006), much to the consternation of Africanist art historians and archaeologists.

By the beginning of the 21st century, the state of the African art trade had become both continuous with the bearing of previous periods and highly contested. Perhaps ironically, the colonialist powers and market forces which facilitated the mass departure of African cultural materials to West also provided a catalogue that would eventually index its own racism and thievery. The academy, collectors, and museums have since grappled with such labels with varying levels of acceptance. This thesis is an elucidation of how individual participants in these sites reflect on their professional practice and the legacy of their discipline's involvement with these harms. The next section offers some background on the organisational structure of the Africanist field, by which I mean the setting in which the academy, museums,

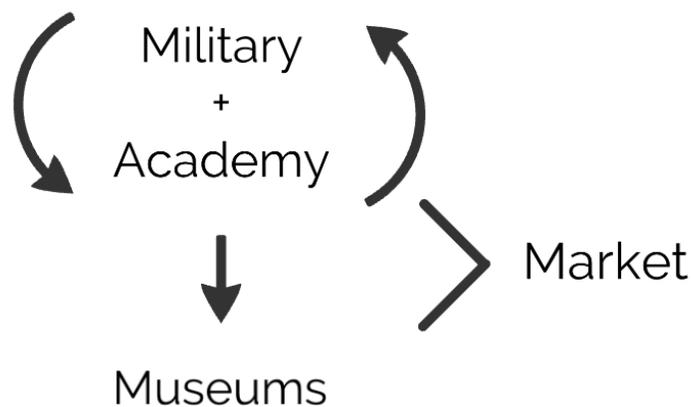
and the market have operated in uprooting, classifying, trading, and withholding African cultural objects.

### III. The Evolution of the Africanist Field

The key narrative within this history is the changing relationship between the academy, the museum, and the market. I describe these three institutions and their numerous sub-groups as “fields”, which Bourdieu defines as a setting in which agents and their social positions are located (1993). These three fields were originally tied together in a co-dependent process of discovery and interpretation (the academy), valuation and commodification (the market), and exhibition and appropriation (the museum), each looping and criss-crossing in relation to one another. Throughout the years, the systems maintaining these relationships have evolved from the simple overlapping structure of the colonial era to the complex and contradictory nature of the field today.

#### a. The colonial unity of the academy, the museum, and the market

##### Colonial Structure



*Figure 1: The Colonial Structure*

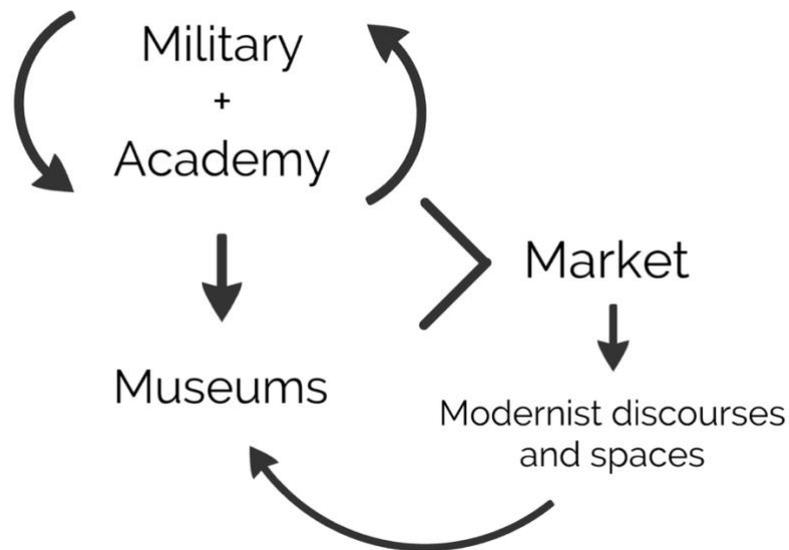
From the mid- to late-19<sup>th</sup> century to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the European colonial system was broken down into four parts. The first two parts, the academy and the military, were locked in a symbiotic relationship which worked in tandem. The military provided access to objects through the seizure of objects as war booty and, after the 1899 Hague Convention, provided

academics with physical and political access to indigenous communities for research purposes. In return, the academy provided legitimisation for the ‘civilising’ mission of colonial occupation through reinforcing the perceived moral, cultural, and evolutionary inferiority and other-ness of African peoples.

The academy/military’s discovery and interpretation of objects fed directly into European ethnographic and world history museums. These institutions appropriated, exhibited, and added academic and market value to objects through the sanctification of their display. At this time, art museums did not consider “primitive” objects as art, and so did not engage with these objects.

The role of the market in African objects at this time was more a function than an institution; it merely enabled the transfer of ownership between Western actors.

### **Modernist and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century structure**



*Figure 2: The Modernist Structure*

When Modernists appropriated non-Western cultural objects and fetishized them as so-called primitive art, the market took on greater significance. The Modernists’ investment in non-Western art turned the market for these objects into an institution through which authenticity

and taste were determined. The market became not only a transit system, but a marker of object value and, consequently, the power of the person or institution acquiring the object. Over the course of a decade, the market grew rapidly as a mechanism of knowledge/power production for Modernist discourse on non-Western objects.

This discourse inevitably expanded from small Modernist galleries and private collections to museum exhibitions and burgeoning collections in the 1920s and 1930s, which widened the distinction between museums as Art Museums and as Ethnographic Museums. The former was intimately tied with the Market as a taste maker, while the latter served largely as a resource and repository for early anthropological work of the academy. The distinction between these two museums' relationships with these objects set the course for the two main trajectories of the study of African art.

Within the Art Museum and galleries, Modernist discourse provided the foundation for the Africanist art historical field. That is to say, it established a precedent that viewed African cultural objects first and foremost as art objects – objects of particular aesthetic value, created as sublime visual representations with particular emotional resonance – distinct from ethnographic objects, which defined objects in terms of their cultural value and usage. This school of thought was brought officially into academic discourse through Robert Goldwater's PhD dissertation in 1937, but maintained a market-dominant perspective well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

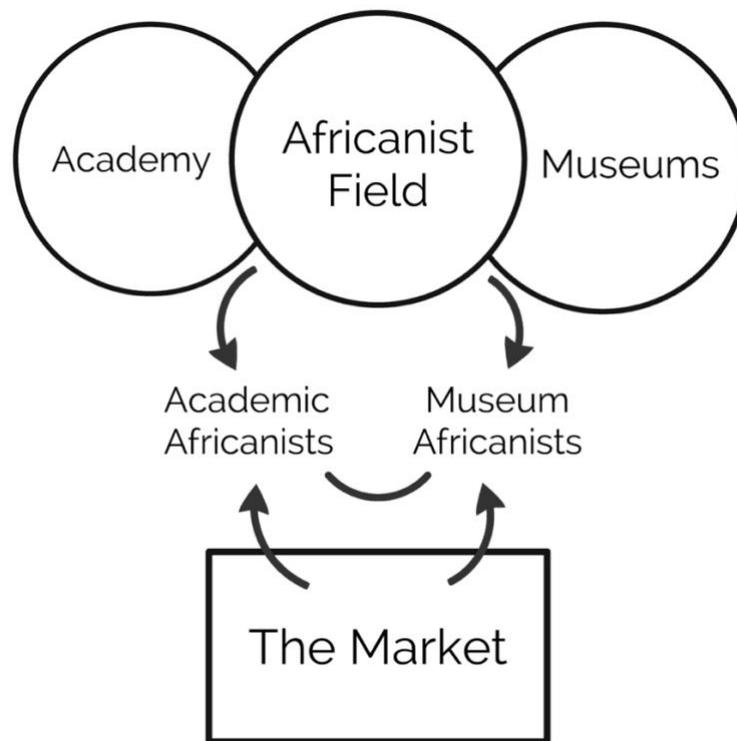
Ethnographic (or Natural History) Museums, on the other hand, formed an important arm of early anthropological research within the academy. Where Art Museums and art galleries displayed African objects with emphasis upon the form and design of individual objects, Ethnographic Museums displayed objects as part of comprehensive collections designed to represent the diversity and otherness of world cultures. Ethnographic Museums acted as repositories for collections accrued through “scientific” fieldwork, tasked with the organisation and classification of physical objects upon which the academy applied abstract theory and belief. Their role was two-sided: as a state-funded institutions, they provided reflections of the West's belief in its racial superiority and imperialistic might and glorified the rightful conquests and developments of Empire. As educational institutions, they disseminated

and consecrated the work of the academy for a lay audience, reinforcing concepts of racial, moral, and cultural superiority over “primitive” non-Western groups.

### b. The co-dependent evolution of three fields

#### Mid-century structure

Through the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the three fields developed separately but co-dependently. They became distinguished more by the purpose of the individual institutions in which they were situated, rather than by the multifaceted and ever-shifting professional identities of the people who occupied them. As the “primitive” art discourse entered the academy, the Africanist field underwent two main changes.



*Figure 3: The Mid-Century Structure*

First, the US became a rapidly growing centre for Africanist knowledge production, which enhanced the role of the market in growing US-based collections for both Art and Ethnographic Museums. Because the US did not have a colonial presence in Africa, it relied

upon the market as a source more so than the rest of Europe. With the mass independence of African countries, the market rapidly replaced settler colonialist institutions to facilitate the exploitation of cultural and archaeological sites across the continent.

Second, the field became subject to two main authorities: the academy macro structure and the museum macro structure. The development of these institutions as fields within their own right meant the development of distinct institutional macro structures that affected the cultural meso-level of individual organisations. Within these structures, Museum Africanist practice developed under a differing set of expectations, pressures, and goals from academic Africanist practice, though it was heavily informed by the latter and most, if not all, curators passed through the academy in order to become a part of the museum.

Academic Africanist discourse was divided both geographically and disciplinarily: European Africanists fell under the umbrella of the Academy, working largely within the social anthropology and archaeology disciplines, while American Africanists worked within an art historical discipline that fostered close ties to the Market and Museums. In the early half of this period, these distinctions made little difference, as the field as a whole operated as a looping system of reciprocal gains. The Market procured objects for the field, which were authenticated and legitimised by Academic Africanists in auction catalogues, then bought by collectors who were advised by Academic Africanists in the course of building strong collections. These collections were then exhibited by Museums, which added greatly to the object's esteemed provenance and subsequent Market value, then published by Academics in exhibition catalogues or academic publications, which provided valuable context and knowledge applicable to similar objects on the Market. These were perhaps sold again for more money, to the benefit of the Market, and eventually donated to a Museum, to the benefit of the collector both in the tax break offered in the US and in the esteem of a museum wing or collection bearing their name.

However, distinctions between Academic fields gained greater importance by the end of this period, as the macro structures of related fields such as anthropology and archaeology had developed more stringent ethical standards than their fellow art history macro structure, leading certain sects of Africanist research to pull away from market involvement.

### c. The fitful disconnection in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century

By the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the respective fields within which these arms of Africanist research exist had developed further away from one another. There are no clean lines of division here; merely cracks and chasms in the discourse. The divisions between some parts made the closeness of others all the more apparent through a series of conflicts from the 1980s through the early 2000s, such as the response to the *Primitivism* exhibition, the Oxford authentication lab scandal, and the mixed responses to the discourse surrounding the ethicality of studying, exhibiting, or acquiring unprovenanced objects.

The Africanist field remains divided between the authority of the Academic macro structure and the Museum macro structure, which each feature divisions that complicate the relationships between discourses and the shrinking influence of the Market.

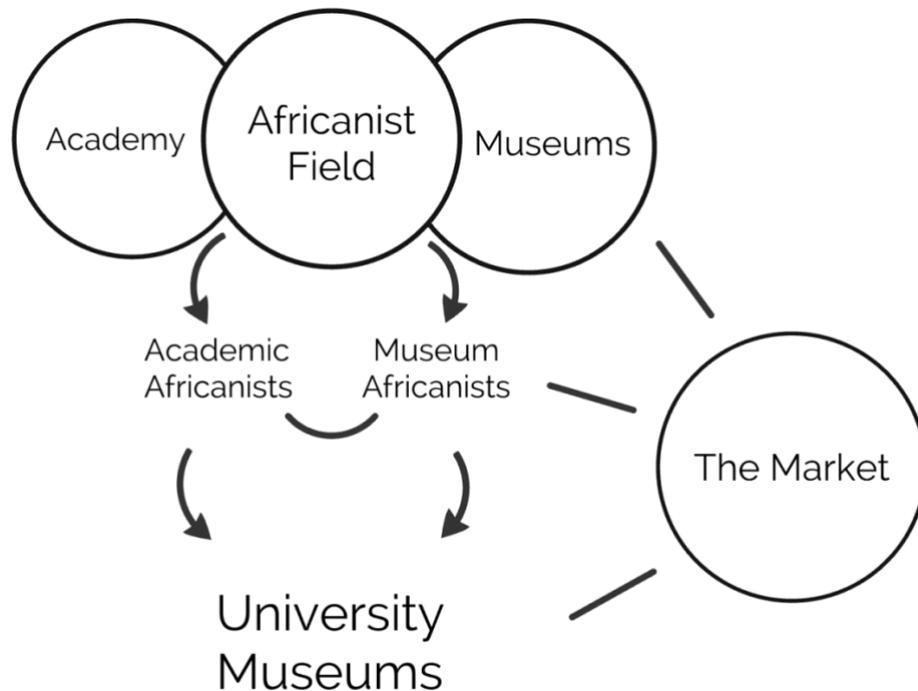


Figure 4: Current Structure

#### **Academic Macro Structure**

Academic Africanists have broken down into two main sects: the archaeologists and art historians.

Archaeologists are the furthest removed from both the Art Museum and Market fields. While they participate in Africanist publications and conferences, they generally identify most strongly with their overarching discipline and its norms and ethics. As a result, they have been the most outspoken faction against the field's previously normative engagement in the publication and exhibition of unprovenanced objects, participation in the illicit art market, and silence regarding issues of looting.

Art historians, conversely, fall into two camps: those who identify more with the Africanist field and those who identify more with their overarching discipline. The former are generally of the post-colonial/mid-century generation or were educated by them, while the latter are more closely aligned with anthropology departments. The former are also more likely to maintain some connection with the Market, both through relationships with dealers and contributions to market publications. The latter are more likely to condemn engagement with the market, and may erroneously believe that market engagement across their field as a whole is an outdated practice that no longer occurs.

### **Museum Macro Structure**

Museum Africanists remain divided into two groups: those in Art Museums, who are aligned most closely with the Africanist art historian field, and those in Ethnographic Museums, who remain part of anthropology or archaeology fields. In the last few years, both Art and Ethnographic Museums have experienced a great deal of fluctuation. The field as a whole currently suffers from a lack of incoming experts, as the younger generation of art historians and curators have gravitated towards the highly dynamic and successful field of contemporary African art, eschewing the problematic legacy of historic collections. Curators cannot be replaced as quickly as they are retiring, which has led some institutions to share a single curator between two museums. In the US, many institutions have begun to hire European curators, the effects of which remain to be seen, but so far indicates that these individuals approach American collections with a certain sensitivity and self-awareness of the contrast between these capitalist-built collections and the colonial legacy of collections within

European institutions. In the UK, the plethora of ethnographic museums assures no shortage of curators based in anthropological or archaeological Africanist specialties.

### **The University Museum**

The University Museum is currently the only institution in which all sects of the Africanist field practice on common ground. Through the mid-century period, university museums gained impressive Africanist collections and conducted renowned research due to the influence of Academic Africanists who maintained strong relationships with the market. Even if the university was not in a position to purchase new acquisitions, the Africanist in charge could secure donations based on their role as advisor to collectors. When direct engagement with the market became improper, the value of this institution shifted from its market access to its curatorial freedoms. The University Museum possesses a unique centrality to all sects of the Africanist field: though situated under the jurisdiction of the Academy, it shares institutional norms and practice with the Museum, whilst often containing collections that hold both Ethnographic and Art objects. All participants in this study have, at one time or another, contributed to or held curatorial roles in university museums.

### **The Market**

The role of the Market is severely limited compared with previous eras, but not entirely eliminated. A minority of academics and museum professionals continue to authenticate objects, provide expertise for catalogues, and publish academic research within market literature. The large majority of field actors, however, have ceased engagement with the market to the best of their abilities and condemn market involvement in others.

## **IV. Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have briefly outlined the cultural and political historical context surrounding the last five hundred years of the West's interest in and commodification of African cultural objects, paying particular attention to the developments of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Following that, I have presented a framework for understanding the make-up of the Africanist field and its evolution from the late 19<sup>th</sup>, early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. This framework offers an

innovative perspective of the composition of the Africanist field specifically and the evolution of Western academic and museum systems generally. Understanding the shifting architecture of these knowledge/power systems is critical as we explore the data in Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8, and surmise the future of the Africanist field in Chapter 9. In the next chapter, I will build upon much of the historical context provided in this chapter as I outline the theoretical approach driving this research.

## Chapter 3

### Theoretical Frames: Post-Colonial Theory and Social Harms

#### I. Introduction

Colonialism's role in constructing the knowledge/power systems within which we work today has increasingly become a focus of study amid efforts to decolonise institutional practices and ways of thinking (Bhambra et al, 2018). The advent of post-colonial theory in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century was embraced first and most readily within the humanities, but has been more slowly received by the social sciences, particularly criminology. Consequently, there is little understanding in certain fields about their historic relationship with colonialism or the perpetuation of colonialist ideologies in scholarship today. The harms done by European colonialist expansion are perceived by many in the West as misfortunes firmly confined to history. Apart from a few impactful events that occasionally force Western art historical or museum institutions to confront the nature of their practice, the colonialist influence on these scholarly disciplines often has been dismissed as a historic chapter that bear little to no weight on work being done today.

This illusion of historic detachment has been reinforced by policymaking. For example, the UNESCO 1970 Convention, introduced in Chapter 2, creates an arbitrary line separating activities that are legal from those activities that are illegal or illicit mainly by imposing a chronological test. Such demarcations have led to widespread acceptance that an activity can primarily be judged by the status of its recognised legality at the point in time in which it was enacted. From this perspective, the harm of the activity is confined to the execution of the activity itself and its immediate aftermath. Historic wrongdoing, such as the looting, destruction, and mass killing of the 1897 British Punitive Expedition (Chapter 2), is thus considered unfortunate but untouchable, having occurred too long ago to be reconsidered as a war crime or a crime against humanity. Such a perspective dismisses the concept that harms which occurred then could still be playing out now, and thus neglects considerations of how modern institutional and disciplinary norms may perpetuate the work of historically enacted wrongdoing.

In this chapter, I set out a theoretical framework to make sense of my research with those involved in the African cultural object trade attempting to create a lens which takes account of but does not accept or perpetuate colonialist perspectives (which I argued in Chapter 1 is a dominant limitation of existing research). To do this, I combine two distinct and so far unconnected theoretical traditions, post-colonial theory and social harms theory, to form a single post-colonial criminological approach toward understanding how Western scholarly knowledge systems have emerged from and continue to support the hegemonic power structures of European and American colonialism and neo-colonial capitalism. In the first section, I outline the main tenets and evolution of post-colonial theory, from its origination in the transatlantic social justice movements of the 1950s and 1960s to its emergence as a theoretical tradition within post-structuralist literary thinking in the 1970s and 1980s. In the second section, I outline social harms theory as a means of understanding the macro-contextual and micro decision-making processes behind wrongdoing that are not defined as criminal. In the third section, I outline the current shape of post-colonial criminology as it has been drawn by others in the last twenty years before defining the forms of discursive violence that occupy the focus of a post-colonial criminology as applied in this study.

## II. Post-colonial theory

At its simplest definition, postcolonial theory analyses the politics of the creation, control, and distribution of knowledge by examining the function and structure of the powers, both cultural and political, that create and sustain colonialism and neo-colonialism. The term ‘colonialism’ as it is used here refers to two things: first, to the political and economic phenomena in which European nations explored, conquered, exploited, and occupied large areas of the world from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century; second, to the ideological orientation of racial, evolutionary, psychological, and moral superiority that drove the militaristic, political, and institutional occupation of regions beyond Europe. Writers such as Edward Said (1993) make a distinction between ‘colonialism’ as the process of occupation and ‘imperialism’ as the extension of power over others through a variety of means, colonial occupation being just one. I have chosen to use ‘colonialism’ to encapsulate both meanings. In this study, the concept of occupation is not limited to geography, but includes the colonialist ideologies that occupy educational, political, and legal institutions internationally. As such, ‘neo-colonialism’ here

refers to the use of capitalism and globalisation to influence developing countries post-independence, in the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

### a. The First Wave

The “first wave” of postcolonial theory emerged in the 1950s and 1960s from a wider transatlantic discourse on revolution, civil rights, and social justice. As Black American writers and activists such as James Baldwin, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King Jr fought against American segregation and racial injustice, writers such as the poet and politician Aimé Césaire in Martinique, the activist Steven Biko in South Africa, and Tunisian-Jewish author Albert Memmi in France wrote critically on the physical and psychological harms of oppression under European colonial powers. Working in dialogue with decolonisation and desegregation efforts globally, these writers emphasised the role of culture and identity in illustrating the lived experience of colonialism and racial oppression.

In his 1955 essay *Discourse on Colonialism* (published in English in 1957), Césaire censures both the European and American bourgeoisie for their ambivalence to colonial violence and their institutions’ endorsement of psychological and physical violence against people of colour. He takes particular aim at Western systems of knowledge production, “goitrous academicians, wreathed in dollars and stupidity, ethnographers who go in for metaphysics, chattering intellectuals born stinking out of the thigh of Nietzsche,” and at the “sociologists et al., their views on ‘primitivism’, their rigged investigations, their self-serving generalisations”. About museums, he laments (1957: 11),

“Europe would have done better to tolerate the non-European civilisations at its side, leaving them alive, dynamic, and prosperous, whole and not mutilated; that it would have been better to let them develop and fulfil themselves than to present for our admiration, duly labelled, their dead and scattered parts...No, in the scale of knowledge, all the museums in the world will never weigh so much as one spark of human sympathy.”

Published the same year, Albert Memmi’s *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (1957) takes the same themes touched on by Césaire and brings them into greater detail. The book is, as Jean-

Paul Sartre notes, not a chronicle but a “*formulation* of an experience” in which Memmi’s own rendering of his experience as a colonised person and depiction of the colonisers found universal recognition by those far beyond his native Tunisia. However, the most enduring voice from this time in post-colonial theory is that of Frantz Fanon, a Martinique-born psychologist and student of Aimé Césaire, who eventually adopted Algeria as his home and was an outspoken proponent of independence from France. His first book, *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) psychoanalysed in wrenching detail the harmful effects of colonial subjugation on black people both within colonised regions and in the coloniser’s own country. Fanon was only 27 when he wrote the book, which was originally proposed as his doctoral dissertation at the University of Lyons.

While stationed in Europe during World War II and during his residency studying psychiatry at Lyons, Fanon experienced new shades of racism. It is notable that the racism of the French was not equally experienced by Black individuals at this time: where Fanon found and analysed new facets of external and internalised racism in his experience with European Whiteness, African-American writer James Baldwin fled to France in 1948 in order to escape the horror of American segregation. “The years I lived in Paris did one thing for me: they released me from that particular social terror, which was not the paranoia of my own mind, but a real social danger visible in the face of every cop, every boss, everybody.” (The Dick Cavett Show, 1968/I Am Not Your Negro.) Baldwin’s sentiment is reinforced by Césaire, who wrote, “The barbarism of Western Europe has reached an incredibly high level, being only surpassed – far surpassed, it is true – by the barbarism of the United States.” (pg. 8)

It was the recipients of such barbarism who responded most enthusiastically to Fanon, though he tragically did not live to see the impact of his last work. *The Wretched of the Earth* was published in 1961, shortly before Fanon’s death from leukaemia at the age of 36. This book became a key text for radical writers and activists in desegregation and decolonisation work. It had particular impact on activists like Stokely Carmichael, who cited Fanon in his 1967 speech which introduced the concept of Black Power. Eldridge Cleaver described *Wretched* as “the Bible” of the black liberation movement in America (Cleaver, 1969). Fanon defended the use of violence by colonised peoples through the argument that, in being seen as less than human, they were thus not bound by the laws of humanity in revolting against their oppressors. This argument was embraced by groups such as the Black Panther Party, and

reflected in the early opinions of Malcolm X. The work of Fanon and Malcolm X in turn influenced the work of South African anti-apartheid activist Steve Biko.

### b. The Second Wave

In the wake of independence for formerly colonised countries, a second-wave of post-colonial theory emerged from both colonial diasporas in the West and newly independent countries in the Global South. Where the first wave emphasised the psychological and cultural dimensions of colonialist violence, the second wave focused on how epistemic structures of colonialist knowledge systems created and perpetuated both physical and symbolic violence. Key concepts behind these perspectives originated with the work of Michel Foucault (see *The History of Sexuality*, 1976) particularly in regard to his writing on the production of, and connections between, knowledge and power. While many were often critical of Foucault's neglect of colonialism in his work, they utilised many Foucauldian terms, such as *the episteme*, the state of knowledge or way of thinking at a certain point time, and *discourse* as a system of representation that marries language and practice and is productive/generative of subjectivities. His conceptualisation of power proved particularly transformative; in opposition to the normative assumption that power radiates from a single source downward, lifting one or a few to the top of a forceful hierarchy, Foucault argued that power in fact circulates, exercised and acknowledged by both oppressors and oppressed in a "net-like organisation" (Foucault, 1980: 98). Such Foucauldian concepts formed the groundwork for the second-wave postcolonial perspectives, which sought to push beyond purely economic critique.

Breaking ground on this perspective was Edward Said, whose *Orientalism* (1978) provided a profoundly influential critique of the knowledge systems that constructed and executed the "Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient." (Said, 1978: 3) Though *Orientalism* focused on the historical and political legacy of Europe's involvement in and conceptualization of the Middle East, the observations and criticisms outlined in it found universal application for narratives surrounding colonised territories across the world. Chief among these was his emphasis on dissolving the analytic bifurcations of "the West" and "the Other", refuting the schismatic generalisations of both coloniser and colonised. Said argued the origins of the divisive essentialisations the West had invented, manipulated, and fetishized through its colonialist expansion were due in large part to the academic

knowledge systems that provided colonialist forces with scientific “evidence” of subjects’ inferiority, literary visions of militaristic and cultural dominion, and philosophical frameworks that delivered moral justifications for systemic and physical violence executed by colonial powers (Id.: 13).

Following on the work of Said, scholars such as Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, and Ngugi wa Thiong’o introduced a body of literature that reinvented the manner in which colonised cultures were viewed, challenging and upending the narratives that had been constructed around them through the colonial era and theorising these experiences within Western academic discourse. Gayatri Spivak’s work has been particularly influential in bringing a Marxist-feminist lens to post-colonial theory, most famously in her essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, first presented at a conference in 1983 and eventually published in 1988. Here, she addresses the issue of representation of the so-called ‘subaltern’, defined first by Antonio Gramsci as relating to marginalised peoples outside of hegemonic power systems and lacking access to cultural production (Spivak, 1988). Spivak’s essay questioned the ability of the Western, Eurocentric intellectual to truly represent the subaltern, arguing that such representation is inherently selective and symptomatic of essentialism, a term first introduced to post-colonial discourse in this text. She also introduces to post-colonial discourse Foucault’s concept of epistemic violence, developing his “complete overhaul of the episteme” to include the violence done to knowledge systems marginalised, manipulated, and destroyed by colonialist action.

A few years later, Kenyan novelist, playwright, and theorist Ngugi wa Thiong’o made tremendous impact with his 1986 book, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. In this collection of essays, Ngugi addressed his own understanding of the ongoing language debate between African writers, who were at odds over whether to write in one’s native language or the hegemonic languages of English, French, and Portuguese. *Decolonising the Mind*, Ngugi’s last publication in English before writing exclusively in Gikuyu and Swahili, tied the debate around language and culture to the ongoing effects of colonisation and the emergent work of decolonisation. He illustrated the ways in which Western cultural and linguistic practices were held superior and normalised, whilst African cultural and linguistic practices were degraded from the time of childhood, thus eliminating language as a “carrier of culture” within colonised African spaces.

Based on this brief summation of postcolonial theory, we can see how these voices powerfully call out the subtle and not so subtle ways that Africans, among other peoples, were minimised, infantilised, and dehumanised. This is the intellectual tradition that was formed in parallel with the story of the previous chapter, the trade in and perceptions of African cultural objects as ‘art’ objects that are separate from and less valuable than ethnographic objects. It is clear that such voices have come to be influential at the edges of academic and, to some extent, museum discourses and practices. In this study I incorporate these voices in a central way, bringing postcolonial insights and frames to bear on the perspectives of my research participants. As a white researcher based in the Global North, I do not attempt to speak for or see through the eyes of Indigenous and colonised peoples, but seek in this project to apply the concepts of postcolonial theorists in a more direct manner than has been done before.

### III. Social harms theory

A post-colonial lens may recast regrettable but isolated mistakes of the past as ongoing relations of violence and subjugation. However, this still leaves an analytical gap for a research project attempting to situate these empirical phenomena within criminology. This is because the existing concepts and vocabulary within conventional criminology would still leave much behaviour outside its key categorisation of criminal. The discursive violence committed by scholars are not recognised as crimes, and are often not even remotely within the realm of prosecutable criminal behaviour. Why then bother identifying and assigning such violence within the context of a criminological study if they are not in fact criminal? How should such violences be addressed within a criminological context? And who assumes responsibility for the effects of these violences? A new set of tools and frames are needed for criminology itself to grasp the trade in African objects as harmful. In what follows I offer a brief history of Criminology’s own relation to a Western and colonialist imaginary of superiority, that make clear the need for a different, social harms informed approach.

Criminology itself is a product of European century colonialist and industrial capitalist power structures, though it rarely acknowledges such origins or their continued influence on criminology today (Garland, 2001; Valverde, 2014). Modern criminological thought traces its origins to developments in the Age of Enlightenment, which gave birth to philosophical

advancements that approached crime, criminality, and justice from a decidedly more reasoned and scientific perspective than their superstitious medieval predecessors. However, such reason was also decidedly Eurocentric, white, and male. As European colonial powers expanded, founded upon the African slave trade and the industrialised poverty of the lower classes, criminological theory provided the philosophical and scientific evidence to support widely accepted prejudices against people of colour, women, the chronically ill (such as those with epilepsy), and the mentally ill. The Classical School of Jeremy Bentham and Cesare Beccaria, which was organised around the emerging idea of the rational individual (read: able-bodied, propertied, white male) emphasised the role of free will and the justification of punishment as a method for social control. This gave way to the criminal anthropology of Cesare Lombroso. While many of Lombroso's concepts and theories were later discredited, he provided other positive contributions to and still influences criminological research and knowledge, and a tremendous effect on perception of criminality and resulting law enforcement worldwide.

The 'science' of crime provided authoritative and objective means of confirming widely held racist and sexist beliefs, supplying knowledge/power structures with the ammunition to develop more rigorous and systematically entrenched processes of othering individuals and social groups. This advance resulted in a range of state-sanctioned violence, from the British practice of transporting offenders to British colonies (such as Australia) in order to prevent the biological passing of their criminality to future children (thus reproducing their type), to the justification of much colonialist expansion across Africa and India, to the segregation and terrorisation of Black Americans (as well as Asian, Irish, and Italian immigrants) by White Americans in the United States, to the Nazi propaganda and resulting genocide against Jews and other minority groups (Agozino, 2003: pp 25-26). Eventually, the emphasis on biological determinism was replaced by additional considerations of sociological factors and psychological makeup. The Chicago School of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century moved away from positivist anthropology to sociological analyses of urban poverty and crime, aiming to address an unjustly asymmetrical economic system but inadvertently and unfortunately laying the groundwork for the legal system's preoccupation with the racial, class, and gender profiling of inner-city youth.

Despite emergence of structural and environmental levels of explanation, criminology's emphasis remains fixated on the individual and on a notion of the rational or normal individual implicitly informed by racist, sexist and classist views: from the individual's socio-economic placement and attempted realisation of societal aspirations and goals (Merton's anomie theory), to the individual's reactions to society's conceptualisation of their character (labelling theory), to the individual's decision-making processes leading up to and following an offense (Sykes and Matza's techniques of neutralisation), to the individual's unlikelihood of committing more serious crimes such as robbery, rape, and murder if they are first caught and punished for small-scale disorder such as panhandling, public drinking, and street prostitution (broken windows theory). The focus on young, often economically disadvantaged and uneducated offenders occupies the principle focus of mainstream and 'administrative' criminologies, a concern at the heart of critical criminologists (e.g. Cohen, 1990).

Theories of white-collar crime, including corporate crime, state crime, state-corporate crime, and occupational crime, which might have offered useful means of studying the activities of academics, museum officials and collectors that participated in my study (cf Mackenzie and Green, 2008; Mackenzie, 2009; 2011), have made important progress on this front through the last few decades. However, such research is inevitably limited from lack of funding (often by the same knowledge/power structures who would be the object of inquiry), difficulty in negotiating access to both qualitative and quantitative data, and the flawed application of existing criminological theories (designed for exploration of street crime and juvenile delinquency) to the continued preoccupation with individual offenders' rationale and decision-making processes. Additionally, because some behaviours and actions that might be classified as white-collar crime are not always defined as criminal by law, such research is subjected to criticism and debate about what constitutes crime and, consequently, what research may thus be considered criminological.

Social harms theory arose out of debate and concern about the power relations that govern definitions and understanding of crime. Proposed by criminologists Paddy Hillyard and Steve Tombs (2005), and building on traditions of Marxism and critical criminology, social harms theory argues that accepted concepts of *crime* excludes many serious *harms*, the exclusion of which protects and serves the knowledge/power structures that commit them. Legal definitions of 'crime' itself includes numerous behaviours and events with varying levels of danger to

individuals or communities as a whole, and often do not represent the most harmful or dangerous actions. While Hillyard and Tombs do not cite post-colonial theory and only vaguely refer to criminology's origins in colonial and imperialist philosophy, social harms theory shares much in common with both post-colonial theory.

First outlined comprehensively in *Criminal Obsessions: Why Harm Matters More Than Crime* (2005), social harms theory opposes establishment criminology's focus on the individual and individual wrongdoing, preferring analysis of the social-structural origins of harmful behaviour and how these behaviours can be addressed without employing the socio-economically biased and divisive punishment-oriented solutions of establishment criminal justice. The theory outlines a number of aspirations for the reform of criminology and criminal justice systems, the end goal of which, as proposed by Hillyard and Tombs, is in fact is doing away with "criminology" altogether. They are far from the first to question the discipline (Cohen, 1988; Bosworth and Hoyle, 2012). While this study does not argue for such extreme measures, it does employ and advocate three main arguments of social harms theory, outlined below.

### 1. 'Crime' Maintains Oppressive Power Structures

First, in line with post-colonial theory, social harms theory argues that conventional criminological and legal definitions of "crime", maintain oppressive power relations. They do so by focusing on individual actors instead of the social structures which lead to harmful arrangements (such as poverty, racial segregation and profiling, systemic sexism, inaccessibility to education and healthcare, etc) which may provide incentives for street crime. Hillyard and Tombs condemn administrative criminology's unwillingness to question the criminal-legal system's definition of 'crime', arguing that the attempts to explain *why* individuals commit crime is deceptive when crime itself is such a varied and ever-changing concept. "The focus is still on *content* rather than on the social, political and economic *context* of the production of the regimes of truth." (2005: 7) Employing a definition of crime that focuses on harm allows us to explore and address the behaviours and events within museums and universities that are neglected and, either directly or indirectly, protected by legal institutions.

In adopting a social harms approach, relationships between scholars and power structures are necessarily altered, as formerly authoritative power structures are now objects of critical inquiry. By applying the same weight to harm that we apply to the pettiest of crimes, criminology can approach the behaviours and events of colonial and neo-colonial power structures as harmful, systemic, and longstanding, and treat epistemic and attendant violences, discussed and defined in further detail in the next section, as significant harms in their own right.

## 2. Criminal intent over-determines the individual actor in causing harm

The importance of “intent” to the legal definition of crime is central to establishment criminology’s psychological profiling of offenders and its resulting theories. The concept of *mens rea*, “the guilty mind”, is applied largely to test individuals, less frequently groups, on their blameworthiness in actions that have resulted in harm/crime. Such intent is measured by the individual’s words and behaviours leading up to, during, and following the criminal event, which are interpreted by judges, magistrates, or juries. However, as Hillyard and Tombs note, “The notion of intent presupposes, and then consolidates, a moral hierarchy which, once examined, negates common sense, certainly from the viewpoint of social harm.” Social harms theory argues that criminology’s perception of intent is, if not misguided, then critically incomplete, as direct harm is determined to be more dangerous than indirect harm and thus, the presence of malicious or selfish intent warrants more serious attention than an apparent lack of intent. Having conceptual tools, such as those provided by social harms theory, that can grapple with notions of indirect harm and can manage ideas of culpability in the absence of individual intent of harm will be useful in considering the subject of this study.

The softening distance of time and geographical place inherent to indirect harm, particularly when situated within a larger organisational structure, seems to diffuse the perception of harm by both the harmer and the criminal justice system. Hillyard and Tombs cites Reiman’s example of contrasting the motives and moral culpability of intentional murder versus “the indirect harms on the part of absentee killers – for example, deaths which result where employers refuse to invest in safe plant or working methods, or where toxic substances are illegally discharged into our environment, and so on.” (p. 9) In such cases, so-called absentee offenders may not have wanted to harm particular individuals, but were likely aware that their

act would inevitably result in harm to someone (p. 10).

It is such cases of indirect harm and ambiguous intent that concern this study. Intent is obviously not necessary to inflict serious harms, but in the case of indirect harms, the role of intent is far less clear. Because instigators of indirect harm are many steps removed from the visibility and effects of their actions, it is possible that their awareness of these harms is non-existent, or at least mitigated by being “out of sight, out of mind”. The question here is how might indirect harm be deterred when the usual deterring factors (punishment) of direct harm are missing?

It is this issue as seen within the world of Africanist research that I believe would most benefit from a joint social harms and post-colonial criminological perspective. Within this study, such cases are evident throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries as the museum community adapts to an ever-tightening set of regulations and standards of practice. Incidents of indirect harm, with limited or full awareness of harm, have been common since the UNESCO 1970 Convention. Examples will be seen in detail in the chapters that follow. Exploring these issues using the tools of qualitative research, allows us to unpick the layers of intent behind individuals’ and organisations’ behaviour in indirect harms, and thus is an important element in understanding the mechanisms at work in systemic harm.

### 3. Criminalisation Produces Harms

In instances of organisational harms, the criminalisation and individualisation of harms are particularly ineffective. In re-evaluating our conceptualisation of intent, inevitably we must ask how the notion of intent functions when responsibility for a harmful event is diffused through multiple layers of an organisation, in which no one individual might bear full responsibility. As Hillyard and Tombs point out, even in cases where intent is not in question, the criminal justice system seeks to individualise blame. Within the cultural heritage field, the singling out and vilification of former Getty curator Marion True is a prime example. This event triggered negative ramifications for an individual out of proportion to the harm of the crime in question, with little negative consequence attaching to the organisation that supported her work.

While True no doubt held individual blame for various personal decisions made in the course of her professional life, her engagement with antiquities dealers and purchase of illicit cultural objects for the Getty's collection was not only approved by the Getty's Board of Directors, but a normalised practice within the museum community across the United States, even as legislation was introduced and museum policy sought to combat such practices. True was one of many curators who maintained personal relationships with collectors and dealers as a matter of professional necessity to secure donations and acquisitions for their institutions, and whose purchase of illicit cultural objects was based upon years of normalised practice rooted in colonial occupation.

True was singled out not only for the Getty's involvement in the illicit antiquities trade, but made a scapegoat for while diverting attention from the systemic harms enacted by museum professionals across the country. As a result, the relentless criminalisation of her individual conduct bred a significant amount of fear in her colleagues and incoming generations of curators. It also allowed the 'system' to appear to be doing something about the harms of colonialism without fundamentally challenging the structures that facilitate trade and acquisition of looted and stolen cultural objects.

While such fear seems to have discouraged certain unethical behaviours, the damages of this fear far outweigh the benefits. Chilled by the effects of True's criminalisation, museum professionals have developed an unwillingness to engage on these issues with concerned members of the public or researchers such as myself. As a result, laypeople and researchers outside of the museum community have little understanding as to how decision-making processes operate within museums, leading to knee-jerk accusations of criminality and scepticism of these formerly trusted educational institutions. Meanwhile, many museums' close-mouthed approach to calls for the restitution of objects has contributed to an ever-widening gulf between those museums displaying ancient and living cultures and the members of those cultures.

Of course, policies have been developed both by individual museums and organisations such as the American Association of Museum Directors to rectify old practices and put redeeming new policies in place, but the governing bodies behind them have done little to determine whether such policies are effective or to ensure they are carried out. While there are some

notable exceptions, most major museums have failed to confront or reflect upon their colonialist origins, thereby denying themselves crucial opportunities to not only decolonise their collections, but also the institutionalised philosophies that support collection practices.

A social harms approach to these helps make visible and apply questions of responsibility, deterrence, and institutional reconstruction to the structures themselves. Instead of focusing on individual blameworthiness and punishment, a social harms approach allows us to see museum policies, governance structures, the availability of certain resources, and institutional and personal priorities as tools of harm as well as means of rectifying harm (pg. 17). By focusing on the social origins of harm within museums, we employ an approach that “does not reject the need to account for human agency, but it is to accept a view of the world that sees human agency as defined by structures, structures which must be known and of which we must provide accurate accounts.” (pg. 61)

#### IV. Post-Colonial Criminology: Defining Violence

In this section, I demonstrate how the combination of post-colonial theory with social harms theory offers a means of developing a specifically post-colonial *criminology*, with particular attention to how this would re-define understanding of criminological violence. The combination of post-colonial theory and social harms theory in this study is intended to culminate in a post-colonial criminological perspective. Such a combination within criminology is not entirely new, though its amalgamation is often not made explicit in critical criminology. A dearth of criminological research has emerged on the “periphery” of establishment criminology; that is to say, outside the US and UK institutions and publications that dominate criminological thinking and within regions formerly occupied by European colonists.

This research, situated largely within cultural, critical, and what is now termed Indigenous criminology (Cunneen and Tauri, 2016), has directly challenged the effects of Western criminology and criminal justice systems on indigenous populations (Anthony, 2012; Blagg and Anthony, 2014; Broadhurst, 2002; Cunneen, 2006; Cunneen, 2008; Cunneen, 2014; Deckert, 2015; Jeffries and Stenning, 2014; Jobes, 2004; Kelly and Tubex, 2015; Marie, 2010;

Tauri, 2014) and efforts to decolonise criminal justice (Blagg, 2008; Deckert, 2014; Porter, 2016; Rigney, 1997; Tauri, 2004; Tauri, 2013; Tauri, 2015; Victor, 2007; Weatherburn, 2014).

However, a “post-colonial criminology” has not yet been fully embraced, and research published under such a label remains thin on the ground. This is not to say it is non-existent. Nigerian criminologist Biko Agozino has been instrumental in critically exposing establishment criminology’s unwillingness to follow its social science kinfolk – sociology, anthropology, and political science – into reflexive post-colonial practice (Agozino, 2004), its failure to recognise colonialism and imperialism as a form of criminality (Agozino, 2003; 2010), its “obsession” with social control of people of colour and the poor (Agozino, 2010), and its continued reinforcement and application of colonial ideologies through its failure to decolonise (Agozino, 2003; 2004; 2005; 2010). However, even he does not use the term “post-colonial criminology”, preferring “counter-colonial criminology”, a term shared by Kitossa (2012) and Tauri (2018).

Some contributions to post-colonial perspectives of criminology do not employ the term “post-colonial” at all, even when using terminology pioneered by post-colonial theorists (Cain, 2000; Kalunta-Crumpton et al, 2004). Thus, when we speak of a “post-colonial criminology”, we are identifying an embryonic field whose writers have thus far not categorised themselves as explicitly post-colonial. Nonetheless, criminologists such as Chris Cunneen and Temitope Oriola have argued for the establishment of a more widespread post-colonial criminology (Cunneen, 2011; Oriola, 2006) and others refer generally to what post-colonial criminology has done or could do (Cunneen and Tauri, 2016, p. 19; Carrington and Hogg, 2017).

Admittedly, the term “post-colonial criminology” is a flawed umbrella term for a vast diversity of research. As a title, it continues to place emphasis on the West and Western relationships, while terms like “Indigenous criminology” do the opposite, re-centring our attention back onto the Indigenous community, Indigenous knowledge/power production, and Indigenous agency. Within this study, the emphasis of a “post-colonial criminology” is not a slight to the correct re-centring of Indigenous narratives but is an intentional mode of confronting Western institutions, from within a Western institution, with their historic and continued entrenchment in oppressive colonial ideologies through the employment of post-colonial theory. Privileged individuals within the United States have little conception of their

nation-state or its educational institutions as a colonising force, while Europeans routinely gloss over the myriad atrocities committed during the European colonial era, even as they grapple with the discomforts and complexities in confronting the grim colonial legacy within museums and universities.

#### a. Defining Violence

The practice of a post-colonial criminology within this study is centred on the identification and definition of types of discursive violence. In combining social harm theory with post-colonial/Foucauldian concepts of epistemic violence, I am adopting and expanding upon a framework and set of definitions introduced by sociologists Jeffrey Guhin and Jonathan Wyrzten (2013). Through revisiting Edward Said (who extensively employed Foucault), Guhin and Wyrzten outlined three forms of violence “at risk in producing knowledge in an imperial field of power.” (pg. 235) These categories of violence are all forms of symbolic violence; that is, harm that does not involve direct physical force but has the effect of disempowering, damaging, undermining, and oppressing. These can of course have physically harmful consequences.

1. **The violence of essentialisation** “involves a misrecognition in which essentialised, ahistorical categories and labels are used to classify the other and then to potentially enact physical and psychological violence upon them” (Guhin and Wyrzten, p. 235). This form of violence was the central focus of Said’s *Orientalism* and draws heavily from Foucauldian concepts of truth and power/knowledge production. Such violence is readily apparent after a cursory glance at the issues surrounding West African art specifically, and the illicit antiquities trade generally. The emergence of Western-recorded African art history in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries was founded on the essentialising decontextualisation of cultural objects to sit within an ahistorical landscape of “primitive” peoples and traditions, believed to be unchanged, frozen in history, in direct contrast to the progressively civilised history of the Western world. This early categorization, and later fetishisation, of objects by modern artists such as Pablo Picasso, established the further essentialising trench that differentiates the normatively privileged category of Western art, featured as a straightforward

chronological canon in every Art History 101 course, from the alternative, contradictory Non-Western Art.

2. **The violence of apprehension** is categorised by Guhin and Wyrzten as the misuse and manipulation of both academic research and local knowledge systems by power structures outside the original authors “to consolidate power and to enact physical and symbolic violence on the “other” (Id.: 236). In some cases, this form of apprehension is fused with the violence of essentialization; Guhin and Wyrzten present the example of colonialist early ethnographic information-gathering missions that produced knowledge about local societies that “was often not totally inaccurate.” The authors argue that the violence of apprehension occurred when such knowledge was used by the colonial state to “produce markers of native identity, the purpose of which was to reinforce a hierarchy between European colonizer and native colonized.” (Id.: 244) Such appropriation has had lasting effects, and remains an issue within Africanist research today. Within the realm of academic research, violence of apprehension of data and research results is of particular importance here; many academics and museum professionals have spoken of their frustration at seeing academic publications and museum exhibitions seemingly serve as catalysts for market demand.
  
3. **Epistemic violence** is a concept most famously addressed by Gayatri Spivak in her 1988 essay, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* First coined by Foucault, Spivak approached the term in relation to the process in which Western knowledge systems, such as social scientific concepts and theories, impede or destroy local forms of knowledge. Such silencing is accomplished through the privileging of the intellectual, which allows them to render their own position transparent in (re)presenting the experience and narratives of “the subaltern”, those outside of and subjected to the political and geographical hegemonic power structure of the colonizing force. Such “asymmetrical obliteration of the trace of that Other in its precarious Subject-ivity” is nothing new. The beginnings of an African art history in the colonialist study of indigenous peoples in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the popularisation of African art objects as curiosities in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century can be read as an epistemic violence committed in the quest for colonialist dominance, particularly in the wake of the 1897 Punitive Expedition. It remains a recognisable harm to this day, continuing in the failure of museums and

academics to acknowledge their privileged geographical, intellectual, and political positionality within the historical socio-economic context of colonialism and neo-colonialism. It continues in the failure of archaeologists to engage the communities within which they work, and the academy's failure overall to accept that issues of theft, looting, and site destruction are not politicised issues set apart from their research but are in fact realities that affect their responsibility to the communities they serve.

## b. Defining Epistemic Violence: Five Aspects

Epistemic violence is an exceptionally broad term which encompasses many shades of violence, the study of which is made more difficult for their being lumped under a single expression. Within epistemological research, numerous sub-categories under epistemic violence have been identified that relate specifically to Western scholarly power dynamics. These terms share many arguments with post-colonial theory but are not explicitly related, and as such, do not speak to the breadth and depth of harmful experiences I have discerned throughout this research. Therefore, I have identified five of my own sub-categories for epistemic violence. These have benefited from, but largely disregard, the definitions set by Miranda Fricker (2007) and Kristie Dotson (2012). While each term seeks to isolate a certain type of harm, there is an inevitable degree of overlap between categories.

### 1. Distributive epistemic violence

This refers to the ways in which 1) *access to discourse* is determined and how 2) *discourse is distributed* by discourse participants. Access can be determined by

- i. Educational or professional level or qualifications; as seen in the monopolisation of knowledge among academics and publishing companies.
- ii. Geographical limits or requirements; such as the centralisation of Africanist literature in Western institutions and publications, the centralisation of African art collections in Western institutions, and the requirements of a visa for many West Africans to visit countries where African art is held.
- iii. Financial privilege; such as paywalls to academic literature, museum fees, and Western-centric academic funding which brings academics to Africa for short periods

of time but does not re-centre African institutions as the main productions of expert knowledge.

- iv. Cultural membership, which here includes how access to academic/museum professional culture is often necessary in order to access discourses on sensitive issues.

The distribution of discourse is most often determined by the efforts to which dominant speakers choose to disseminate discourse. Within this study, this is most often seen in the limited scope of academic publications, whose contents are almost never seen by stakeholders who lack higher education qualifications or insider knowledge of the field. (However, this violence is not the sole responsibility of those publishing but that of the academic publishing industry itself, which perpetuates an asymmetrical system in which academics must publish for no remuneration beyond the social capital that is requisite to progress in any field; this system is illustrative of the complexity of harms in a vast knowledge/power system.) It is also seen in the fact that, while museum exhibitions frequently travel, they rarely travel to the country of origin of the objects on display.

## 2. Representational epistemic violence

This refers to how 1) knowers/knowledge may be *discredited*, 2) how knowers/knowledge are *misrepresented*, and 3) the *privileging of Western knowers/knowledges systems* over local knowers/knowledge systems.

We see discrediting in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century racism, in which the dehumanisation and fetishisation of West African peoples was tied to academic and governmental efforts to assert evolutionary supremacy. Non-white, non-Western peoples were considered “savage” or “primitive”, and their psychology was considered to reflect that of early evolved humans. This perspective was used to discredit the artistic work of the Edo people’s bronze plaques and sculpture in the wake of the 1897 British Punitive Expedition. Later, it was used to emphasize the child-like quality of West African peoples based on their cultural objects. It continues to be evident in 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century knowledge production, where we can discern the widespread dismissal of origin countries’ abilities to properly house, conserve, and safeguard cultural objects that might be returned to them on the grounds that those countries are too corrupt to manage their money properly or too poor to be given such a large responsibility. This is used

as an argumentation strategy to rationalise the withholding of cultural objects in Western institutions from repatriation to the original communities.

Misrepresentation can be seen in the commodification and fetishisation of cultural objects by the art world, particularly in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century glorification of African objects as “primitive” in relation to their creators’ perceived purity of creativity and closeness to early evolved human beings. Western standards for aesthetic value resulted in the alteration of cultural objects, oftentimes literally stripping away original elements in order to make them more pleasing to a Western eye that favoured architectural minimalism.

The privileging of Western knowledge over local knowledge systems is a key focus of this study, as it has appeared in 1) the privileging of Western art historical lexis and methodology, despite the re-emergence of culture-specific lexis and methodology; and 2) the representation of cultural objects in exhibitions, which frequently fails to address the Western lens through which knowledge has been produced and shared, let alone the violent political and cultural means through which objects were removed from their original contexts and proffered to museums or private collections. Thus, the Western lens is established as normative and differing perspectives are seen as “other.”

### 3. Silencing

Silencing occurs in two ways: *diminishing* knowers/knowledge and *omitting* knowers/knowledge.

Diminishing knowers/knowledge shares a great deal of overlap with the privileging of Western knowers/knowledge in representational violence; in both cases, the one is made more evident through emphasis of the other. The key difference here is our perspective; in the previous violence, emphasis lies on the West. In this violence, emphasis lies with the Other. Diminishing occurs across all fields, but in this study is most evident in art market and art historical literature, which employs an object-centred approach at the expense of those who made the object. A prime example can be found in William Rubin’s introduction to his catalogue for *Primitivism* (1984). In it, he describes “affinities” between Western modernist and non-Western “primitive” works which force a relationship between the two that is, so to

speak, non-consensual. He imbues individual objects with a sense of power which does not extend to acknowledging the creators of those objects, whilst Western objects are spoken of in terms of their individual, named makers and the narratives surrounding their creation and perception. His argument is that Primitivism as a movement is not about primitive works, but about the West's relationship to them; while he is undoubtedly correct, he appears oblivious to the harm that stems from silencing non-Western knowers in order to explore the perceived relationships between object and Western audience.

Omission of knowers/knowledge is the foundation upon which the Africanist field was built during the colonial era. Within early art market and art historical literature, it's most notably found in fetishisation and commodification practices that, literally and figuratively, stripped objects of cultural context and collecting history so the object may stand "on its own" as an art object. Within museums, omissions surround the scant acknowledgment of object histories, which leads to generalisations about object makers and the culture from which it came, which in turn leads to omissions of the physical, economic, and cultural violence of colonialist and post-colonialist history and the West's central role within it. This further leads to the omissions of the object's alternating financial, political, and cultural value in the process of commodification and Western display, which ultimately results in the illusory presentation of collections as benign forces of worldly understanding and education. Within both museums and academia, the devastating impact of colonialist history is frequently omitted, as can be seen by most museums' approach to representing the British Punitive Expedition of 1897. Most accounts omit British culpability, fail to mention the deaths of estimated thousands (or that this can only be estimated because an official death count was never conducted), and generally neglects to describe the event as the decimation of the ancient Edo empire at the impatient hands of the British.

Within all Africanist fields, it is normalised practice to omit knowledge of the illicit trade from public discourse, relegating it instead to private discussion. The harms that stem from this practice are numerous: key information that appears obvious to insiders is far from obvious to outsiders, leading to widespread misinformation which can adversely affects policy-making and academic research.

#### 4. Justificatory epistemic violence

This refers to justifications for harmful practices, most frequently those undertaken as part of a normalised institutional procedure. Such justifications frequently betray defensiveness and an unwillingness to acknowledge, let alone address, systemic practices that result in harm. Within museums, justifications are found in emphasising the legal right to objects acquired during certain periods in which there is ethical questionability surrounding their removal and import. Such arguments indicate a preoccupation with how Western institutions are perceived rather than how they affect source communities; most institutions recognise Western concepts of wrongdoing and their cut-off dates more readily than they recognise the harm done to source communities historically or presently. Within the academy, justifications frequently occur in the defence of harmful practices undertaken by older generations.

#### 5. Neglect

Neglect can be divided into two areas: neglecting to *engage with knowers/knowledge* and neglecting to *engage in discourse*. While neglect shares much in common with silencing, its difference lies in the actor's awareness of physical or symbolic violence and their resulting choice to refrain from action.

Neglecting to engage in discourse is a choice only those with a privileged position within that discourse have the ability to make. In the museum field, the vast majority have neglected to engage with the public, with scholars, or with source communities on issues of provenance, illicit trade, or steps towards decolonisation. This withholding of information serves to protect the institution from any possibility of incrimination, but ultimately harms both the museum's reputation and resources and those with whom the museum refuses dialogue. Within the Africanist field, most have chosen not to engage publicly with trade discourse. A few have shared their arguments for this choice, most of which centre on 1) their desire to prioritise their own career over what they perceive would be making a career out of these issues, and 2) the argument that it is African voices, not Western ones, which must now be prominent in controlling this discourse.

## V. Mechanisms of Structuring Violence

The manifestations of these forms of violence over the course of the colonial and post-colonial periods has varied significantly between fields, eras, and institutions. In order to recognise and further understand these violences, it is crucial that we explore these harms as historically situated norms that have been inherited by individuals and institutions from the colonial era; that we account for the extent to which colonial ideologies differ within the same system of knowledge/power production and the complicated push-pull dynamic between individuals and institutions; and that we examine these harms as part of a complex set of relations between institutions and individuals that symbiotically reinforce large-scale violence. In the previous chapter, I outlined the evolving historical frameworks of the museum-academy-market knowledge/power system. I expand upon these frameworks now in order to bring this theoretical perspective to life. By historicising the data in this way, we not only contextualise participant experience and field events, but we actively seek to reframe the narrative surrounding these issues with the goal of meaningful decolonisation of museum and academic practice.

In making sense of the evolution of these systems and the relationships between them, I now draw in a very different theoretical perspective, informed by Diane Vaughan's organisational sociological perspective. Where the macro-level consists of the world in which the institution is situated and the micro-level consists of individual action, the meso-level perspective, on which Vaughan trains attention, allows us to see organisations as "a window into culture", which in this instance refers to culture as the overarching group of values and norms that dominates and influences institutional behaviour (Vaughan, 2007: 4). Vaughan proposes that studying organisations at this level enables us to explore how culture acts as a mediating factor between institutional forces (the institution's priorities, budgets, resources, politics, etc.), organisational structure and goals, and individual agency in creating a setting in which harm and wrongdoing have been gradually normalised.

Vaughan breaks down the institutional mechanisms for normalisation into three key elements. The *production of culture* at 1) the meso-level is derived from 2) macro-structural influences (the political, economic, and cultural forces that determine ideological orientation, availability of resources, and pressure from competitors), which, along with 3) the personal influence of

micro-level individual(s), culminate in shared objectives and beliefs. Such culture is not necessarily shared through an entire institution, and may differ between separate work groups (Vaughan, 2007: 64). These work groups consist of individuals who interact because they share responsibilities for a central task, and may span numerous levels of institutional hierarchy. (Id.: 64) It is within these myriad work groups that the *culture of production* of harms is composed through a combination of shared cultural beliefs, patterned decision-making processes, and macro-structural pressures. When specialisation of production is segregated to different work-groups, information may fail to disseminate through institutional hierarchies, leading to what Vaughan calls *structural secrecy*. Within this study, the meso-level is enlarged to an entire field of study rather than a single institution: the field of Africanist research.

I now return to the mapping of different actors introduced in the previous chapter in order to elaborate upon the post-colonial criminology framework, in addition to using Vaughan, to help explain and contextualise at the organisational level how particular effects of violence are achieved.

#### a. Colonial Structure

As described in the previous chapter, the museum-academy-market system was originally a tightly connected and symbiotic entity that emerged during the course of colonial rule. Macro-structural influences at this time were dominated by the international political landscape of European colonialism in non-Western territories. There were two main motivators at work: first, there was stiff competition amongst burgeoning European empires to not only attain the most lucrative resources, but to exhibit their intellectual and cultural superiority through the elevation of ambitious academic research and awe-inspiring collections. Second, the exertion of power required constant maintenance, justification, and amplification in order to survive political criticism within Europe and indigenous revolt in colonial territories.

As a result, these institutions forged a common discourse to achieve compatible goals. In *Orientalism*, Edward Said describes “a growing systematic knowledge in Europe about the Orient, knowledge reinforced by the colonial encounter as well as by the widespread interest in the alien and unusual, exploited by the developing sciences of ethnology, comparative

anatomy, philology, and history.” (p. 39) The resulting discourse centred the West and non-Western civilisations in a binary of dominant and dominated, powerful and deficient, in which the West fabricated essentialising fantasies of the Other that reinforced the rightness of their campaign. Said writes that “the essential relationship, on political, cultural, and even religious grounds, was seen—in the West, which is what concerns us here—to be one between a strong and a weak partner.” (Said, 1978: 39-40).

While these three institutions remained distinct from one another, the individual actors who occupied them often belonged to all three at some point in their lives, if not all at once. As a result, the discursive relationships between the three were intimately linked as actors toted multi-hyphenate occupations or were in close contact with those who did. Discursive harms were thus the product of a wide-ranging meso-level borne out of militaristic might and academic inquiry. Said’s theory is founded on the Foucauldian concept of this circular knowledge/power relationship, in which the one legitimised the other in a repetitious loop. “To say simply that Orientalism was a rationalization of colonial rule is to ignore the extent to which colonial rule was justified in advance by Orientalism, rather than after the fact. Men have always divided the world up into regions having either real or imagined distinction from each other.” (1978: 39)

Separately, Vaughan corroborates this organisational interrelation when she writes, “Otherwise autonomous regulatory and regulated organizations can become linked by resource exchange or common interests, so that despite their physical separateness, they become interdependent.” The centrality of this interrelation at the beginning of the century had critical ramifications for regulation of museum and academic practice in latter half of the century. Vaughan confirms, “When regulatory relationships become interdependent, the sanctioning stage of social control can become compromised, so that the harshest sanctions are withheld and bargains are made.” (Vaughan 2002, 127-128)

### b. Modernist and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Structure

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the colonialist model altered with the introduction of the primitive art market. The advent of Modernism and its passionate commodification of non-Western cultural objects empowered the market for so-called “primitive” art, which elevated the market from

its previous status as mere ownership facilitator to a knowledge/power structure in its own right. It was in this period that the division of Africanist perspectives had its beginning, as the Modernist movement viewed objects first and foremost as art objects, while burgeoning anthropological research prioritised function and cultural use.

This division meant discursive harms occurred on two levels: while ethnographic discourse denigrated non-Western cultures and people of colour through essentialising and representational violence, modernist discourse approached non-Western peoples and objects with a contradictory, fetishizing lens. Homi Bhabha explains, “The fetish or stereotype gives access to an ‘identity’ which is predicated as much on mastery and pleasure as it is on anxiety and defence, for it is a form of multiple and contradictory belief in its recognition of difference and disavowal of it.” (Bhabha, 1994: 75) Modernist appreciation of non-Western objects falls squarely into this definition of fetishism, particularly as they themselves ascribed the term “fetish” to non-Western art objects. The commodification and fetishisation of these objects led to the ephemeral ideal of authenticity, in which collectors sought objects that fulfilled their vision of a primitive world untouched by industrialisation or Western contact.

This quickly developed a contradiction in the market, as indigenous makers created objects to supply the Western demand and the West consequently denigrated such objects as inauthentic. Bhabha writes, “This conflict of pleasure/unpleasure, mastery/defence, knowledge/disavowal, absence/presence, has a fundamental significance for colonial discourse. For the scene of fetishism is also the scene of the reactivation and repetition of primal fantasy – the subject’s desire for a pure origin that is always threatened by its division, for the subject must be gendered to be engendered, to be spoken.” (pg. 75)

### c. Mid-Century Structure

By the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the Africanist field had established itself on both sides of the Atlantic as a field in its own right. However, as the colonialist role of the military diminished with independence and the academy and museum evolved, the Africanist field became subject to the differing macro structures of the latter organisations. Initially, the ramifications of these separate macro-structures were little felt. As the African art market reached its heyday in the

United States, the reciprocal relationship between dealers, academics, and curators remained largely in place, with the divide between academic and curator being particularly transparent.

However, as American “universal” museums developed blockbuster exhibitions in competition with each other and new entertainment media, the role of the curator gained new pressures distinct from that of the academic. As they evolved from cabinets of curiosities representative of the work of one collector to nationalistic institutions representative of many, museum organisational structures have focused on the organisation as a single organism in which the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. At the meso-level, the museum emphasises building and protecting the brand of the museum, with responsibility and knowledge thus diffused over a number of levels. During the mid-century period, curators enjoyed long-term associations with individual institutions, with the caveat that the name and work of the individual curator was absorbed and eclipsed by the name and identity of the institution. Though they enjoyed fame within their field, in which they often participated in an academic as well as curatorial capacity, their authorship of exhibitions and collections was not as directly recognised by the general public.

At this time, there were few policies dictating museum acquisition ethics; big institutions were competitive in their collection building, so curators enjoyed a certain freeness in their acquisition decision-making that was spurred by the pressure to form the best possible collection. The ramifications of this system were threefold: 1) collection and exhibition narratives crystallised both market and academic discourse for a broader Western public, which brought harmful essentialisations and representational violence into an already oppressive mainstream discourse, whilst participating in the silencing of indigenous knowers; 2) the lack of regulatory oversight surrounding acquisition ethics created an environment in which curators were often free to act as they pleased, regardless of the larger macro-structural discourse surrounding illicit antiquities or the meso-level raised eyebrows about questionable acquisitions; 3) the institutional structure itself, in which decision-making processes are filtered through numerous levels of bureaucratic control, means that the discursive harms produced in the course of knowledge/power production become more complex and embedded.

In contrast, academic organisational structure has always been centred on the individual. While researchers depend on university size, wealth, and reputation to facilitate and validate

their research, and universities depend on researchers' productivity and reputation to bolster the institution's prestige and attractiveness to funders. Unlike museum exhibitions, researchers' publications and achievements are first and foremost their own, rather than the institution's as a whole. Compared to museum organisational culture, which is largely retained within a single institution, academic organisational culture flows through a great number of institutions, events, and projects, mediated by the ritualistic procedures of publishing, conferences, and teaching that are required for individuals to undergo a normalised trajectory for professional development.

Through these myriad productions and manifestations of discourse, both written and spoken, academics create and belong to abstract cultures that are simultaneously separate from and related to their position within a single institution. Thus, the meso-level is characterised by the dominance of the individual researcher and the position of the researcher within both their field's organisational culture and their university's organisational culture. This individualistic structure had great bearing on the development of the Africanist academic field in the mid-century period, particularly the burgeoning art historical arm within the United States, in two main ways.

First, the dominance of the individual researcher is particularly felt in the positioning of the researcher as expert; researchers have often tended to "colonise" subjects, seeking to create a body of work on a particular topic through which they are ultimately recognised as the leading producer of knowledge in that area. Such positioning, particularly as it established itself within Africanist research in the mid-century, leads to epistemic violence as described by Spivak (1983), in which the position of the intellectual is privileged over that of indigenous knowers/knowledge systems, allowing the academic to render their own position transparent as they represent the Other. In this process, Western academics of the mid-century applied Western art historical terms, methodologies, and ideologies to their description and definition of African objects, which contributed to the erasure of indigenous terms and definitions of their own cultural experience. Though there was some recognition of this erasure by mid-century art historians (Herbert Cole wrote in 1969, "Though the difficulty of understanding African points of view can hardly be overestimated, the necessity of attempting to do so is nonetheless imperative."), the issue remains today.

Second, the freedom and eminence afforded to individual academics during this time was paired with an intimate connection with the market, thus fostering prestige both from the quality of one's research as well as from one's influence on prominent collections. Connection with the market varied for individual researchers; for some, it took place in the overt collaborations and personal relationships one had with dealers or collectors. For others, it was contributions to auction catalogues and identification of objects for galleries. The British arm of the Africanist field were the most vocal opponents of the illicit trade, with many having spent many years in West Africa attempting to prevent the illegal export of cultural objects by market actors, as well as by their unconcerned colleagues. It was less of a sticking point for American Africanists, whose geographic removal from the issue allowed them a certain benign ignorance about the effects of Western demand on indigenous communities and cultural sites. This unfamiliarity led many American researchers to attribute works within private collections to certain ethnic groups based on educated guesses from previous experience with material, rather than from informed fieldwork.

#### d. Current Structure

Returning to the final depiction of structures and relations, the situation currently prevailing, I apply a postcolonial criminological lens and Vaughan's account. As conveyed previously, the museum-academy-market system within Africanist research is at its most complex today. The sub-division of academic and museum Africanists have garnered yet more subdivisions within them, which has both broadened and weakened the Africanist field as a whole.

Museum organisational structure has undergone the most noticeable transformation since the mid-century; with the passing of the 1970 UNESCO Convention came a number of damning cases in which reputable institutions were found to have acquired looted archaeological works. As a result, the macro regulatory environment has developed significantly, and is currently governed by a number of international policies (UNESCO 1970 Convention, UNESCO 2001 Convention), national laws, and ethical codes set by organisations such as the American Association of Museum Directors (AAMD), American Association of Museums (AAM), the Museums Association in the United Kingdom, and the International Council of Museums. These provide basic regulations for the acquisition and restitution of objects. Conversely, there has been little effective regulation for the art market throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and up to the

present day. Museum professionals have always been responsible for controlling the flow of objects from the private into the public sphere, but while museums have dutifully distanced themselves from a once friendly and familiar relationship with the market, they have done so with increasing discomfort and uncertainty.

Vaughan explains, “The autonomy (physical separateness, independence, and identity) of regulatory and regulated organizations limit the effectiveness of the monitoring, investigating, and discovery stages of social control efforts.” (2002; 127) Though there are policies that direct museum behavior, particularly on specific issues such as the acquisition of archaeological objects or the handling of religious objects, regulating bodies are often too far removed from museum practice to consistently monitor or regulate the implementation of policy and law. As a consequence, the presence of illicit objects in museum collections are most frequently discovered through journalistic, scholarly, and legal investigations, rather than internal institutional regulation. Though many museums have reviewed their own collections and taken responsibility for illicit objects, the majority of cases within the last twenty years have been the result of external forces’ closer examination of provenance records that existing museum regulations did not catch during the acquisition process. Optimistically, voluntary restitutions that are the result of internal provenance research within museums have become far more common in recent years.

Within the academy, the competitive environment has become particularly demanding. In this environment, universities seek to generate money through attracting public funds, obtaining research grants, and escalating student enrolment. Academics are in competition with one another for jobs and research funding, and are pressured to comply with increasingly demanding organisational roles in order to maintain job security. International policies and national laws do play a role in the regulatory environment, but do not inform or inhibit day-to-day practices. Rather, ethics policies and ethical reviews particular to fields and individual institutions play a more significant role in guiding behaviour and defining harm within one’s discipline. It is this division between disciplines and the resulting gaps in regulatory discourse that are most problematic in the current academic Africanist structure.

While the division between the archaeological and art historical sects of Africanist research have been in place from the beginning, the development of these fields separately from one

another through the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries has widened the gap considerably, with some finding intractable conflict between themselves and their colleagues in the other field. Due to their longer-term field research and sustained proximity to and involvement with indigenous source communities, archaeologists have been far more proactive in their efforts to stem illicit trade, both on the ground and through political intervention. A heated and progressive discourse on the effects of illicit digging and the responsibilities of archaeologists prompted progressive self-regulation within the field, in which resolutions were made in official and unofficial capacities regarding proper field conduct.

As a group situated within the Africanist field, archaeologists are the furthest removed from the historic influence of the market, and are thus the least concerned with alienating or offending collectors, dealers, or market institutions as a whole. The art historian division of Africanist research, however, has shown reluctance to embrace a similar outspokenness, to the great frustration of archaeologist colleagues. Because art historians have historically had the closest relationship to the market, ties remain between the two that prevent similarly progressive self-regulation from occurring.

In fact, self-regulation of Africanist art history is increasingly unlikely as the field fractures along fault lines running along the growing focus on contemporary African art and the anthro-art historical traditions of the last fifty years. Africanist art historians today are subtly divided into two groups: those who identify most closely as an Africanist, and those who identify most closely with their overarching discipline. The former continue to maintain muted relationships with the market, while the latter believe such fraternization would be a death knell for one's career. As a result, there are inconsistencies in practice, as well as in scholars' assumptions about colleagues' practice, that betray critical gaps in the discourse. This leads us to Vaughan's concept of structural secrecy, which in turn reveals discursive harms still at work today.

## VI. Conclusion

This chapter has brought together a range of perspectives not previously considered alongside each other. Social harms theory emerged and tends to be applied to particular national contexts, of the Global North. Though increasingly it is being drawn on outside of this area, it

almost never has been used to think about social harms as a transnational phenomenon. This has led to me incorporating postcolonial work where the role of Western states against other areas of the world is a central concern. Finally, perhaps Diane Vaughan's work sits most distinctly from these two perspectives. However, her theorising at the organisational level brings the macro perspectives of the postcolonial into alignment with the social harms theory and sets up the analysis, in the subsequent chapters. How individual museum administrators and academics speak about and understand their experiences and roles in the African art trade can now be interpreted through these frames.

## Chapter 4

### Methodology, Research Plan and Process

#### I. Initial Approach and Original Research Questions

When this research began in 2013, the ERC grant funded project, *Trafficking Culture*, was in its second year. I had just finished my MRes in Criminology, in which my dissertation focused on how American curators of African art conceptualised the risks and rights of the acquisition, exhibition, and repatriation of African cultural objects. This research provided me with a valuable introduction to the African art field, its scholars, and its institutional cultures, which allowed me to devise a more in-depth approach to the field for my PhD. However, this was a very limited glimpse of the institutional norms of American museum, and I remained largely unaware of the scope and details of the African art market.

Very little research has been conducted on the West African arm of the illicit antiquities trade. None of us at *Trafficking Culture* being Africanists, and with no Africanists actively publishing on these issues within illicit antiquities research, my original supervisors and I approached the topic with the assumption that it possessed a similar structure to other branches and jurisdictions of the illicit trade in cultural objects. That is to say, we assumed it consisted largely of archaeological and historic non-archaeological objects that had been illicitly dug/stolen and sold through one or more middlemen, with the most aesthetically and historically significant objects ending up on the European, American, and Asian markets through auction houses such as Sotheby's and Christies.

As a result, my initial research questions focused heavily on the market and its governance. The overarching aim of the project as it was initially conceived therefore was to address the question: To what extent has the illicit trade in African antiquities been impacted by regulatory, academic and market activities since the 1990s? This was then further specified in three questions targeting specific aspects of this issue:

1. How did the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Mali and the United States affect market activity involving Malian antiquities?

In 1997, the United States and the Government of the Republic of Mali entered into a bilateral agreement to restrict the importation of archaeological materials, particularly from the Niger River Valley region. This MOU has since been renewed three times and has been accompanied by major governmental initiatives to battle looting that, prior to the political upheaval in Mali, enjoyed a good deal of success. This portion of the study sought to examine the market in Malian antiquities before and after the MOU to determine whether it, in conjunction with the UNESCO 1970 Convention, works as legislative regulation, what effects it has had on the market, and what effects it and related legislation has had in modifying behaviour and/or beliefs of academic and museum actors. Additionally, I planned to examine comparative markets of Nigerian and Ghanaian objects to determine Mali's effects in contrast with neighbouring source countries not currently or historically in agreements with the US.

2. What were the effects of academic involvement on the size and nature of the trade?

Taking into account the rise of globalist and multicultural perspectives in 1980s and 1990s academia which challenged the institutionalised approach to “primitive” art, this portion of the study sought to determine the positive and negative effects of academic involvement in the market. Principally, I was focused on the case study of the Oxford University Research Laboratory, which discontinued their use of thermoluminescence dating to authenticate illicitly exported West African objects in 1992 after widespread protest. By examining the market before and after this event and peripheral academic events, I intended to explore whether the withdrawal of university support affected the economic and legal aspects of the market, what effect this particular event may have had in the moral and social argument on market credibility, and how it affected academic support of private individuals and commercial salesrooms and galleries.

3. How have major exhibitions over the past 25 years affected market demand for African objects?

In the wake of numerous museum scandals, many museums have shifted the narrative of their exhibitions and collections from the purely aesthetic, ahistorical appreciation of cultural objects to a more dynamic and self-aware perspective that reflects the

original context and use of objects, as well as the conditions under which they were removed from their place of origin. By looking at the market before and after this change in the approach to exhibitions, I had hoped to determine what role major exhibitions have played in sparking market demand, whether the withdrawal of museum support for the display of looted objects has depressed demand, and how museum stances have affected moral and social action overall.

In order to answer these questions, I developed a plan for quantitative data collection and analysis that would be contextualised through a compact set of qualitative interviews with academics and museum professionals. I designed a multiple interrupted time-series research design focusing on Mali and comparative effects in neighbouring countries such as Nigeria, Niger, and Ghana. This would involve gathering a series of cross-sectional snapshots of data points (prices, number and nature of objects) within the market literature over time, using the control group data (in this case, comparator markets) to estimate the effect of the three interventions on the dynamics of the demand for Malian objects principally and its surrounding countries secondarily.

In particular, I focused on the effects of market booms and lulls, trends in aesthetic and cultural preferences, evolution of attitudes and perspectives on cultural objects, and when and how provenance and other validating factors such as thermoluminescence dating are displayed. This would have determined whether the interventions have affected the availability of objects on the market, what types of objects are most desired and valuable, and ultimately what areas of each intervention could be pinpointed as being most conducive to the perpetuation the trade in illicit trafficking objects. While experimental time-series approaches are difficult to construct and are often costly, my study had identified a natural experiment in which the interventions that would be measured had already been applied.

Additionally, there was an existing data source (market literature, followed by ethnographic interviews) that would have allowed me to use this method to test the effects of the identified interventions. Overall, this approach would have largely exploited existing market data (which has never been systematically done in research) rather than conducting a time consuming and expensive process of creating experimental conditions and methods of data recording.

### a. Quantitative Element

The original plan for the quantitative portion of the study was twofold: first, I was to record sales using catalogues from major auction houses Sotheby's and Christies, which offered a comprehensive and historical source of quantifiable data of descriptive information and estimated and actual prices; and second, museum acquisition records and exhibition catalogues would provide information on object descriptions, details as to whether the objects were acquired as gifts or by purchase, and testimony of institutional ideology in exhibition narratives. The goal of this section was not to measure the exact size and influence of the market overall, but to simply analyse the market over roughly fifty years to determine how dominant trends, prices, and perspectives fluctuated through that time.

Data from auction catalogues was to be divided into three categories: economic, art/historical information, and market history.

Economic information contained:

- Auction House
- Date (of auction)
- Year (of auction)
- Name of Sale
- Place of Sale
- Lot number
- Low Estimate
- High Estimate
- Price Realized
- Price Adjusted to 2013

These provided the general numbers of the event, and were most easily used for quantitative analysis to demonstrate market lows and highs. However, variables such as the name of the sale can also provide invaluable qualitative data, as sale names reflect presiding terminology year by year, often switching between "Primitive Art", "Tribal Art", and "Art of Africa,

Oceania, and the Americas”. This can be a useful indicator of current attitudes, especially as approaches to non-Western art altered over time.

Art/historical information included:

- Title (of object)
- Description
- Information/history
- Photo
- Type
- Material
- Culture
- Dates
- Country listed
- Country assumed
- General location

These variables provided general descriptive information about the object provided by the auction house (shape, features, details, materials, height and width, etc.), often accompanied by a segment ranging from one paragraph to a whole page on the original use of the object, its significance, or anecdotal information on its history. They can also provide information on trends for particular types and cultures, and insight into socio-cultural and art historical perspectives.

And finally, market history variables comprised:

- Provenance
- Thermoluminescence certification
- Exhibition/Literature
- Property/seller
- Archaeological findspot

These provided details on the ownership history, scientific and historical validation, and previous display and/or publication of objects. In addition to quantifiable information on individual object histories, I believed these variables could help determine when and how provenance and dating certification began being included, whether objects with provenance, dating certification, and exhibition and/or publication credentials may command higher prices, and the identification of preferred thermoluminescence dating labs

Over the course of two years, I collected auction catalogue data from four institutions. The bulk of my catalogues came from the Glasgow University Library (100 of Sotheby's and 94 Christies), followed by catalogues recorded during fieldwork in September 2014 at Harvard University (163 Sotheby's and 21 Christies) and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts Library (13 Christies), and supplemented by scans of catalogues shared by a colleague from the Art Institute of Chicago (13 Christies). In all, I recorded data from 227 catalogues: 49 Sotheby's catalogues from Glasgow, all 163 Sotheby's from Harvard, and 16 Christies from Harvard.

Using issues of UCLA-based *African Arts* magazine from its first issue in 1967 through 2012, I amassed three lists: 1) notable publications on West African art (not comprehensive), a comprehensive list of all West African-focused exhibitions, and 3) drawing from the second list, a list of notable West African-focused exhibitions. Of the latter, I found and recorded information from thirteen exhibition catalogues. Additionally, I intended to use *African Arts* to quantitatively track the number of advertisements in each issue from 1967-2012 to further illustrate the changing relationship between academia and market.

#### b. Qualitative Element

As noted, a smaller scale qualitative element to the research was designed to supplement and contextualise the quantitative portion of this study. Semi-structured individual interviews were intended to provide historical and cultural edification surrounding the museum and academic interventions in my time-series study, but were not going to form the bulk of my data. Where the quantitative data was intended as a framework for understanding correlative phenomena in market-academic and market-museum relationships over the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, the qualitative interviews were meant to explore the beliefs behind and reactions to these relationships as they evolved.

Due to the sensitivity of these issues within the museum community, I anticipated difficulty in securing a large number of participants, in any case. My Master's thesis only contained seven interviews after having contacted twenty-seven curators and museum directors. Consequently, I was prepared for a low response rate. Through 2014 and 2015, I reached out to 45 individuals in the Africanist field via email. I sent requests on a rolling basis, contacting a set number of key individuals who were active and reasonably well known in the fields, conducting interviews, and then snowballing my sample group by gaining recommendations and introductions from those participants. Of the 45 people contacted, 28 agreed to interviews and 21 completed the interview process.

### c. Interview Sample Selection Rationale and Positionality

My decision to focus solely on actors based in the West (though not necessarily from Western countries) was based on three points. First, the advantages of my recent experience. Having just completed my Masters dissertation, I was compelled to continue in this vein in order to develop a more thorough understanding of how individuals in this field conceptualise their role in issues of illicit trade. Second, the advantages of recent access. Through my Masters, I developed key experience in negotiating access to individuals in a field that is notorious for its lack of transparency or accessibility to outsiders. I hoped that this experience would afford me more opportunities for interviews. Third, and most importantly, my own position as a scholar in the West.

As a white American living in the UK, I am in a position of power to critically assess the ways in which Western educational institutions continue to benefit from and reinforce knowledge/power systems established through Western colonial aggression (Bhabra et al. 2018). My privilege, including my educational, racial, financial, and geographical privilege, affords me the safety to conduct and publish this research with little negative effect on my career. I did not extend my research plan to institutions within West Africa because I do not have the moral, cultural, or racial authority or right to speak on these issues within the African continent, having never been there and not possessing the cultural or linguistic tools required to do so. While I have concerns that my choice to focus exclusively on scholars in the West might serve to reinforce the oppositional binary between the West versus Other, I have sought

to position the Western focus of this study as a challenge to its power, rather than as a reinforcement.

These ethical and reflexive considerations were at that time quite instinctual; I had not read, in preparing my study or in the two years of gathering market data, any postcolonial theory or work on reflexivity in research. I just felt that it would have been inappropriate to presume to include participants based in Africa as a tokenistic gesture of having some quotes to sprinkle into a largely quantitative project. However, and as will become clearer in the presentation of interview data in the subsequent chapters this instinctual sense led to my deeper concerns about the field of African cultural objects generally – not just the market whose movements I was tracking – but also the troubling way that African cultures, peoples and their material objects were described and talked about. For a number of reasons that I give just below, I eventually abandoned the quantitative element of the project and focused entirely on the interviews developing a qualitative study. However, before turning to that discussion, I describe the process of interviews, as these were planned and carried out.

#### d. Ethical Procedure

The University of Glasgow College of Social Sciences Ethics Form was completed, reviewed, and approved by the Ethics Committee for Non-Clinical Research Involving Human Subjects on 1 September 2014, ethics reference number 400130162.

Following College of Social Science ethics advice, a Plain Language Statement was provided in the introductory email. Their understanding of it was discussed prior to their signing the consent form. Anonymity was offered, but I ultimately decided to make the majority of participants anonymous regardless of their willingness to be named. Interviews were audio-recorded with consent. Where requested, a transcript of the interview was sent to the participant so they could redact information they may have deemed too sensitive. However, none of the participants who requested transcripts chose to do so.

Because the majority of interviews were conducted via telephone or Skype, recordings were done on Apple's Garage Band and stored on my password-protected computer. For interviews done in person, the audio recorder was stored in my home in a locked filing cabinet. Signed

consent forms were sent via email and stored digitally. Transcripts were identified only by participants' initials and location. The ethics application states that data will be retained over a ten year period, until 2024, at which time audio files will be deleted but anonymised transcripts will be retained.

No financial incentives were provided to participants.

#### e. Interview Process

Because my participants spanned Europe and the US, interviews were conducted largely via Skype and telephone, with face-to-face interviews in two instances. All were individual interviews except one, conducted jointly with two participants.

Interviews were semi-structured with a list of set questions tailored to the individual participant's experience and field background. Semi-structured interviews allow for the researcher to focus on a particular set of themes, while also giving interviewees the opportunity to identify unexpected issues and themes by giving them space to expand or digress (Leavy, 2014).

Questions were grouped into four sections, though not all questions were asked for all participants:

- i. A request for a brief career history and/or relation to the issues if unknown.
- ii. Academic involvement: what changes have occurred over the last few decades in relation to interactions with the market and the authentication and validation of cultural objects for sale, which events are identified as being responsible for these changes, whether the morality towards the activity has changed or the risks are simply too high, the evolution in how academics support private collectors and commercial salesrooms and galleries, the differences between academic art historical approaches versus anthropological approaches to West African cultural objects and the market, academic relationships with source communities, experiences with looting, theft, or the production of fakes in the field, etc.

- iii. Museum involvement in acquiring and exhibiting West African cultural objects: what changes have occurred over the last few decades, which events are identified as being most responsible for particular changes, how museum relationships with collectors have evolved, how museum relationships with auction houses and dealers have evolved, whether there has been a noticeable increase in the marketing of particular styles and cultural types of objects after a major exhibition of that style or culture, museum relationships with source communities, etc.
- iv. Regulation of the import, export, and excavation of West African cultural objects: whether regulation has had any noticeable impact on the availability of particular objects, whether regulation has had an impact on governmental efforts to curb trafficking, what those efforts consist of and how they have been successful and/or unsuccessful, what kind of regulation has been most effective at both the supply and demand ends of the trafficking network, etc.

However, the fourth category was quickly absorbed into the other sections and not asked about explicitly, with the intention of identifying which participants directly discussed regulation and its impacts and which omitted it.

#### f. Discontinuing Quantitative Data Analysis

In late 2016 and early 2017, I made significant changes to my research questions which lead to my ultimate decision to discontinue the quantitative portion of this study. As fieldwork progressed and I considered the most appropriate methods for analysis, it became increasingly apparent that my original research questions had altered too drastically to continue without alteration. This was made most clear in the course of learning more about the Africanist field and African art market, which upended the assumptions that had informed my initial research design. Four particular points were:

## 1. Terminology

My supervisors and I had assumed that many, if not most, objects could be considered “antiquities” and that the word “antiquity” would not be out of place in this discussion (Brodie, 2015). It is true that *desired* and most *valuable* market objects consist primarily of archaeological material and historic pre-colonial (19<sup>th</sup> century) figures and masks that fall under the term “antiquity”. However, archaeological objects represent a small minority of the African art market, which is in fact dominated by 20<sup>th</sup> century cultural objects. The term “antiquity” is not used by most scholars in the Africanist field because much of the demand for objects, both scholarly and commercially, has focused on objects that are not more than one or two centuries old, and, moreover, the term itself is too broad to apply to a body of objects with uncertain dates. As a consequence, one cannot speak of a purely “illicit antiquities trade” in West Africa, which is the common blanket term for trafficking on cultural objects from areas such as Asia, or the middle east (Brodie, 2009; Mackenzie and Davis, 2014). While one *could* focus solely on the African antiquities market, it would not be representative of the market that is dominant and with which Western scholars most frequently interact.

## 2. Market Structure

The terminology issue was about more than nomenclature: it also affected assumptions about how the trade in African objects worked. I assumed that archaeological losses in West Africa would mirror those in other countries and that the market would follow a familiar process of archaeological looting, to various middlemen and dealers, to Western collectors. While the antiquities arm of the art market does appear to follow this structure, the market as a whole is made more complex by the modernity of the majority of its objects, which 1) are complicated by differing definitions of authenticity between buyers and creators, and 2) are not accompanied by the same push for pristine provenance as accompanies archaeological objects.

In the first case, where the authenticity of an object in other fields is defined by a clear-cut binary (objects made in a specific time by a specific people versus objects made by modern peoples to fool others for profit), authenticity in African art fills a spectrum determined by age, makers, intent for use, and ultimately, the buyers’ own perception and definition of authenticity. The most authentic objects are those considered to have been made for purely

cultural or religious purposes, preferably dating to before colonial occupation. Inauthentic objects are those that have been made to fill market demand, though they may look identical to “authentic” objects.

These categories are further complicated by the fact that many objects are created for the market but used culturally or religiously first to bestow them with authenticity and added value, while “fakes” made explicitly for the art market are created by the same artists in the same cultural groups that have made “authentic” counterparts. Genuinely historic wooden figures that date from just before or just after the introduction of colonial occupation may be indistinguishable from objects created last year, by the same ethnic group, that were treated to develop an aged patina. Without a clear provenance, authenticity in non-ceramic works is almost impossible to determine. While my original research design would not have been overly affected by issues of authenticity, I eventually concluded that the quantitative data gathered for the research may have over-simplified a market that is intricate and dynamic.

In the second case, modern cultural objects with no clear provenance may have entered the market in a myriad of ways, spanning the spectrum from unwilling theft of personal and community objects, to the willing sale of cultural objects by individuals and communities. The violent history behind objects sold unwillingly or stolen during conflict and times of socio-economic instability is lost in the decontextualizing nature of commodification, making it much more difficult to discern what percentage of the market consists of objects taken through the systemic harms of war, poverty, and cultural genocide, what percentage are objects made for direct market consumption, and what percentage have been sold willingly by individuals or communities. As narratives surrounding the certainty and uncertainty of object history gained prominence in my interviews, the parameters of my quantitative data analysis felt increasingly limited, and unable to provide access to problematic Western perspectives.

While white Western scholars exhibited no qualms about condemning the trade of stolen or looted archaeological objects, they exhibited a notable indifference surrounding unprovenanced cultural objects that may or may not have left their place of origin as a result of socio-economic hardships, such as war, drought, famine, and poverty, that drove the original owner to sell. They were even less bothered by willing sales due to changes in cultural and religious beliefs achieved through colonial occupation. Participants’ willingness to accept

the ambiguity of object histories and their discomfort with assuming every object was potentially stolen or unwillingly sold indicated a much more complicated and significant perspective toward Western acquisition than I had initially anticipated.

### 3. Colonial Borders

My quantitative research design assumed that identifying objects from the Malian market and comparative Nigerian and Ghanaian markets could be simply achieved by identifying which ethnic groups belonged to which countries. With specialist knowledge of West African art, this may be possible. However, my assumption failed to consider the arbitrary nature of modern-day African borders that were initially imposed by European imperialists, which consequently divided indigenous boundaries into two or more countries. As a result, objects listed in auction catalogues with very little information beyond ethnic affiliation could belong to a group spanning multiple (modern recognised national) borders. By limiting these objects to a single presumed country, I would have made an uneducated guess that had a high likelihood of being wrong. This would have led to questionable results during data analysis.

### 4. Growing awareness and concern about colonialism

The first of these factors – terminology, market factors and colonial borders – combined to build my realisation that this field could not be researched identically to the market in other objects, and significantly, that doing so might itself be an act of Western arrogance. I did not want to shoehorn the African art trade, and by extension the people and communities whose culture was supplying its objects, into a one size fits all model where (yet again) Western scholars decide what is or is not effective regulation or significant heritage harm. As I conducted interviews in support of the quantitative analysis, I began to see these as inherently interesting and important in their own right.

The often unapologetic and unexamined views of interview participants displayed what I now recognise as a colonialist mindset, in many ways (and with important exceptions). To my, at that time, naïve liberal sensibility, this felt quite shocking, and I sought to understand how such attitudes were still possible. More importantly, I began to question the data I had already collected. Namely, the market information which derived from material produced by the same

sorts of people as I was interviewing. Rather than seeing this data as neutral accounts of market shape and trends, I began to see it as normatively loaded valuations of people and culture, and irretrievably influenced by colonial ideas of the Other.

The project's initial design was organised around a clear sense that the project would be situated within the discipline of criminology. However, I struggled to find a criminological theory that would provide a useful frame. Prior work had employed theories from what is known as crimes of the powerful / white collar crime research and this has been a promising direction in analysing other cases of illegal networks of antiquities trafficking (Mackenzie, 2005; 2006; 2007). I also became deeply engaged in the work of Diane Vaughan, and her organisational approach to complex crime. However, these directions did not get to the heart of what had emerged in my interviews. Interviews not only betrayed certain values held by participants, but also demonstrated that historical relationships between countries and institutions of the 'West' with those of Africa were still defining contemporary views and relations. I needed some way to make sense of these issues.

I turned to post-colonial theory and social harms theory in late 2016. These theories reinforced the significance of my qualitative findings, leading me to restructure my research questions predominantly around my qualitative data. Between the growing emphasis on my interviews, the weaknesses I had discerned in my original quantitative research design, and the sheer level of work a combined qualitative-quantitative study demanded, I determined that it was in my best interest to discontinue quantitative analysis in order to develop a clearer and more nuanced qualitative understanding of the Africanist field.

The theoretical foundation of this study was originally rooted in organisational crime perspectives (e.g. Vaughan, 1996). Until 2016, however, it remained in a half-formed state as I struggled to build upon existing criminological theories to adequately explain the phenomena I saw in academic and museum fields surrounding the effects of criminalisation of previously normalised behaviours. Post-colonial theory provided the exact terminology and ideology I had struggled to find in criminology in relation to examining behavioural evolution in colonially-developed institutions. Additionally, it presented a challenge to redefine the parameters of my qualitative research after having removed the quantitative portion of this study.

## II. Revised Approach: A Post-Colonial Reading of My Study and Data

### A. Revised Research Questions and an Inductive Approach

Having at last adopted post-colonial and social harms theory (Chapter 3), I necessarily reformed my research questions:

1. How has colonialist ideology influenced the structure/production of knowledge in regards to the acquisition/exhibition/study of objects in the Africanist field up to the present day?
2. What harms have been produced, perpetuated, and challenged as the Africanist field has responded to change through the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and specifically to the illicit art market?

These questions were generated through the qualitative data already collected. In effect, I switched from a structured case study approach involving evaluating hypotheses about what affects market activity in African objects, to an inductive, quasi-grounded theory (e.g. Glaser, 2004) approach. It is quasi-grounded theory because I did not go into the study with this inductive approach and do not feel it appropriate to retrospectively fit a theory onto the data I had already collected. Rather, I benefitted from learning about inductive approaches, and realised that I was abandoning my original methodology in favour of allowing the insights of the data to guide me to issues that were more fundamental, which is in the spirit of grounded theory without claiming to be adhering to established methods of that model.

I sought methodologies and tools that would allow me to make sense, in a systematic way, of the interview data. Hence, I harnessed tools for analysing speech that would offer a critical take on the symbolic forms of violence and underlying cultural biases that I saw in the data and which I theorised through the material in Chapter 3. I turned to forms of critical discourse analysis, now known broadly as Critical Discourse Studies.

As a further result of this shift in focus, the qualitative and quantitative elements switched positions as foreground and background, and it was proposed that much of the literature collected as part of my quantitative analysis be repurposed as contextualising data.

## B. Critical Discourse Studies

Critical Discourse Studies (CDS) is an umbrella term for a collection of methods of critical discourse analysis. The school originated among a network of linguistics scholars in the early 1990s, who at that time employed the term critical discourse analysis (CDA). Since then, CDS has evolved to span numerous fields across linguistics and the social and political sciences. It is not a theory in its own right, but a perspective which guides various forms of discourse analysis. At its core, CDS is dedicated to the exploration of how discourse is used to produce and challenge dominance and power abuse in social groups (van Dijk, 1995). How that goal is manifested varies greatly due to the multitude of approaches the school encompasses, all unique to the critical goals of each individual study. However, despite the plethora of variations, CDS is defined by three key factors:

- CDS differs from other forms of discourse studies in its “constitutive problem-oriented, interdisciplinary approach”, which does not focus on individual linguistic elements but seeks to analyse, understand, and explain “social phenomena that are necessarily complex and thus require a multidisciplinary and multi-methodical approach.” (Wodak and Mayer, 2015: 2) Viewing language as a form of social action, CDS examines how language is used to express and enact ideology and power.
- As a methodological approach, it must be used in conjunction with established theories to create an interdisciplinary understanding of socio-cognitive and socio-political intersections of power and discourse. CDS demands an interdisciplinary approach to encompass a full examination of macro-, meso-, and micro-level contextual analysis.
- The critical impetus: CDS research should ultimately be political. The goal of CDS research should be social change. Unlike other forms of discourse analysis, CDS analysts are encouraged to take an explicit socio-political stance.

CDS views language as a form of social practice in which ideology and power are manifested through the production and progression of discourse. The definitions of CDS's most frequently used terms – power, ideology, and discourse – tend to vary among scholars and thus require consistent clarification.

## 1. Discourse

The term “discourse” here refers to complex clusters of simultaneous and sequential interrelated semiotic practices – including linguistic (both written and spoken) and visually representational acts – related to a macro-topic, situated within specific fields of social action (Wodak and Mayer, 2015). That is to say, discourse consists of both written, spoken, and visual contributions to a larger topic, the actions of which occur within specific fields of socio-cultural and institutional conduct. Discourse is not merely text, but texts are a part of discourse that “make speech acts durable over time and thus bridge two dilated speech situations, i.e. the situation of speech production and the situation of speech reception.” (Wodak and Mayer, 2015: 27) In analysing discourse, we are concerned with four specific elements:

- 1) Intertextuality refers to the ways in which texts are linked to other texts. They may be connected through explicit reference to another text, topic, or main actor, through references to the same event, through the transfer of arguments from one text to another, or by allusions or evocations. (Wodak and Mayer, 2015: 30)
- 2) Recontextualisation refers to the process of transferring given elements to new contexts; when an element is taken out of a specific context, it is ‘de-contextualised’ before it is recontextualised in the insertion of the element into a new context. Intertextuality is thus manifested through recontextualisation of elements from one text or discourse into another.
- 3) Interdiscursivity refers to the ways in which multiple discourses may be linked, either to other topics or to sub-topics within a discourse.
- 4) The field of action refers to “a segment of social reality that constitutes a (partial) ‘frame’ of a discourse.” (Id., 2015: 30) Examples would include political law-making.

## 2. Ideology

‘Ideology’ here is defined as a perspective or worldview system “composed of related mental representations, convictions, opinions, attitudes, values and evaluations” which are shared by members of a social group (25). In CDS, ideologies are seen to serve as important means of establishing shared social identities and of creating or maintaining unequal power relations. In discourse, this takes forms such as controlling access to specific discourses or public spheres and hegemonic identity narratives. CDS particularly focuses on the ways in which discourse mediates and produces ideologies within social institutions and organisations.

### 3. Power

Wodak and Mayer define power as “an asymmetric relationship among social actors who have different social positions or who belong to different social groups.” (2015: 26) Thus, ‘power’ is enacted at personal (micro), organisational (meso), and systemic (macro) levels through power networks, defined as ‘two or more power-dependence relations’, and the nature of certain social relations which create ‘ties of mutual dependence between parties’ (Emerson 1962: 32). Physical violence, control of resources and the means of production, and threats and emotional manipulation are all enactments of power that may reverberate throughout the micro-meso-macro system.

It is through discourse that power is validated and invalidated. Discourse is a site of social struggle in which power is manifested through ideological struggles for dominance via linguistic forms and expressions, the control of the social occasion in which contributions to discourse occurs, the form of genre or text contributing to the discourse, and control over who may view or engage with the discourse.

### C. Discourse Historical Approach

While CDS overall provides a compatible framework through which to apply post-colonial and social harms theory presented in the previous chapter, the Discourse Historical Approach offers further refinement in this study. The Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) employs a corpus-based methodology to examine the nature and evolution of one or multiple discourses over a certain length of time. Its defining feature is a system of triangulation in which a variety of empirical data is analysed alongside its contextualising historical, cultural, and political

background data. While CDS overall emphasises the importance of analysing data within the wider context of its historical and current knowledge-power production systems, DHA differs from other approaches in that the contextualising data is explored and analysed with as much weight as the base empirical data, thus establishing a greater level of understanding in the linguistic and procedural relationships between the events under examination and the history leading up to them. As such, unlike other corpus-based methods, DHA has elements of quantitative analysis but places greater emphasis on the qualitative.

In line with CDS generally, DHA demands an interdisciplinary, problem-oriented approach from research that is necessarily critical and self-reflective, with an emphasis on seeking results that are made available to experts and the public, and that can and will be applied to create positive change (Wodak and Mayer, 2015). DHA operates under the socio-philosophical orientation of critical theory. It follows three interconnected aspects of critique:

1. *Text or discourse immanent critique* seeks to identify inconsistencies, contradictions, paradoxes, and dilemmas in the text-internal and/or discourse-internal structures.
2. The *socio-diagnostic critique* is concerned with exposing persuasive and/or manipulative natures of discursive practices. This socio-linguistic critique requires the analyst to exceed “the purely textual or discourse internal sphere” as they employ their own personal background and contextual knowledge to embed the communicative and interactional aspects of a discourse in a wider frame of socio-political relationships, processes, and events. It is within this critique that analysts are obliged to apply social theories to interpret discursive events.
3. *Prognostic or prospective critique* seeks to contribute to the transformation and improvement of communication within institutions or social groups (Wodak and Meyer, 2015: 65).

DHA undertakes a three-dimensional process: it first identifies the specific content or topics for analysis within with a specific discourse, investigates the discursive strategies involved, and examines the linguistic means and context-dependent linguistic relations (Wodak and Mayer, 2015: 32). Unlike other forms of CDS,

- 1) Fieldwork and ethnography are required for a thorough analysis and theorising of the subject at hand;
- 2) Research continually moves between theory and empirical data. DHA encourages a complex research strategy that integrates abductive reasoning (the construction of explanatory hypotheses by observing data and relating them tentatively to previous theoretical models) with inductive processes (empirical exploration of the strength of hypotheses) and, ideally, deduction (drawing prognostic conclusions on the basis on the applied theory);
- 3) Multiple genres, spaces, and intertextual and interdiscursive relationships are studied;
- 4) The historical orientation of texts and discourses is taken into account, permitting the analyst to reconstruct the process of recontextualisation that links discourses intertextually and interdiscursively over a set period of time;
- 5) And categories and methods are not fixed but are elaborated upon according to the specific problems explored in individual analyses.

DHA's emphasis on contextualising discourse with historical data plays a particularly vital role in this study. While some research on the illicit antiquities trade and related repatriation debates have necessarily touched on the role of colonialism in the modern transit of cultural objects, few studies have examined the role of colonial ideology on modern institutional culture in relation to the creation, perpetuation, and reaction to these issues. Members of colonialist-founded institutions rarely perceive their retention of colonialist ideology within their institutional culture; this not only affects the perspective of their work and their orientation to issues of illicit trade, but has resulted in the defensive and evasive response to criticism surrounding the current operation of their institution. Meanwhile, concerned stakeholders have misguidedly vilified individuals and institutions alike in their effort to provoke institutional change, ignorant of institutional histories and further entrenching disagreements and misunderstandings of institutional culture. It is my hope that by employing a DHA-based approach, this study will provide much-needed context surrounding the evolution of colonialist-founded institutional structure and culture as it has affected the behaviour and decision-making processes surrounding issues of illicit trade.

From an interdisciplinary perspective, CDS/DHA provides a relevant structure through which to manage the diversity of disciplines at work in this study. From a critical perspective, the use

of CDS/DHA shares the inherently critical manner of post-colonial theory, complements the semantic restructuring of a social harms approach, and supports an innately political view and the goal of instigating deep-seated institutional change. Though they have emerged from very different fields, with CDS/DHA firmly rooted in linguistics, post-colonialist theory largely at home in literature and literary criticism, and the social harms approach borne out of criminology, all are founded upon the critique of texts and discourse with the intention of acknowledging and upsetting unjust power distributions. Overall, as post-colonial theory does not present any standardised method of data analysis, I believe CDS/DHA, in conjunction with post-colonial theory and a social harms approach, offers a unique perspective that will diversify how we understand and approach these issues in illicit antiquities research.

#### D. Process of Applying Discourse Approaches to Interview Data

I am not a trained linguist, and I have adapted a DHA-based approach that omits the more structured analytical steps typical of CDS. While this type of linguistic analysis is incredibly valuable and, I would argue, a much-needed method within illicit antiquities research, this study ultimately seeks to develop its theoretical contribution rather than the methodological, and so I adapted DHA to suit the social sciences-background and time constraints of this study.

Though this analysis methodology was chosen more than halfway through the research process, the study itself has (unwittingly) adhered to the basic structure of DHA analysis. Wodak and Mayer outline the DHA process in eight steps (Wodak and Mayer, 2015: 34):

1. Activation and consultation of preceding theoretical knowledge (i.e. recollection, reading and discussion of previous research).
2. Systematic collection of data and context information (depending on the research questions, various discourses and discursive events, social fields as well as actors, semiotic media, genres and texts).

These two steps constituted the first section of my research process. While I did not use my quantitative data as planned, gathering this data alongside my qualitative

interviews played a crucial role in developing context surrounding field and market histories, relationships, and evolution.

3. Selection and preparation of data for specific analyses (selection and downsizing of data according to relevant criteria, transcription of interviews, etc).
4. Specification of the research question/s and formulation of assumptions (on the basis of a literature review and a first skimming of the data).
5. Qualitative pilot analysis, including a context analysis, macro-analysis and micro-analysis (allows testing categories and first assumptions, as well as the further specification of assumptions).

Steps 3 and 4 occurred at two intervals in this study, with step 5 leading to a repeat of the prior two. As the data behind my combined qualitative-quantitative segment was tested through initial analysis and presentation to a small number of conferences and seminars, I returned to step 3 in downsizing my data through the removal of my quantitative analysis, and to step 4 in reconstructing my research questions.

6. Detailed case studies (of a whole range of data, primarily qualitatively, but in part also quantitatively).
7. Formulation of a critique (interpretation and explanation of results, taking into account the relevant context knowledge and referring to the three dimensions of critique).

Finally,

8. Practical application of analytical results (if possible, the results may be applied or proposed for practical application targeting some social impact).

## E. Analytical Framework Applied

In analysing interview data, my framework is broken into three main sections, each with their own subsections.

### 1. Macro

The macro-level situates the large-scale context of institutional structures and historical background. Within this level, analysis includes:

- a. The field and/or discipline of the speaker, paying special attention to whether fields/disciplines overlap,
- b. The type of institution/organisation to which the speaker belongs,
- c. The over-arching discourses included in the text,
- d. And the historical elements that compose the background for this particular contribution to the discourse.

Analysis at this level seeks to identify the structural elements that produce, support, and mask harms, as well as those that challenge harms and contribute to desistance. By developing an understanding of field and market history, particularly within the larger outline of Western colonialism, we not only gain a more thorough understanding of institutional cultures and their historic relations to one another and their parent-culture of colonialist ideology, but we increase the likelihood of identifying information that speakers may intentionally or unintentionally omit from their narrative.

### 2. Meso

At the meso-level, we identify the variables that shape the production and dissemination of discourse and institutional/discursive norms. Here we identify,

- a. The topics discussed,
- b. The genre of the text, and whether it mixes genres (specifically for non-interview literature),

- c. The setting of the text, meaning the location, event, or publication in which it is situated,
- d. The participant's position and role, and how their position/experience affects their discourse,
- e. And the type and level of access to the discourse held by the speaker, as well as the type and level of access required for others to observe and/or take part in the discourse.

Where the macro-level comprises the historical and institutional structure of culture, and the micro-level comprises the individual's enactment of that culture, the meso-level consists of the contents and direction of culture itself. These five variables are driven by individual action and choice while situated within a larger institutional and discursive framework, and thus are used by the one to influence the other in a constant back-and-forth of discursive exchange.

### 3. Micro

The Micro level is divided into three stages, in which we examine individual actors' contributions to discourse.

#### Stage 1: Discursive Strategies

Stage 1 examines records the basic structure and content of what is said, how it is said, and what it suggests. Three particular strategies are analysed here:

*Nomination strategies*, which is to say, how persons, objects, events, processes, and actions are named and referred to linguistically. In this study, I focus on the discursive construction of social actors, groups, and places. This includes

- 1) the frequency with which individuals are named,
- 2) how individuals are named (whether their whole name is used, whether they are referred to by professional signifiers, whether they are referred to only by relationship to others or professional role without being named, etc),
- 3) how groups of people (nationalities, professionals, communities, etc) are described,
- 4) and the ratio of African place names to Western place names.

In this strategy, I am looking specifically for evidence of representation epistemic violence (discrediting knowers/knowledge, misrepresenting knowers/knowledge, and privileging Western knowers/knowledge over indigenous knowers/knowledge systems) and silencing (diminishing knowers/knowledge, omitting knowers/knowledge, and instances in which privileged speakers/discourse controllers neglect to engage with knowers/knowledge).

*Predication strategies* examine the characteristics, qualities, and features that are attributed to social, objects, events, and processes by speakers. In this strategy, I examine for evidence of representational epistemic violence and for the violence of essentialisation.

*Argumentation strategies* examine which types of argument are employed in the speaker's attempt to persuade discourse participants of the validity of specific claims of trust and normative rightness. In addition to the other forms of epistemic violence mentioned, I examine for justificatory epistemic violence, as participants present justifications for harmful normative behaviours.

*Perspectivisation strategies* examine the perspective from which nominations and predications are expressed, indicating the ideological beliefs of the speaker.

### Stage 2: Intertextual and Interdiscursive Relationships

Stage 2 identifies intertextuality (reference to, representation of, and reconstruction of other texts) and interdiscursivity (reference to, representation of, and reconstruction of a larger discourse) and how the representation of other texts and discourses re-contextualises terms, events, and issues to reflect the ideological goals of the speaker and/or institution.

### Stage 3: Exclusion, Inclusion, and Prominence

Stage 3 identifies the significance in what speakers choose to include, to make prominent, or to exclude altogether. This stage seeks to make sense of the data analysed in the previous two steps, and looks specifically for the harm of neglect, in which the speaker neglects to engage in a particular discourse or with a particular group.

### III. Participant Sample

The chapter so far has travelled through the original design and questions of the research; the quite substantial amount of research actually carried out under this original design; and the revised methodology and interpretive frame since adopted. The design changed in that the interviews have become the core of the project, but I did not carry out new interviews and am applying the critical discourse lens to the responses given to my original questions.

As part of the shift in research approach, I also re-organised my participants. Under the original design, interviews were meant to contextualise quantitative data and I did not distinguish particularly between the different positions and roles of participants; each was simply providing information that would assist colouring in the data from catalogues. However, in re-thinking my study as one in which the participants' positions and roles were important for reflecting and aligning with different relations of the West to the African Other, inflected to different degrees with a colonialist perspective, position and role emerged as clear demarcations. There seemed to be clear patterns emerging in participant views that fell along specific lines. This included professional position and affiliation (in relation to the field as marked out in Chapters 2 and 3), as well as, and somewhat overlapping with the points in time when interviewees were becoming trained in and involved in the field. Hence, I have organised participants into a number of cohorts, and the following chapters that analyse the data are structured on this basis.

Research Participant Table

Participant Pseudonym	Years Active	Nationality
<b>The Post-Colonial Generation: Mixed Museum and Education Professionals (Chapter 5)</b>		
Noah	1960s to 2000s	UK
Jacob	1960s to 2000s	UK
Elijah	1950s to 2000s	UK
<b>Art Historians (Chapter 6)</b>		
Abeo	1970s to present	West African
Nancy	1970s to present	US

Jack	1980s to present	US
Charlie	1980s to present	US
Harry	1970s to present	US
<b>Museum Curators (Chapter 7)</b>		
Jane	1970s to present	US
George	1980s to present	European
Alice	2000s to present	US
Steven	2000s to present	West African
<b>Archaeologists (Chapter 8)</b>		
Sean	Postcolonial period to present	US
Patrick	Postcolonial period to present	US/N. America
Sam	1970s to present	US
Gareth	1990s to present	UK
Fred	1990s to present	European
Louis	1990s to present	European

This table provides summary information about the interview participants. Further detail providing background of participants and their relationship to the Africanist field, as well as the countries they have been active in are provided in specific chapters.

Having set out the historical background, theoretical frame and the research design and methodological approach of this study, we are now ready to explore these issues through the words of the participants in the next four chapters.

## Chapter 5

### The Post-Colonial Generation: Authority and Accountability

#### I. Introduction

In this chapter, I present and explore the perspectives of the first participant group, consisting of three senior British citizens and professionals in the museums and academic fields, all men, who began their careers in 1960s West and East Africa. They are influential members of the generation that bridged the colonial-to-post-colonial era, during which they commenced their careers in African countries that were imminently pre- or post-independence. During this period, colonial powers were simultaneously withdrawn through the process of independence and conserved through the creation and maintenance of “national” collections, which were designed by European settlers in European museological styles. Working within these institutions, these three participants were the immediate successors of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century colonial officers and academics who, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, entrenched Western European power systems and ideologies particularly through the creation of West African educational institutions.

Thus, the themes exhibited by this group are in constant conversation with colonial legacy, both through their overt denouncement of oppressive Western power structures and their unwitting perpetuation of colonialist ideology. Two core themes emerge, hinged on the prominence of institutional authority and accountability: first, emphasis on harms that occur within African countries, as perpetuated and prevented by African and Western power structures; second, emphasis on wrongdoing within the market and museums, in contrast to the perceived innocence of the academy.

In the following section, I identify the participants and describe their career backgrounds. The ensuing section consists of a summary of the historical context surrounding academic and museum practice within West Africa in the mid-century period. The fourth sections analyses participants’ attribution of harms in African settings, with particular emphasis on the accountability of source countries, whilst the fifth section analysis participants’ attributions of harm in Western settings regarding market and museum wrongdoing. The sixth section summarises the major findings from this chapter and their significance.

## II. The Participants

Despite sharing the same nationality, the same backgrounds in social anthropology, and similar experiences of work and life in Africa, the views of these three men vary broadly. While this small sample is in no way representative of their generation as a whole, they represent three distinct variants on a spectrum of colonialist ideology, ranging from: a traditional British nationalist, a paternalistic centrist, and a progressive post-colonialist.

Noah worked in Nigeria for a decade before returning to the UK to work in British museums and educational institutions. Of the three, he has spent the least amount of time in West Africa. He represents the most traditional colonialist perspective.

Jacob worked in Ghana for many years before returning to the UK to work in British museums. He returns to West Africa frequently and continues to have professional involvement with cultural heritage development in certain regions. His views fall in the middle of a continuum from colonial/traditional British to progressively post-colonialist.

Elijah worked in East African and Ghanaian museum and education institutions for several decades before moving on to the US to work in universities. He provided the most explicitly progressive post-colonial views.

## III. Historical Context: Situating Scholarly and Museum Work in the Mid-Century Period

The mid-century period referred to in Chapters 2 and 3, covers roughly a twenty-five-year span from the 1950s through the 1970s. It immediately followed the early 20<sup>th</sup> century interwar and post-war periods of colonialism, which were characterised on the one hand by the systemic undermining and dismantling of African belief and power systems, and on the other hand by Western anthropologists and art historians' simultaneous consternation about and facilitation with the disappearing cultural objects and practices of indigenous Africans, both through the advent of modernism and the European taste for "primitive" art objects (see

Chapter 2). Academic and museum structures within mid-century Britain were characterised by a profound interconnectedness, in which individual actors enjoyed a flexible range of roles within both academic research and museum curation throughout their careers. While museum and academic field boundaries became increasingly defined by the 1980s, the multiplicity of disciplines contained in the Africanist field maintained a blurring of boundaries and career titles. This field ambiguity was particularly prominent among British Africanists, whose careers were founded in fieldwork and expatriate living in Africa. The participants in this study maintain this ambiguity; while their education may be grounded in a particular discipline, such as social anthropology, their professional experiences defy a singular categorisation.

#### a. Museums and Academic Structures

As the demand for “fetishes” and other non-Western cultural objects grew in 1920s and 30s continental Europe, Western scholars settled in Africa to establish Western-style institutions through which to educate Africans in the European tradition, as well as to research and preserve African cultures, history, and archaeology. The 19<sup>th</sup> century colonialist approach to African cultural objects – take everything of interest and ship it to Europe for research and display – was gradually replaced by a scholarly desire to keep objects in situ, as archaeological and anthropological fields developed an emphasis upon contextual data and cultural preservation. This shift was accomplished largely through the work of British scholars working in Nigeria. British Africanist research in the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century was focused predominantly within Nigeria, which can be attributed to 1) the extent to which British colonial powers had settled within the country, 2) the art market’s demand for objects from within Nigeria, and 3) the dedication of a few key individuals in establishing a scholarly and governmental network that maintained itself long after Independence.

Noah explicitly cites Kenneth Murray as “a key figure in this”. In 1927, Murray was posted as an art teacher in various British-backed government colleges in Nigeria (Hellman, 2014). “His view was that modern art in Nigeria and the process of art education should be based upon local traditions.” (Interview transcript, Noah) Indeed, Murray not only taught art but experimented with ceramics in multiple styles, influencing a whole generation of Nigerian ceramic artists (Onuzulike, 2013). Noah particularly cites Murray’s concern about the risks to

traditional art forms: “He could see that with the advent of colonial rule and all that sort of thing, and new forms of religion and employment and education and whatnot, that many of the masking traditions, particularly in south-eastern Nigeria, were being abandoned.” Murray began collecting Nigerian art and pushed the largely Nigerian government to develop legislation for protecting the country’s artistic heritage (Hellman, 2014). Noah attributes the discovery of brass castings at Ife in 1938 to a local rush to look for marketable goods that stirred the authorities into action. “People were digging up grounds of foundations of houses to find extraordinary things. And so within the colonial network in Nigeria there began to be a movement towards the need for the colonial government to protect Nigeria’s antiquities”.

In 1943, after serving in the army during World War Two, Murray returned to Nigeria in a new role as Surveyor of Antiquities, tasked with assessing the risks to Nigeria’s cultural heritage and how to go about preserving it. His work led to the founding of the Nigerian Department of Antiquities in 1946. Two years later he was joined by Cambridge-trained archaeologist Bernard Fagg, who not only provided much-needed archaeological expertise, but connected the Department with museum professionals and directors from Britain (Hellman, 2014). Most notable of these was Fagg’s own brother William Fagg, who at the time occupied the post of Deputy Keeper of Anthropology at the British Museum and later became Keeper of Ethnography. With the influence and guidance of their British partners, Fagg and Murray developed seven museums across the country before Independence in 1960 (Fagg, 1963). These institutions were meant to represent the archaeological findings and cultural objects from their respective regions, and in some cases, were built in collaboration with local communities (Hellman, 2014). While they were founded under the premise of cultural preservation, they also served two key ideological functions: firstly, to reinforce the colonialist fabrication of a cohesive Nigerian nationalism, and secondly, to act as physical representations of the colonialist government’s successes.

The successes included a wealth of scholarly development. In the mid-century period, Nigeria offered British archaeologists and art historians a plethora of opportunities to not only make new archaeological and ethnographic discoveries, but to develop museums and university departments before moving on to more prestigious jobs in the US and the UK. Bernard Fagg took over the Department of Antiquities in 1957 before leaving only six years later to curate the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford (Povey et al, 1988). British archaeologist Frank Willett was

enticed by Fagg to join the Department in 1958 but also left in 1963, eventually taking up roles in the US and the UK, including the Hunterian Museum at Glasgow University (Picton, 2007). Archaeologist Thurstan Shaw joined the University of Ibadan in 1960, where he established the department of archaeology, and worked there until his retirement in 1974.

Previously, his work in Ghana in the 1950s included the development of the National Museum of Ghana, based on his personal collection of objects begun at Achimota College. He returned to the UK two years later, to take up the post of Director of Studies in Archaeology and Anthropology at Magdalene College, Cambridge. His student, the Nigerian archaeologist Ekpo Eyo, took over the Department of Antiquities in 1968, overseeing its transformation to what is now the Nigerian National Commission for Museums and Monuments. However, he too left in 1986 to take on a professorship in the Department of Art History and Archaeology at the University of Maryland (Slogar, 2012). The exception to this pattern was Kenneth Murray, who remained in Nigeria through his retirement and died there at the age of 69 in 1972. Regardless, a precedent was set by these prominent individuals, in which Nigerian (and, to an extent, Ghanaian) museums and universities continued to apply Western styles and ideologies in the progression of knowledge production within West Africa.

#### b. Political Environment

While the political environment of this time was rarely directly discussed by participants, it forms a critical backdrop to mid-century practice and the development of the art market.

From 1967 to 1970, Nigeria was rocked by the Biafran War, fought between the government of Nigeria and the secessionist state of Biafra, which represented the Igbo people. The military blockade that surrounded Biafra led to severe famine, in which between 500,000 and 2 million Biafran civilians died of starvation. With all federal resources directed towards the war, border security deteriorated, allowing a sudden outpouring of objects looted from shrines and archaeological sites into nearby Cameroon (Rubin, 1982; Berns and Fardon, 2011). These objects flooded the Western market and were of particular interest to buyers in Europe and the United States (Berns and Fardon, 2011).

Within the West, the 1970s proved a particularly trying and contradictory time for museums, at least in their acquisitions and ownership of particular objects. The 1970 UNESCO Convention introduced new restrictions to museum acquisition practices that chafed at the formerly free relationship between museum and market. The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York suffered the most public consequences, as both its Classical and Ancient Near East acquisitions were revealed to have been looted and smuggled out of their source countries (Watson and Todeschini, 2006). Despite this, the African art market was in its hey-day at this time, and African art curators and collectors experienced almost none of the heat that afflicted their colleagues in Classical, Pre-Columbian, and Ancient Near Eastern departments. The sole exception was the case of the Afo-a-Kom, as discussed in Chapter 2.

However, African and other ‘non-Western’ art departments were not immune to the sweeping changes though this period. By the late 1970s, as many British Africanists returned to the UK to take up curatorial or academic posts, attitudes surrounding the importance of object provenance had shifted and certain behaviours in acquisition became frowned upon.

#### IV. Attributing Harms in African Settings

Noah, Jacob, and Elijah’s interviews all address issues of harm in the acquisition and trade of African cultural objects. However, the harms they identify centre almost exclusively on the illicit removal of objects from their country of origin. All three participants emphasise illicit removal as one of the most pressing and egregious harms they have witnessed in their experience working both in Africa and in the West, though their opinions on the context surrounding the removal, the severity of harm it produced, and the resulting criminality of the parties involved all differ drastically.

Both Noah and Jacob occupied positions in West African countries in which they oversaw and enforced legislation that required cultural objects to be licenced for export by the national museum. As such, they shared a number of similar experiences in witnessing wrongdoing and in their struggle to compel European and American expatriates and visitors to adhere to national law. However, despite the similarity of their positions, their views on both Indigenous market actors and Western market actors are frequently in contrast. While Elijah shared a comparable post in East Africa for a time, his perception of behaviour described by the other

two participants sits in opposition, as phenomena described by them as harmful is described by him as unproblematic, while the Eurocentric norms taken for granted by them are criticised by him for their systemic violence.

#### a. Descriptions of Indigenous vs Western market actors

The most traditionally colonialist of the three, the harm Noah most prominently identified was that of illegal exportation, though his presentation of the severity of this harm, as he perceives it, is dependent upon a number of variables. In this group, it was he who most frequently described his frustration with and adroitness at singling out fellow Europeans who were about to leave the country without having obtained permits for their wares. He recalls a particular series of events in which an acquaintance of his who worked at the nearby hospital was due to leave the country temporarily.

Noah briefed “the people”, presumably meaning airport security, to make sure the man was properly searched. When the man returned, he visited Noah and mentioned he was “practically strip searched at the airport on the way out”, to which Noah airily responded, “Oh? I said, how strange.” He describes how both actors were aware of each other’s intentions, the one to take things out and the other to catch him, with neither acknowledging as much. He says, “They knew that I was fairly smart and wise to their game. They still got stuff out, but at the same time, I did actually get things back by playing this kind of joking, this game with them.”

He describes these relationships in winking, playful terms, implying a professional cat-and-mouse gambit. He was all too aware that many objects were completely outside his control to confiscate, as “stuff like that went in diplomatic bags and there was nothing I could do about that.” He “only played these games for a couple of years”, but emphasised the importance of such an attitude in dealing with these issues. Otherwise, “the whole thing would seize up and people would continue to subvert the system. I mean, it leaves you enough to subvert the system.” Such repetition is emphatic: the word “subvert” suggests Noah’s perception of these Western professionals as being sly and undermining. They are getting around the system and weakening its effectiveness. Such terms and conceptualisations for harmful behaviour are frequently cited by criminologists as being deployed by white collar criminals (Croall, 1988; Barak, 2017).

This choice of phrase paints a world of playful cat and mouse, representing criminality and policing as almost an affable game of law-breaking and law enforcement. This sits in contrast to the judgment he reserves for non-Western actors engaging in similar behaviour of object removal. Noah's descriptions of West African diggers and dealers focus more explicitly on criminality. He refers repeatedly to "illegal diggers" and "illegal excavations", which is notable in the context of his discussion of the influence of an infamous Western collector, who is described in neutral terms.

Because he does not name or discuss individual West Africans through the course of the interview, his broad generalisations of specific groups take on a tone of paternalistic essentialisation. "Nigerians are nothing if not traders and entrepreneurs. I mean, one dealer I knew in London said he was somewhere in Australia and there was dealer from Nigeria selling stuff which he had removed illegally from the country. So, the network of dealing and trading very quickly spread all around the world." Here, "dealing and trading" are equated with transnational illegality.

Of particular note are a series of encounters he describes with a Nigerian art dealer. This dealer would occasionally send objects to his museum to request a clearance permit, "on the grounds that these were new things that she was boxing up to send to clients." He describes eventually learning the truth from a friend in London: having obtained the museum's official letter that the objects were not covered by antiquities legislation, the dealer would "very carefully open the other end of the box, take out the fake, and put in a genuine thing and seal it back up again." This relationship between law enforcer and scheming lawbreaker is bereft of sly nose-tweaking, as he laments that there was nothing he could do about it:

"She was untouchable because she was married to one of the nastiest members of the Nigerian military forces. So she was untouchable. You couldn't do anything about her, as a Nigerian because otherwise you might very well get gunned down one night. So, she was untouchable."

The repetition of "untouchable" suggests a level of frustration that was perhaps long-lived. His two anecdotes form a telling binary: Western lawbreaking is presented as a cunning but light-

hearted game with equally weighted players, in which Noah himself had power to deter those players. Nigerian lawbreaking is comparably much more dangerous and serious, a game in which the power dynamic is unequally weighted, risking death for the unlucky player. These contrasting stories suggest Noah's position as a colonial museum employee only allowed him authority over his own white Western brethren and their quiet market involvement.

In contrast to Noah's jocular relationships with Western collectors and market actors, Jacob (who falls somewhere in the middle of the continuum from adopting to rejecting colonialist perspectives) describes Western market actors with a great deal of disdain. According to his recollection, the illegal exportation of objects by Western academics was a practice well-known amongst colleagues. "The people I knew principally were archaeologists at the University of Ghana, they were fully aware of this. There were cases of so-called researchers coming in and helping loot archaeological sites." Among these, he lists "one notorious American researcher" who, under the pretence of doing research on funerary terracottas, exported the terracottas illegally to later sell in New York around 1969 or 1970. Colleagues of his recognised the stolen terracottas on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and felt "very aggrieved about it."

Another case involved knowing "a senior British academic who collected things which probably should have been licensed, who took them out and made a lot of money selling them." He shared his belief that these were not purely innocent misunderstandings, but that he believes "professional archaeologists and anthropologists were aware that these were the rules and regulations", and consequently "avoided it or got round it." Such phrasing suggests a perception of the transgression as a kind of neglect or fudging, rather than manipulating or corrupting.

He describes these incidents with a scornful tone that mellows when I question what the level of transparency was around these acts. "I think it was known among some of their colleagues, yes. They'd say oh, X has just gone out with a bag full of things." I clarify, "So it wasn't very respectable?" He deliberates, and eventually says,

"I'm thinking about the 60s and 70s now, when Ghana was a very free and easy place. I mean, it's very hard to explain what it was like if you weren't there. It

was very easy going, it was very tolerant, it was very pleasant and there were more important things than bothering about Professor X doing this or that. Yes, they were disapproved of. People would say, look at that swine.”

Such a statement suggests that the contempt with which he views wrongdoing colleagues currently is the result of retrospective amplification, as time and the cultural environment increasingly saw such behaviour to be worthy of more serious consequences and stigmatisation.

Though, like Noah, Jacob does not mention individual West Africans' names, he does elaborate on specific relationships he has held with both museum and market actors. In contrast to Noah's negative experiences with indigenous market actors, Jacob frequently alludes to dealers and traders in a way that suggest he willingly interacts with and asks questions of them. In describing the structure of the field as he has seen it, he says,

“In the past, I'm talking about twenty or thirty years ago, a lot of these young men would go around the villages and they'd have a local contact, it might be a distant cousin or an uncle, who would say, they've just found a site which is producing terracotta heads or something. And they would buy them off the farmer. It's petty trading... You know, there are always people in circulation on trade routes. And this is just another thing that you can pick up and make money out of. I knew a dealer in Kumasi about thirty years ago and I asked him how he got in the trade, and he said he used to be a diamond smuggler in Sierra Leone. But this was profitable and it was safer and easier, you know. So people are traders, that's it.”

Jacob emphasises a humanising perspective that does not attempt to criminalise indigenous market actors. His statement that “People are traders” is not an essentialisation of a nationalistic or cultural attribute, but a characteristic of human adaptability and survival under conditions of structural disadvantage and economic duress. As the final statement in this section, it seems to serve as a rebuttal to an argument (such as Noah's) not explicitly addressed.

His relationships with dealers appear overwhelmingly congenial, rather than competitive or sly. In describing his experience in gaining knowledge about how sites are looted, he references a friend “who used to be in the business” and who had links to the trade in Niger through his family. Such relationships are conveyed with a benign generosity that stands in contrast to Noah’s essentialising frustrations.

Like Jacob, Elijah (the most negatively oriented towards colonial views) favours the word “trader” to describe West African market actors. He is clear about who he believes is most accountable for the mid-century market boom: “It wasn’t that the West Africans were corrupt. It was that people from the West, from Holland, from France, from Britain, wanted these things to take home to put on their mantelpiece or add to their collections. So they created demand for them.” While he speaks out generally against the destructive Western influence of market demand, in opposition to both participants, he also notes that the mass removal of cultural objects was facilitated by the structural conditions of academia and its research funding:

“One of the things which would happen is that many people would say that in order to understand the sites of Africa and to understand the prehistory or whatever it is of Africa, one had to take out large numbers of objects which would be studied carefully by themselves and by their students. So large numbers of crates of material were taken away. Things were studied in a dutiful fashion and illustrated and drawn in Europe or America. And then when it came to returning the objects to Africa, it was much more difficult to obtain the money for the return of objects than it was to obtain the money for the research. I mean if you were going to excavate a lost town or chieftancy or something like that which had wonderful things, you could probably get a grant from the large foundation to help you in your work and to bring out graduate students. But when you’ve said that you wanted to have five thousand dollars to...wrap things up safely, et cetera, insure things and send them back to the country where they belonged, it was much more difficult to get that five thousand dollars.”

The response itself does not answer the question I put to him about whether he had experience with colleagues routinely or brazenly ignoring export laws. He seems to suggest that the academics who removed objects did so entirely for the benefit of their research, and that failure to return objects was not the fault of the scholars but the fault of the system in which they worked. This view is completely unique within this study, and stands in contrast to both his colleagues' comparatively indignant attitudes on this issue and his own progressive stance on other issues.

#### b. Establishing Positionality: Paternalism versus Progress

These perspectives on the rightness or wrongness of certain behaviours are heavily influenced by the participants' geographic and ideological positionality. While not explicitly discussed or defined by them, this positionality is expressed through their identification of group belonging (using "we" and "here" to reference psychological belonging or geographic position in the UK or Africa) and their expression of certain ideological positions. For Noah and Jacob, this manifests in related expressions of colonially-rooted paternalism, while Elijah's manifests in the explicit and resolute rejection of this paternalism.

Noah's paternalism is expressed most explicitly in his beliefs surrounding the superiority of the West in caring for cultural objects and the responsibility of West African countries in matching Western standards for objects care. Of the three, he most overtly and frequently identified Nigeria and Nigerians as being responsible for the illicit trade. He emphasises two aspects of this responsibility. First, he frequently references object safety, which includes museum security and the sophistication of museum facilities, as well as the security of the original cultural contexts, such as shrines and archaeological sites. He only vaguely addresses his perception of the Western market's role in creating demand: "I mean the problem now is that the whole ripping off of Nigerian antiquities, whether through illegal excavation or removing stuff from shrines and temples and so on and so forth, well, you know, we often know where this stuff is from and the irony is that it's sometimes safer here than it would be there." The "irony" he mentions seems to indicate his recognition that it is the Western market demand that has led to the destruction of these sites, and yet it is within the West that these objects are less at risk for destruction or theft. His belief in the superiority of Western facilities is referenced repeatedly:

“I think it’s a very grey area because when stuff was part of a cultural environment, for example when that cultural environment no longer exists. Yes, you could say, it really ought to be in a museum in Nigeria or Ghana or wherever, yes indeed. But once the works have flown, they’ve flown. And the problem about Nigeria and almost anywhere in West Africa is they don’t have secure display facilities. Then the stuff will be better looked after here than it is there.”

While he acknowledges the argument that de-contextualised objects should go to museums in their origin country, “Nigeria or Ghana or wherever”, he argues that “once the works have flown, they’ve flown”, suggesting he perceives export to be a futile, largely permanent state of affairs. He situates himself repeatedly in the UK, both psychologically and geographically, through his emphasis of “here” being better equipped than the “there” of Nigeria, as well as through his sweeping generalisation in disparaging the lack of secure display facilities in “Nigeria and almost anywhere in West Africa.”

Second, he emphasises the responsibility of the origin country to create and enforce effective export legislation. “I think one is in an awful position, stuff is coming out, you can’t do anything about that, because that’s the job for the authorities within the countries concerned.” He asserts that Nigeria does not have a right to objects taken unlawfully from them unless they themselves show a greater degree of readiness and responsibility in housing, displaying, and caring for these objects. “But the move has to come from Nigeria, they’ve got to put the money into it, got to prove they can do it. You could say there’s a moral case, it’s got to be like that. Well, you can huff and puff but you won’t burn the house down.”

In his view, Nigeria has forfeited its right to the return of stolen objects, and repeated calls for repatriation will be in vain until it invests in a system that Western institutions and individuals deem satisfactory. He presents Greece as a model example: “Greece has provided a way forward, but it, well, one can say what can happen to Greece in terms of the Euro and all the rest of it, but Greece is prepared, has provided a way forward, is prepared to wait, to play a waiting game. It’s not a short-term fix, but you never know what might happen.” He appears to admire Greece for their willingness and preparedness to wait, indicating that he believes

these displays of responsibility must also be accompanied a waiting period.

This perspective of the developing country that has learned how to behave, or begun to reach standards acceptable to the British, evidences the infantilisation and civilising process set out in postcolonial theory. It also demonstrates the forms of postcolonial violence discussed in Chapter 3, particularly distributive epistemic violence.

Jacob's paternalism manifests itself in a more benign manner through repetitive positioning of himself as a guide and benefactor of West African individuals and institutions. Though he presents many instances of engagement with West African individuals, he does not name them. This stands in contrast to his frequent naming of Western colleagues. As a result, the relationships he describes are not equally weighted as collaborations, as friends and colleagues are framed as receptors of his benefaction. For example, in introducing his friendship with a former market actor of Nigerien descent, he immediately remarks that the man "left school at 12, 14, and I helped him get a bit of an education." While he is clearly proud of having provided this opportunity, this recollection is one of a pattern in which he highlights his personal role in aiding unnamed West Africans. In one instance, he describes his working relationship with a new director of a West African country's National Museum and Monuments Board.

"Now, I work with very closely with the director of the National Museums and Monuments Board, who is newly appointed, he's only been there a couple of years. And he's trying very hard to improve the situation. So, we plan to run a course for his curators saying this is how you tell the genuine piece, this is how you tell the fake piece, this is the ones you can think about giving a license to, those are ones you shouldn't give a license to."

There are three kinds of violence observable in this extract: First, he emphasises his authority in his role of consultant to this director, whom he does not name; this lack of specificity afforded to Western colleagues becomes particularly significant when discussing an individual in such an important role, and is a form of silencing.

Second, he minimises the director's authority based on the length of time he has held the post; by emphasising that he is "newly appointed" and minimising the experience contained in two years of leadership, he establishes himself as the most experienced authority of the two. This discrediting constitutes representational epistemic violence.

Third, he positions himself as a joint collaborator with the director; the use of the word "we" in "we plan to run a course for his curators" reinforces his presentation of himself as an authority on the same level as the director, rather than as a consultant. Such privileging of his own position as a Western expert constitutes another instance of representational epistemic violence. Notably, he does not elaborate on the shocking admission that curators based in West African museums have difficulty establishing the authenticity of certain historical objects, which is due in large part to the estimated (90%) of African objects that no longer exist in Africa, but are held by Western institutions.

These instances of ostensibly benign but symbolically violent speech reflect the participant's highly Eurocentric positionality. While Jacob holds greater respect for West African knowledge/power systems in comparison to other participants, he frequently frames their success as reliant on his own involvement and the involvement of his affiliated institution.

In contrast to both Noah and Jacob, Elijah's positionality is Afro-centric and extremely sensitive to the Western penchant for unconscious paternalism in the development of African institutions. He deftly cuts to the heart of the colonial ideology driving Western collections and research in the colonialist and mid-century periods, implicitly calling out forms of silencing and representational epistemic violence:

"I fear what's happened is it was the Western idea that if you collected things from Africa, they could be stored more efficiently, more safely, in places like Britain, and people would appreciate them, and that it was British and other colonialists who could interpret the art and the artefacts far better than could people in Africa. So it's felt, that even when they weren't taking things from Africa, they were in fact helping to create an image of Africa which they could do better than anybody locally."

Through his identification of the “British” and “other colonialists”, he subtly reinforces the distance between himself and these groups. He claims no relation, and his disdain for these paternalistic attitudes becomes increasingly evident, as he mocks the “many old colonialists” who complained that repatriation of cultural objects would set a dangerous precedent:

“They began writing letters to the Times and the Telegraph, saying how terrible it would be if these things were ever returned to Africa, that people wouldn’t look after them. It was debated in Parliament about, I can’t remember, it was probably the Nigerian things, that Britain should never return these, because if they return these to Nigeria, then this would lead to those horrible Greek people wanting their Marbles back from the Parthenon.”

Elijah’s belief in repatriation is not only intellectual; he relates a story in which he slyly facilitated a “permanent loan” of objects from a major British university back to the national museum at which he was curator. “I’m afraid I was guilty of misrepresentation. Basically, I wanted to get these things much more on a permanent loan, but didn’t state that fact.” He succeeded in his request, and along with his wife and child, brought the objects back tucked into twenty-seven items of luggage, “mainly wrapped in nappies and things like that, child’s things.” The objects were put on display in the museum in time for independence and received a warm homecoming. “People began leaving offerings to these items by the side of the showcase. And so this was a successful return of objects to Africa without having to ask for a permanent gift.”

Elijah’s perception of Western harms within Africa is not limited to the West’s interaction with cultural objects. When answering my query about how academic publications may have positively affected the art market and adversely affected cultural heritage conservation, Elijah foregoes a simple positive or negative answer and instead identifies what he perceives to be a much larger form of violence: the ways in which Western academia has been built to benefit the West, at the expense of the non-Western communities that supply the objects and settings of research.

“I think foreign [non-African] universities do have a lot to answer for because one of the things which I felt was a great, great problem, and I addressed this

several times without making much impact, was that it was easier for someone who was a specialist in America or Britain to go out for a short time to Africa [than to spend a longer period fully getting to know the place]”

His description of non-African institutions as “foreign” situates his perspective as existing within Africa, for African issues, rather than outside it as a former resident. He holds these institutions to account as someone with a deep investment in African interests, both personally and professionally, with the confidence of an institutional insider. He is critical of the ease with which Western academics were able to travel to Africa on scholarships such as the Fulbright and the fleeting amount of time their research on Africa actually took place in Africa. This system, he argues, both disadvantaged African institutions and allowed the Westernisation of African research:

“But what really needed doing was people to go out for long periods of time to be a professor in an African institution, to spend about a couple of years there, to study objects with their students, who would then be African students, rather than expatriate students, and then it would be hands-on learning. These students would learn from the professor, the students would learn from other students, and so you’d get that knowledge and ability to appreciate the objects being developed within the African institution.”

This deficiency in the Africanisation of research via the Western-centric methodology of Western academics was not only a disadvantage to African institutions, as he describes, but to the Western researchers who unconsciously perpetuated these harms. He doesn’t fault the quality of research done by these foreign academics. “Their notebooks were probably immaculate, their illustrations would be better than any done by an African institution because it would have better cameras and all that type of thing.” But he condemns the ways in which researchers within this system, “people like yourself, graduate students who would go out for a limited amount of time with a limited amount of resources,” were coerced into perpetuating harmful practices due to their own vulnerability and reliance on academic macro structures:

“And it was those people who didn’t really have the resources to sort of write up that material in Africa. The next thing on their mind would be getting a

permanent job. The idea was that you did your research, your research was outstanding, you published it not in Africa, where it would have a greater impact, you published it in America where the impact would be that you'd get visibility, and that visibility would give you your next job. That was one of the problems that happened, is a lot of fantastic work was done by graduate students, particularly by American, French, British, Belgian, Dutch, German graduate students, but they didn't have the resources to sort of...Africanise their work, as it were."

## V. Attributing Harms in Western Settings

In discussing harms specific to Western institutions and individuals, all three participants emphasise the tension at play in addressing harmful behaviour in the West whilst attempting to maintain the institutional norms and goals that led to harm. These are most evident in two practices: first, publication of papers about cultural objects studied in the field with details on exact locations or specific identifying markers; and second, involvement with the market, both through authentication and recommendations for auction catalogues and in purchasing objects.

### a. Effects of Publication

For this group, the controversy surrounding publication of catalogues and papers about cultural objects centres on how publication 1) makes objects vulnerable to theft from their original archaeological or cultural sites and 2) how publication increases the value of such works, thus encouraging theft and commodification. This stands in contrast to issues raised about publication that will be discussed in later chapters, in which publication of already looted works is criticised for its validation of harmful market practices.

Noah's stance on publication is characteristically black and white: "Kenneth Murray always took the view that publication's a bad thing because it would invite thieves. I took the opposite view. The publication was a good thing because it provided, it actually provided some protection for things." He describes instances in which this protection allowed him to trace objects he saw at auction in Paris back to the insider-knowledge of his colleagues and the publications in which they had appeared. "The point is that the thieves' guide was also the

policeman's guide. So I, as a kind of quote-unquote 'policeman', trying to see what exactly had gone on, I had the book too." His use of quotes to describe himself as a policeman indicates self-awareness about the unofficial nature of his authority in this self-assigned role. Even after leaving his job in Nigeria, he continued on in this role to curb the trade through whatever furtive and unassuming ways he could. For him, this appears to have manifested most clearly in the importance of publishing, both for its function as a possible obstruction to wrongdoing and as a kind of moral sign posting of academic righteousness: "So, that's always been my view, that one should publish what one knows and allow knowledge to develop. And I think that anybody of a similar set may feel the same way. We gain merit by publishing our stuff, after all."

Jacob, however, adopts a more reserved position in acknowledging the difficulty of participating in academic normative practice that benefits the academic whilst disadvantaging source communities. He describes the phenomena as "tricky":

"You're getting this very tricky situation where if you have a good scholar who puts on an exhibition and produces a catalogue about something or other, that immediately sends the price up and the desirability of these things because you've now got, if you like, documentary to support. So someone like Doran Ross at the University of California, who's a great scholar of the Asante of Ghana and done big exhibitions with other people and on his own, and lo and behold, everyone starts collecting textiles and they've got the reference book."

The terms "tricky situation" and "good scholar" are key here in creating a scene that has conflict at its heart. He ultimately sees the scholars as being in a bind, where this particular activity may have an undesirable effect. However, he does not expand on this point, or share whether Ross himself is aware of the effects of his publications and exhibitions, whether academics in general are aware of it, or if it is trickier precisely because they are not aware of it.

Elijah takes a similarly sympathetic perspective, but goes even further in suggesting that scholars simply lack awareness of how their work affects the system as a whole. In answer to my question about the quandary of knowing an exhibition might create more demand for such

objects, he answers in a way that sidesteps the possibility of implicating wrongdoing.

“I think with archaeologists, you have this great thrill to find something which other people may not have found. And your first desire is to show that you’re the person that’s made this known to the world, as it were. So, there’s a sort of...a demand that you published, that you tell your community of colleagues what you’ve found, and how important it is. It’s the same as in science, when people find new fossils and things, they want to sort of publish them in something like *Nature* as soon as possible. And that they don’t think about the long-term ramifications of what they’re doing.”

He doesn’t discount that there are harms associated with publication, but his emphasis of the innocence and good intentions behind scholars’ motivations for publishing suggests he doesn’t blame scholars’ for these effects or hold them accountable for “long-term ramifications”. Like Jacob’s perception of the situation as “tricky”, Elijah hones in on the “demand” faced by academics to make their findings accessible. All three are bound to publication as an institutionalised norm. While they all acknowledge that certain harms are a by-product of this practice, none question the practice itself or investigate how it might be altered to avoid harm.

#### b. The Role of Market Involvement

The question of market involvement provoked the most discomfort, justifications, and contradictions amongst these participants. As museum and academic relationships with the market became strained and then looked down upon through the mid-century period, academics and museum professionals were forced to grapple with the abandonment or defence of practices that had aided them professionally and personally. While I anticipated some defensiveness about maintaining involvement with auction houses or market actors, I did not expect participants to be entirely ignorant of changing attitudes to such relationships.

Noah does not exhibit any awareness that norms around market involvement have altered since the mid-century period. When asked about the now highly contested role of Western experts in authenticating objects in his field, he emphatically and repeatedly uses the word “we”:

“Well, we’ve always done that. I mean, Frank Willett, who was a colleague in Nigeria and then he was at Northwestern University and then he was in Glasgow, would occasionally do this. Sometimes for a fee, sometimes not. And this would be true for pretty much anyone.... I think we’ve always done that. I mean, Roy Sieber, William Fagg, Robert Farris Thompson, you know, the senior people. We took our lead from them.”

His invocation of heavyweight names appears to be an attempt to emphasise the legitimacy of the act through the reputations of the individuals who partook of it. His casual, dismissive kind of repeating that “we’ve always done that” reinforces the level of normalisation of this practice, and indicates his disconnect from the ways in which the field have changed. He appears unaware that this practice is now largely condemned by younger scholars.

He then goes on to claim, “I’ve never made any money out of doing this,” and immediately contradicts himself by stating, “I did write an article for a Sotheby’s catalogue a couple of years ago and they paid me very well for it. They paid me one euro a word or something. So I did rather well out of that.” Presumably, based on his belief that he’s never made any money out of this, this was perhaps the one time he was paid for his expertise. It’s more likely that he is claiming he has never made any substantial money from this; nothing more than supplemental kind of pocket money. However, he fully appreciates the effects of this involvement: “I’m very well aware of the fact that, you know, if Christie’s or Sotheby’s or a friend of mine who wants to sell something says, well do you want to know what this is, and I give my opinion, I’m very well aware of the fact that an extra nought will go onto the estimated value of it.”

Refusal to share information based on this influence is, in his view, futile and irresponsible: “That’s the way the market works and I think on balance it would be dishonest to say, well, I’m not going to tell you what this thing is because I know perfectly well what it is and I don’t want you to earn any more money from it because if I don’t tell them somebody else will. I’m not the only person who knows about this stuff.”

This introduces a theme of helplessness in his interview, in which he relinquishes

responsibility for market harms through belief that his own actions are inconsequential. In addressing market involvement, he reluctantly admits, “I can see that you could say, yeah, but that will incite them to buy more. But I can’t control what’s happening in Nigeria or Mali or Ghana or the Democratic Republic of the Congo, or wherever. I can’t control that. So whatever I say, it doesn’t make no damn difference at all to what is happening in the country concerned.”

He holds a firm conviction that the knowledge production on his end is not related in a tangible way to the events occurring in African countries. He predominantly blames the profitability of the trade on the inability of West African countries to police the situation: “As long as countries like Nigeria and Mali and so forth can’t police what’s happening within their own territory, then there’s nothing I can do about it.” This helplessness does not just apply to him, but is applied to other colleagues. He cites the exhibition *Central Nigeria Unmasked* put on at the Fowler Museum at UCLA in 2011, through which curator Marla Berns discovered objects she had previously seen during fieldwork now in private collections. He complains, “She was able to show these things which she had got mentioned in the field which were not in this museum collection or that museum collection. And there’s not much she can do about it, so.” He projects the same sense of helplessness he has accrued in his own experience to Berns’s efforts to bring transparency to the histories of the objects in this exhibition.

Jacob similarly evades criticism of academic and museum involvement with the market, but through deflection rather than surrender. He does not deny that museums have been prone to wrongdoing, but he speaks broadly about museum wrongdoing in the United States, gesturing knowingly to certain scandals, and denies being able to think of any similar cases where British museums have been asked for objects to be returned. His criticism is reserved for foreign cases in which the harms of unscrupulous capitalistic market involvement are evident. “I can’t think of any in the UK where a museum has acquired stuff and then people have suddenly said, hey, you shouldn’t have that. Plenty of cases in the States. And largely because of the Greek and Italian smuggling and theft. I mean there may be cases in the UK, but I can’t bring any to mind.”

He assigns most blame to art dealers and the market overall. The question of museum ethicality is, for him, outdated: “This isn’t the problem. The problem are the private collectors

and the auction houses and the dealers. They are not controlled by museum staff.” In his view, museum work has evolved and most museums “now have a policy anyway saying that thou shalt not collect dodgy stuff.” The problem, as he sees it, occurs when museums are offered collections and the owners are reticent to provide export licenses for each object. He cites an example, in which the museum declined the offer:

“I knew a case of a private collection which was offered to a museum and it was possibly going to be funded by a grant from a public body. And when the owner of that collection was asked, where were the export licenses for all this? He said, oh I don’t have any, I just brought it out. At which point, it said, no, sorry, thank you very much but no. Which caused a certain amount of unhappiness in various directions but...that I think is one of the few sanctions you have against private collectors.”

His description of this kind of rejection as a sanction against the market suggests he shares some of Noah’s helplessness in being able to police these issues. However, it must be noted that Jacob’s language surrounding museum responsibility is inherently contradictory. He is emphatic that museums know better *now* than to collect unprovenanced works, but when asked about the legacy of a former colleague with a reputation for collecting unprovenanced works, Jacob is keen to justify his actions.

“I think he acquired wonderful things, it was just that the provenance was cloudy... Oh he did a lot of very good things, but that’s different from saying, was he buying stuff that came properly documented? And he had a lot of contacts in trade and other museums and collectors around the world. He was a very kind man in many ways. Just bloody awful at doing the filing.”

Though his last remark is said facetiously, it remains that Jacob is largely dismissive of the same type of wrongdoing undertaken by his colleague as by the American curators he implicated earlier on. He frames this colleague’s harmful practice as inherently separate from his transformative influence within the field, suggesting that for him, the issues are two separate things: whilst his colleague was a great scholar and figurehead in the field, he was also unfortunately inept at rigorously vetting the provenance of new acquisitions. Jacob fails to

consider that perhaps the one affected the quality of the other.

Elijah holds the market in similar disregard and exhibits a far less conflicted view of museum involvement. He attributes museum acquisition of questionable objects to a well-meaning desire to have a little bit of everything from everywhere, “we should have at least one bit of a Nok terra cotta, we should have have a bit of Djenne terra cotta, we should have a bit of a Koma terra cotta from Ghana,” with the museum acquiring from what they think is a licit market.

“Many people say, well we’re not going to try to get it from smugglers, we’re going to try to get it through the best means possible. Catalogues and reputable auction firms. And what one doesn’t quite realise is of course that when you see things for sale in auction catalogues, many things have been laundered, perhaps several times. And so, they’re wanting to in buying legal objects, you may be buying, unwittingly, illegal objects. So the people go back, just to recent catalogues, and say, nothing there looks as if it’s looted. They say, these have been in collections for 10 years or 15 years, or whatever have you.”

He accuses objects of having “been laundered, perhaps several times over.” Such statements reveal two things: first, he is quite sympathetic toward museum acquisitions who, in his view, are trying to do things the right way without knowing that the right way is an illusion; and second, he does not trust the market, but does not accuse one particular part of it for being untrustworthy; rather, he paints a kind of vague picture where fear of laundering lurks behind every object.

## VI. Summary of Analysis

The themes covered in this chapter are by no means unique; the biases, beliefs, and harms put forth by these participants can be found in participants’ discourse in subsequent chapters. These themes hold significance here due to their illustration of 1) the historically-situated context of viewpoints that continue to persist in the discourse of current Africanist professionals, 2) the complexity of this particular generation’s perspective, which is all too often over-simplified by later generations as monolithically colonialist, and 3) how

geographical positionality is strongly correlated with participants' ideological positionality.

Throughout this study, there is a strong correlation between the length of time one has spent living and working in African countries and the extent to which one is likely to condemn or condone Western, and more specifically colonialism's, role in creating and feeding the illicit market for non-Western cultural objects. Though this participant group is miniscule, and is not representative of their generation as a whole, the contradictorily similar backgrounds and disparate experiences of Noah, Jacob, and Elijah offer a high-contrast demonstration of how length of time and strength of affiliation with particular institutions influence ideology and behaviour.

Noah's and Jacob's discourse is strongly characterised by their national identity. Their positionality is repeatedly affirmed as geographically and ideologically British, operating out of inherently imperialist institutions. Though they, like many of their colleagues, spent an average decade living and working in West Africa, they did so explicitly as agents of British governmental departments and British-founded institutions. The silencing, justificatory, distributive, and representational epistemic violence exhibited by them reflect the forms of epistemic violence used by their institutions to historically justify both the violent occupation of much of the Southern Hemisphere by the British Empire and the retention of cultural objects that were obtained as part of that occupation. While their actions are well-intentioned, their perception of good or helpful behaviour leans heavily on Western, not West African, definitions of positive involvement. As a consequence, they not only preserve harmful colonialist ideologies assumed from their predecessors, but appear to have passed on such ideologies to subsequent generations of students.

Elijah's discourse, on the other hand, is characterised by his significant work experience and personal connections to the African countries that made up his home for many years. Unlike other European expatriate academics of the mid-century period, Elijah's identity and consequent positionality shifted drastically to replace deeply ingrained Eurocentric beliefs with a more informed and radical Afrocentric ideology. In contrast to Noah's and Jacob's inherited, unconscious, and apparently unquestioned biases, Elijah's searing condemnation of the systemic injustices of the Western academy and their relationship to European colonialism indicates that his time spent outside of British institutions has given him a larger perspective

on certain issues that his peers lack.

This correlative relationship of geographic positionality's effect on ideological positionality will be one of the most critical variables within this study, and the significance of its origin within this participant group will be expanded upon in later chapters.

## VII. Conclusion

The participants within this group demonstrate the extent to which colonial ideologies are far from monolithic. These perspectives, while wide-ranging, are all representative of the ways in which such ideologies are challenged, perpetuated, and, most often, concealed within inherited normative practice. In the following chapter, I explore how the normative practices of this generation and their harmful effects have evolved and persisted amongst Africanist art historians.

## Chapter 6

### The Art Historians: Entitlement and Liability

#### I. Introduction

In this chapter, I explore the perspective of the second group of participants, consisting of five art historians who began their careers between the mid-1970s and the early 1990s. Unlike the immediate post-colonial generation, who typically spent between three and ten years working in West Africa for West African institutions, the participants within this group have had more limited periods of fieldwork in Africa, never for more than a year. As a result of their Western-based practice, their discourses are dominated by Western-centric ideologies that affect their perception of who is harmed and who is harmful, and, most prominently, the perpetuation of harmful tropes regarding the capabilities of Indigenous peoples and institutions in comparison to the perceived superiority of standards and resources in the West. Much of this group's approach is shaped by Africanist art history's struggle in the 1970s and 1980s to receive validation as a legitimate sub-field within the art historical canon.

At a time when African art was not taken seriously as art, the role of the market in legitimising objects through high sale prices and demand was critical in fighting the marginalisation of the field. I believe that this sense of marginalisation has led the majority of participants within this group to perceive their positionality as radical and inherently anti-racist, which gives them a sense of entitlement in their practice. As a result, problematic views and practices are obscured and normalised under the guise of an inherently progressive worldview. The narratives in this chapter are driven by themes of entitlement and liability: the entitlement exhibited by Western scholars in controlling the representation and keeping of African objects, and the liability they wrestle with in maintaining relationships with an art market that comes under increasing scrutiny.

In the following sections, I introduce the participants in this chapter and provide historical context surrounding the development of the Africanist art historical field. Analysis is divided into three sections: in the first, I explore the ways in which these art historians' ideological positioning and normative practice perpetuate past harms of colonialism, and how they identify and position themselves in relation to harms committed in the course of curatorial

practice. In the second section, I examine how participants conceptualise wrongdoing in illicit trade involvement within West African countries, as perpetuated by both West African and Western actors. In the third and final section, I explore the ways in which these participants perpetuate harmful beliefs surrounding their perception of Western institutional superiority and the inability of West African countries to properly care for repatriated works.

## II. The Participants

This group contains two generations of art historians; the three oldest participants trained under the tutelage of Roy Sieber, as did many of their generation of art historians and museum curators. The youngest two began their careers in the late 1980s/early 1990s, on the cusp of the early awareness of African archaeological looting. All combine teaching with curatorial work, though primarily university museum curatorial work.

Harry began his career in the mid-1970s and has worked primarily as a professor, whilst engaging in some university curatorial work. He has previously enjoyed a longstanding relationship with private collectors in an advisory role and then as caretaker of the collection developed from their donations to his university.

Abeo began his career in the mid-1970s. Originally from West Africa, his career is largely based in the US and has combined work with traditional and contemporary arts.

Nancy began her career in the late 1970s and has worked primarily as a professor whilst engaging in some curatorial work in both university and public/private museums. She occupies the most powerful institutional position within this group in terms of the seniority of her role and the recognition of her stature by others.

Jack began his career in the late 1980s and has focused largely on anthropological aspects of art history with extensive fieldwork in Africa. He too has occupied university curatorial positions.

Charlie began his career in the late 1980s; his work focuses on anthropological aspects of art history and the art market. Within this group, he has the least amount of experience doing fieldwork within West Africa.

While all participants were generous with their time and patient with my questioning, Nancy was the least cooperative and at times borderline hostile, showing particular impatience, mistrust, and disdain for my line of questioning.

### III. Historical and Discursive Context

#### a. Academic and Museum Structures

By the late 1980s, the Africanist field within the United States was well aware of what Monni Adams described as the “double heritage” of art history and anthropology, which complicated the disciplinary identity of sub-Saharan art research. Africanist practice in this period was shaped by tensions: between the art historical and anthropological demands made by academic macro structures; between mid-century scholars’ perpetuations of Primitivism and their students’ rising emphasis on multiculturalism, critical race, and gender studies; and between those who relied on the market and those who condemned the market for its role in the destruction of archaeological and cultural sites within Africa.

While the ambiguous disciplinary placement of Africanist research frustrated both art historians and anthropologists, with neither quite ready to accept Africanist research for itself, it remains that certain groups fell more into one discipline over the other. Within anthropology, Africanist research was characterised most clearly by the movement responding to the harmful effects of Primitivism, led by Sally Price’s *Primitive Art in Civilised Places* (1993), and examinations of the historiography of market and scholarly interactions with non-Western peoples and cultures. Thus, students within this grouping of Africanist research studied the market rather than participated in it directly.

Amongst art historians, a sense of urgency drove scholars to conduct as much fieldwork as possible in order to record the “traditional” art forms that were fast disappearing, due to the effects of colonialism and economic development, and, ironically, the effects of the art market.

Art historian Roy Sieber had the most influence over the majority of participants in this group. Sieber's legacy is not an easy one to criticise, as he is one of the most beloved and prolific researchers in the Africanist field. He not only conducted research within Nigeria and Ghana, but established groundbreaking research collections at the University of Iowa Art Museum and Indiana University Art Museum at Bloomington, consulted on the development of numerous private collections and collaborated with renowned collectors such as Katherine White, and supervised more than 40 PhD students, in addition to countless MA and undergraduate students (Adams, 1989; Kreamer, 2003). Sieber prioritised his relationships with dealers and collectors and routinely encouraged students to facilitate such relationships as a means of gaining access to objects and opening up possibilities for exhibition or research collaborations (Kreamer, 2003). While he was by no means the only Africanist to engage in or promote these practices, his prolific work as a mentor had a tremendous impact in defining these relationships and shaping normative practice in art historical and curatorial roles through the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

#### b. Political Environment

Politically, this period presents two issues. First, the *Primitivism* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) described in Chapter 2 presented a paradigm shift in how representation of non-Western works should be designed, as it revealed the extent to which outmoded and frankly racist ideas about non-Western art still permeated the art historical and curatorial world. Second, a simmering debate emerged regarding how to approach the issue of the theft and illegal export of African cultural objects, and whether or not normative academic practices like publication and authentication have any bearing on market demand.

The issue of looting and theft of archaeological objects was a hot topic within archaeology, but was not as hotly embraced by art historians. This was partly because many art historians did not study or collect the archaeological objects that were protected by emergent legislation. Even in circles where concern was raised, there was little or no calling out of individuals involved. There was a questioning of certain practices, namely publication, based on scholars' experiences in seeing fieldwork sites cleared of valuable objects after publishing research. However, debates remained largely intellectual, and no field-wide standardized practice of exposure and rejection was devised or accepted. The lack of action on this issue can be

attributed, firstly, to the field's inherent interconnectedness with the art market, and, secondly, to its fight for recognition as a legitimate art historical discipline, which relied on the prestige of market prices to raise art historical estimation of African objects (Borgatti, 2010).

The detail of this atmosphere is most effectively illustrated through a 1992 interview in *African Arts* between Roy Sieber and Doran Ross. This interview is not only illustrative of Sieber's influence on approaches to these issues, which are discernible in the beliefs of the participants in this chapter, but is representative of the respective push and pull between a younger generation of scholars and their teachers, in which the student is reluctant to criticise the teacher but has grown increasingly wary of the harms associated with this sort of practice. Sieber touches on numerous topics that remain just as relevant today as they were in 1992, particularly the issue of "hot" objects, the effects of publications on cultural site destruction, the historical precedent set for cultural appropriation, and the racial discrimination behind the side-lining of African art history.

The interview demonstrates two main points relevant to participants' discourse in this chapter: first, that the questions surrounding these issues are still being debated today and have not been addressed by the Africanist art historical community in any organised way. Sieber discusses "hot" objects coming out of Africa, in two senses: "hot not in the sense of stolen (because they were nearly all stolen), but hot in the sense of this being the new thing out of Africa" (Ross and Sieber, 1992). When Ross asks Sieber how he reconciles the two versions of "hot" in his own mind, Sieber skirts the issue, saying,

"I don't know that it can be finally reconciled. It is going to be a 'hot' argument for a long time. How is one going to reconcile the Elgin Marbles or the Benin material? What about the Rosetta Stone? This has a history almost as old as man. When we find certain things raided by Vikings turning up in Viking graves, whose cultural heritage is it? It is a very important question. For the first time, there is the recognition by certain elements in the world, among them theoretically UNESCO, and certain scholars, that the concept of ownership isn't who has possession of the object. Ownership might really relate to what culture created and used the object." (Sieber and Ross, 1992)

With that being said, Sieber disagrees with how certain cultures, particularly Nigerian cultures, have expressed how they wish to retain cultural objects. Thus, he engages in the age-old tradition of criticising Nigeria: “I think the Nigerians made a mistake when they tried to be tough about everything. The original stance was: nothing leaves. If they had said, ‘Okay, everything comes to us, and we will give to museums enough so that the world can know what Nigerian art is,’ that would have been a sensible balanced position” (Id.: 44).

Second, Sieber embodies the attitude found consistently within this participant group, in which he intellectually identifies points of racism and discrimination in the wider reception and representation of African art, but fails to acknowledge or take responsibility for the ways in which his efforts to validate African art have left African communities and knowledge/power structures vulnerable to both the physical violence of looting/theft and the discursive violence of silencing, discrediting, and misrepresentation. He speaks eloquently about the racial discrimination behind the degradation of African art (“Africans never carried this [noble savage] aura because of slavery. You can’t really consider people noble savages and then put them into slavery, you see...I think that has never completely left the by now almost subliminal attitude toward Africa and by extension its art.”, Id.) and demonstrates the constant need in his job as a teacher to call attention to the racial biases evident in the language previously used to describe African art:

“I had a series of background lectures which explained some of the prejudices against Third World art, some of the history of exoticism. They were lectures that were blatantly relativistic—we have to look at these cultures on their terms if we are going to understand the role of art in those cultures. I do variations of that still.” (Id.: 46)

When Ross asks him whether his remarks about the “noble savage” preference exhibited by collectors is “a fundamentally racist posture”, Sieber replies,

“Of course, definitely. In the pattern I mentioned, Western art (white) is obviously superior to Oriental art (yellow) which in turn is superior to African and Oceanic (black). The earlier *art negre* term meant both Africa and Oceanic, particularly Melanesia. What could be more racist?” (Id.: 50)

However, this socially conscious posturing is not matched by a similarly mindful practice. Sieber relates a conversation he had with the archaeologist Bernard Fagg, whose influence he cites repeatedly through this interview.

“I had a long talk with Bernard Fagg about whether or not I should publish the names of villages. He said it becomes available to the wrong people, but finally he said no, he couldn’t ask me not to do it, because it is part of the knowledge we should have about this material. So I did. And then a number of years later, I met an art dealer from Paris, and he told me, ‘You know your book? I used it! That is the way I got all this stuff from the Idoma.’ It is an ethical problem. If you give precise information, there are people who are likely to misuse it. If you do not, it is likely to impoverish later research.” (Id.: 47)

This dilemma is cited repeatedly by participants across this study. Ross agrees, mentioning the intensity of debate surrounding the topic within *African Arts* itself. He argues, “By making things like labels and captions place and time specific, you are also developing a kind of accountability for the people who have that object, and you are providing evidence of when a piece was in Africa and when it was not.” (Id: 48) At no point does either man suggest that the object’s owners or community caretakers might be consulted in the ethically risky decision to publish researcher sites, resulting in a regrettable instance of silencing. Instead, Ross suggests paternalistically that such publications hold indigenous communities accountable for the protection of their objects, which fails to take responsibility for the role the Western researcher has in bringing unwanted attention to potential goldmines for market opportunists.

With the context of this Western-centric research practice set out, we can see how such racially conscious posturing sets up a fallacy that one cannot be racist if one is actively fighting for the recognition of non-Western as an art form on par with classical Greek or Roman sculpture.

#### IV. Harms of Practice: Negotiating Wrongdoing

This section explores three aspects of art historical practice: first, the ways in which participants conceptualise their responsibility and rights in educating others about non-Western peoples; second, how participants negotiate the harms involved in publishing and authentication; and third, the harms participants identify in museum practice.

##### a. Educating the Other to others

Reflecting Roy Sieber's mission to enlighten students about the racial biases inherent in wider treatment of African art, participants within this group overtly discuss their mission in making African art more widely available and accessible, despite the occasional costs to the communities from which objects are sourced<sup>1</sup>. Harry's discourse in particular is characterised by repeated discussions surrounding the debate on using stolen or sensitive cultural material in the course of educating students. More than once, he uses the example of an auction of Hopi masks in Paris which was contested by the Hopi people. In educating his students about the event, he feels righteously justified in using images of the masks, despite the Hopi's belief that the masks should not be seen.

“As a teacher I'm a little bit ambivalent because when the big case of the Hopi Kachina mask came up in Paris, I systematically copied every image off of the website to use for teaching for my classes. And I warned my students that these are all objects that the Hopi claim nobody else should see. I showed them to the students with a warning they're not supposed to see them but as teacher, I simply am not going to refuse to use them on some kind of ethical grounds. So there we are.”

He places his moral responsibility as a teacher above all else, particularly eclipsing the beliefs and requests of ethnic groups. He explains,

<sup>1</sup> In the antiquities field these are often referred to as 'source countries', and similarly the countries where collectors are located often called 'destination countries', with 'transit countries being the places objects travel through. I occasionally make use of these terms, but recognise problematic aspects of this labelling which implies some parts of the world exist to supply other parts with their decorative objects. This is one area where I feel introducing postcolonial perspectives might raise awareness and inspire reflection about the terminology that currently dominates.

“I would say it is my right as a teacher to use material no matter where I find it. You know the Hopi would say, ‘You don’t have any right to show them this stuff!’ And I’d say, ‘My job is to help my students understand Hopi culture and to respect other peoples’ cultures.’ I know, ok, respect peoples’ cultures by showing them Hopi masks? Nevertheless, teachers like me are hypocrites because we insist on showing stuff even if it’s been stolen.”

His justifications are unique in this group in that he recognises the harm in this practice as defined by others, yet he continues to display the objects and grasp at a rationale as to why he has chosen to ignore those definitions. Furthermore, he argues that the benefits of his approach ultimately outweigh any harms because he has introduced another generation to Hopi culture and art forms: “Just imagine how much greater appreciation my students have for the Hopi people because of my class. How many of them even knew who the hell the Hopi were before my class?” His work is addressing a larger harm in the blight of ignorance in the United States about its indigenous peoples:

“There are a lot of very educated people in this country who have no idea what the real, true cultural diversity of America is because they’re vision is so focused on, it’s a long story, I won’t tell you the whole story, but it’s really quite outrageous, it’s scandalous how little a lot of scholars even understand about American culture.”

Such a position drastically centres the Westerner’s experience of these objects over that of the living culture who has challenged the Western narrative over the ownership of these objects. Harry argues that, ultimately, he is justified in ignoring this challenge because his position as an educator imbues him with the power to do so as long as it is in pursuit of the re-education of ignorant Westerners.

Similarly, Nancy cites her fearfulness that the repatriation of African objects would undo the validation achieved thus far through the representation of Africanist art history within the sanctifying halls of Western museums. “I find a lot of this [repatriation movement] problematic in part because I’m deeply opposed to the kind of exclusion of African art by a

broader art historical engagement in museum and other contexts. There's a kind of, sort of backside of the sort of censorship happening at the same time." It is sobering for her that "even Africans have this idea that every object should come back, that it should never have been seen by Western eyes." Such a perspective is, in her view, utterly misguided. Like Roy Sieber and research participant Harry, she balances this socially conscious concern with a litany of her own activism: "My priority in part has been to work behind the scenes on various things, talking with [a journalist], working with museums in Africa, joining in particular groups like ICOM and Red List to see what I can do in that context. If I find an illicit object that I know was part of a museum collection, I will tell African museums."

#### b. Weighing Market Involvement: The Effects of Publication and Authentication

Examination of this group's attitudes and assumptions towards the effects of academic publication and professional authentication for the art market reveals two things: first, an overwhelming lack of consensus among art historians regarding the effects of publication of research on archaeological and cultural sites within West Africa; second, a similar lack of consensus surrounding professional norms for market involvement. These discrepancies, paired with participants' own inaccurate assumptions of what constitutes normative practice, reveals fractures within the Africanist art historical discipline. That is, while it is true that the wider Africanist field as a whole failed to assess the harmfulness of certain practices in light of key events regarding the illicit trade, the field divides into sections based not on generational difference, but overarching academic discipline, where particular, discipline specific perspectives shape arguments both for and against engagement with colonialist claims.

In discussing the ramifications of publication, there is a tendency amongst the three participants in this group to deflect blame: the real harms, as they see it, are the result of market publications, not academic publications. Indeed, three of the four participants who discussed this topic either openly deny the impact of academic publications or did not mention it at all.

Harry falls into the former camp, as he disagrees that academic publishing has any effect on market demand. "I mean, I'm just publishing my fifth book now and I do know for a fact that

a lot of people in Africa, even in the smallest villages, have consulted my books. But under the circumstances, even if I publish straight out where an object is that I photographed, it's really not a problem." He credits the people in the villages in which he does research with being worldly enough to identify and deal with looting as they see it: "In most of these villages, people have known about the theft of objects and have been carving objects to sell to tourists for so long that they are pretty capable, they're not at all naïve, and they're pretty capable of dealing with it." However, he does attribute the catalogues published by dealers to bolstering demand: "A lot of the European dealers are publishing big lavish catalogues of objects and they get more money if they're a new discovery. And as soon as they publish these objects, people are storming all over Africa looking for these objects." The implication of such statements is that he has not noticed any appreciable rise in demand for objects he has published about, due in no small part to the steadfastness of the communities within which he works, but that market publications create an almost frenzied demand.

Charlie affirms this view, as he answers my question on the effects of museum exhibitions or academic publications by citing an example of how a collector's publication on Baule slingshots created demand out of nowhere for similar objects: "All of a sudden, collectors wanted slingshots, tourists would see this book in the hotel lobby gift shop and then they would want to buy slingshots."

Jack does not disagree or deny that academic publication has played a role in creating demand, but he frames the issues in the past tense. "Yeah, that used to be very much the case and a concern that a lot of people had." He references knowing people who have refused to publish important objects documented in the field, "simply because they're very much aware that they would in fact be providing a road map for somebody to come and steal the objects." He does not appear to have experienced this dilemma himself. Regardless, he believes it to be inconsequential now: "But there's so little of material left in Africa now, it really isn't as big an issue." In addition to this perceived lack of material, he credits the shift in focus from historical to contemporary works among a younger generation of curators with minimising issues of publication ethics. Nonetheless, he is exceptionally cognizant of the historic relationship between the art market and art history as a field: "What I was referring to earlier about the discipline being joined at the hip with the market and with collectors; we publish their collections and validate them, legitimize them, and every time you're helping build

provenance. And all of that adds to the value of these objects.”

In contrast, Nancy addresses the controversy surrounding publication whilst vehemently denying that academic publication has any negative ramifications, using her own experiences to justify her points. When asked if she had observed exhibitions or academic publications having an effect on market demand, she responded in the negative:

“Um, I don’t think, I mean the Ife works are individually worth over a million dollars. And those, you know, it has nothing to do with it, it has to do with the quality of the images, I mean of the works themselves. I don’t think that if you have them out it makes them more valuable. But you know, they’re simply striking works of art.”

She seems to believe works of art are inherently worth great sums of money, and that academic and museum influence have no role to play in increasing their value. Additionally, she sees her own work as being not quite harmless, but not discernibly harmful:

“When I wrote a book on [cultural objects], which was about works that were in both museums and in shrines, I made a decision to publish the sites, the towns where they’re from, because I wanted to document different style areas, et cetera, and some of those were stolen later but then lots and lots of areas were taken. I don’t think that mine had any more impact.”

Clearly, she is aware of what has occurred in this region after the publication of her book. She does not entertain any notion of having contributed to that phenomenon, yet she appears to defend herself. She consciously “made a decision to publish the sites”; this indicates that she was cognisant of the weight of this decision, but disregarded the weight due to her desire to document different area styles. “Some of those were stolen later but then lots and lots of areas were taken.” She makes the argument that the sites she recorded were only some of many areas that were subjected to shrine and museum thefts, and so is justified in having recorded them because they were just as likely to be targeted as other unrecorded sites.

She identifies the reticence to publish as a particular failing in certain fields, and blames archaeologists for debasing a practice that, in her view, has done more good than harm. “We’ve had fifty years of a policy in essence promoted largely by archaeologists but also others, that has insisted, if one publishes works that have come out illegally, then it’s further promoting the trade.” This “policy” is, in her belief, responsible for the loss of Malian terracottas to the obscurity of private collections. She decries this policy as being “based on a sort of pseudo simplified Marxist analytic that seems not really to be borne out, has not helped the situation.” This policy does not exist in any official capacity, but as an institutional norm accepted across fields. However, she believes the mentality behind it is responsible for a larger failing within archaeology as a whole: “There’s a group of some archaeologists who feel that one should not be working on sites where the potential is to find objects, one should not deal with objects, et cetera. And I think that we’ve lost a critical voice of archaeologists dealing with this material because they are not wanting to get involved in this particular aspect of it.”

Ultimately, when she does identify harm in such activities, she blames the art market and collectors:

“I think the larger impact was the exhibit at the, there have been several things, but one was just the ongoing project process of Jacques Kerchache as a key collector and promoter of these works in France. And then the Cartier Foundation exhibit brought real interest in these works. I think when you get a big exhibit that it does have that effect and they’ve never been as valuable as many other works.”

This trend in deflecting blame towards the market for the effects of publications is an interesting turn of events when considering the ways in which authentication presents in this groups as a normalised aspect in art historical practice. Though there is an apparent lack of standardised practice in engaging with the art market, participants’ views on authentication more directly illustrate a spectrum of awareness of associated harms, from those who assume authentication is a death knell to one’s career, to those who participate with certain reservations, to those who harbour no reservations whatsoever.

Charlie is the most conservative in the sense that he believes working with auction houses

would sully his scholarly credentials. When asked about his experience with the commonality or acceptance of authentication for the art market within anthropology or art history, he responds in much the same way as participants in other groups, citing his awareness of a few cases of colleagues' participation. "There was a case about twenty years ago of a scholar who wrote a little blurb for an auction catalogue for Sotheby's. And that was really looked down upon by the scholarly community, that that was something inappropriate and kind of unethical that he was crossing that boundary between scholarship and the market." He presents this harm as a black-and-white issue that is rare but not unheard of. He includes his own experience of having been asked to provide such a service and his firm rejection of the offer. "There was a stool that was up for sale at Sotheby's, two years ago I think it was, and I was contacted by the head of tribal art at Sotheby's to ask if I would write a blurb about this stool and I declined. [Chuckles] Just cuz I didn't want to cross that line."

Abeo presents a much thornier and complex approach to the issue. He does not object to the practice of authentication in and of itself, and condemns expectations that it is art historians' responsibility to police the market. "I think the responsibility of assuring that a nation's artworks were not looted, that responsibility is not theirs." Such statements do not answer my immediate question, which enquires about his experience with and awareness of the ubiquity and norms of authentication. Rather, he references a larger discourse surrounding the normative role of academics in identifying and challenging institutional and historical wrongdoing. Unlike the more straightforward answers of other participants, who are either blithely for or vehemently against authentication, his response acknowledges his experience with both arguments.

He admits, "That said, I do know also that there has been a major concern expressed and followed up, actually, with action by the McIntoshes [exposing looting], as an example. In an attempt to make sure that institutions, particularly in Britain, do not confer legitimacy on stolen works." He draws up what he sees as two sides to the practice: in the first, Africanist scholars "with expertise in that area" are employed simply to check the authenticity of an object; in the second, "where the assignment is to validate by providing dates, authentic dates, which you can do only if you have kind of the recourse to, official kind of assistance, that becomes much more difficult in my estimation to justify." He does not oppose authentication itself, but the use of it by academics in an official capacity to legitimise stolen objects for the

wider art market.

In this group, Jack is the only participant to discuss authentication with an edge of justification. When asked about his experience with the commonality or normality of authentication in the art history field, he responds casually that it is common. When asked if he thinks that's changed, he replies, "Yeah, not a whole lot. I think a lot of people... yeah, I authenticate things, people are bringing things all the time and I'll let them know whether I think it was an object that was made and used in Africa. I'll tell people everything that I know about the object." However, like Abeo, he differentiates between what he perceives to be an academic function to authentication versus an economic one: "What I won't do, I can't and won't appraise the object."

His justification begins in his explanation of the interconnectedness of art history and the market: "The thing is, art history's been, from the very start, tight at the hip to the market and to dealers and collectors. A lot of what art historians study are in private collections." His justifications intensify as he devalues the extent of any harms he may have engaged in: "Yeah, it gets tricky when you're dealing with objects of tremendous value that, you know, were stolen. But 99% of what I see and what is brought to me aren't the high-quality prime pieces that carry a lot of value."

Only one participant discussed authentication without addressing any surrounding controversy, or even exhibiting awareness of such controversy. When asked whether it was common in his experience for art historians to authenticate objects for the market, Harry responds, "All the time. All the time. All the time, all the time. In fact, I've done it many times." When asked if he feels this has changed at all through the years, he says,

"No, no. A dealer knows you're an expert in a particular field and sends you a photo of an object and says, 'Do you think this is worthwhile?' And you write back and say, 'It's a wonderful piece, where did it come from?' And with any luck, it turns out that it was collected by some French or Belgian colonial officer in the 19<sup>th</sup> century."

Such a statement suggests that it is merely "lucky" if the piece has such a provenance, but it

will not deter his authentication of it, and he, like so many others, does not consider the collection of these items by French or Belgian colonial officers to be so problematic as later means of collection. This statement is particularly relevant to the Sieber and Ross (1992) conversation, which addressed at length the falsification of provenance by dealers, and their discovery that such objects were in fact recorded by them during fieldwork. Harry goes on,

“So you write a nice story saying this is a wonderful example of blah blah blah, and they pay you two hundred and fifty bucks or something like that. We all do it because the two hundred fifty bucks could buy you a little bit of film or a memory chip for your camera or could get you one-tenth of the way to Ouagadougou. So that’s very common. I did it more when I was young and still an associate professor and my income was low. I did do it once a month for a friend of mine in Dallas. But I don’t do it very much anymore. I don’t need the money nearly as much as I did.”

Unlike those who responded with a veneer of justification for their involvement in such a close market relationship, he does not exhibit any awareness of the other side of the argument, suggesting that perhaps he does not realise that there is another side to the argument. For Harry, this is a normal and appropriate means of supplementing an insufficient academic income.

### c. Criticism of museum harms

When this group identifies harms within the West, they invariably focus on museum wrongdoing. However, discussion of such harms features an intriguing push-and-pull in which art historians both associate and disassociate themselves from problematic practices. Such tension reveals the closeness of the two disciplines and the resulting discomfort, estrangement, and condemnation at play surrounding issues of illicit trade and cultural misrepresentation.

Charlie describes his early experience working in a curatorial role and his impression of an institutional culture that normalised harmful collecting behaviours:

“I mean certainly, I think the museum ethics have certainly improved in the last

twenty years. [Chuckles]...So I was there from '90 to '95, and even at that point, museums had pretty low expectations of the kind of documentation they wanted when they accepted a piece into the collection. I think today, unless you can prove that something was legitimately exported or have some sort of evidence, museums will not accept the piece for donation. So yes, museum ethics have substantially improved in the last twenty, thirty years."

Despite his direct involvement as part of an organisational culture perpetuating harmful norms, he does not detail his personal experience within this system. He speaks in a detached manner, identifying museums as "they", an organisation outside of himself as opposed to one with which he might identify. Such a manoeuvre does not strike me as evasive, but as a significant marker of how he identifies himself and his relationship to museums.

In contrast, Harry refers briefly but significantly to objects in various museums' collections: "And then of course, I'm sure you know, that there have been questions about pieces from Nok and Ife at the [Museum]. I've got nothing to do with that." His exclamation that he has "nothing to do with that" suggests a certain level of defensiveness, even as he admits he lacks knowledge about this particular situation. He remarks, "There's an Ife mask at the [Museum], I'm sure they probably have documentation, because as far as I know it's still on display." Such a statement suggests he trusts that documentation equates to validity, and that the continued exhibition of a controversial object implies it has been legally acquired. Overall, his simultaneous associations and dissociations from questionable museum acquisitions suggest he may identify with the colleagues who caretake these collections, even as he seeks to distance himself from the discomfort of possible wrongdoing.

Jack speaks at length about the complicated nature of curatorial work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, citing his own experience both as a university curator and as an active critic of curatorial practices. He prefaces his discussion by remarking, "I'm in a privileged position because I'm not a curator." This privilege, as he describes it, has afforded him much greater flexibility to engage with collectors on difficult topics, and more protection professionally from the pressures inherent in the job. "One of the reasons I didn't become a curator was because I didn't want to have to deal with these difficult issues, which I know would have really bothered me." He describes the job of a curator as being particularly burdensome, tasked with the contradictory

demands of building a heavily documented collection and the perhaps incompatible means of doing it ethically and legally.

In his view, curatorship appears fraught with difficult decisions and compromising situations. He uses one such situation as a teaching opportunity, in which a powerful collector sought to offload certain problematic objects as a donation to his university museum as part of a bigger financial contribution to museum renovations. “I let the director of the museum know what was going on with this figure, and he was the one that had to make the decision as to whether they could collect something. It wasn’t my decision. So yeah, full disclosure on my part at least. And the figure’s in the museum now.” Ultimately, his most prominent discomfort with curatorial responsibility lies in the fact that due diligence is not standardised across museums, but is an intensely personal process that varies individually. “There are, I think, standards of best practices and the whole thing with that fix is people might or might not be aware of them but ultimately, everyone has their own set of things they draw the line about at a certain point. Some people are more ethical than others.”

Unlike the others, Abeo abandons any defence or discomfort surrounding curatorial practice. Instead, he argues vehemently that museums fulfil a distinctly Western function that is fundamentally at odds with African cultural practices and needs. He proposes shrines as a more appropriate space for African cultural objects:

“Shrines are where people’s heritage, the social, the cultural patrimony, that’s where they’re held, that’s where they are kept, there are no windows. When you want to call on your ancestors, once or twice a year, whatever the ceremony is, you go there, people go there, and you offer libations, pour oil or whatever it is. And so the idea of displaying those objects simply for your next door neighbour here to come and ogle and oh and ah at them, that’s not African.”

The harm he has identified here is that African objects are being manipulated into distinctly un-African spaces and are on display in decidedly un-African ways.<sup>2</sup> His argument suggests a

<sup>2</sup> It is worth pointing out that Abeo is the only West African among the interviewees in this group, though he has spent the majority of career, and life, by this point, in North America. This is not to claim he has or should have

sense that even when the African object is in Africa, it remains woefully decontextualised as a foreign object in a Western institution. He imbues these objects with a living consciousness, asking, if we gave the objects in European and American collections a voice, “what would they say? They would get mad. They would scream. They would be angry. Many of them are not supposed to see daylight.”

Anthropomorphising of objects is a common occurrence in discussing cultural heritage issues, particularly when people speak of “orphaned” objects. However, he goes one step further than most, presenting the objects with a voice and describes their utmost despair at being so wrongly stored and represented. This, of course, is a conceit for his own belief in the intrusiveness of the colonisers’ museums. It is the introduction of museums that he sees as one of the key aspects of the colonial enterprise. “That because museums are what we use in Europe, you guys have to have museums.” He ascribes this museum invasion with setting a variety of standards that Westerners do not question:

“And so, when museums were introduced, certain things, certain motions, certain practices were taken for granted. That the climate, for example, will be constantly adjusted to suit the objects. That there will regular power supply. That there will be a party of experts who would tend to those objects, curators and that kind of stuff.”

These are the facets of how Westerners conceptualise what a “museum” is, and what they mean when they say that Africa must have “museums”. Such things are taken for granted by Westerners, but not by Abeo; the implication is that other Africans do not take it for granted because it stands in such contrast to how they would use, respect, admire, preserve, or store cultural objects. Strikingly, he makes a key distinction between the “museum” as an ideological institution and as a building: “It is not because there are museums in Europe that the objects are not stolen, it is because of structure.” He argues that it is not museums that protect objects, but the security features of modern museums. These are the features that are

particular attitudes about how art from Africa ought to be displayed, but it is important not to deny or ignore his own heritage. Two participants in the overall study have citizenship in an African country, and while the study makes no claim to be representative of all those working in the field, the overall participant profile (predominantly male, white and European or North American) of the study is not dissimilar from the overall population of those working in the Africanist field.

missing in Africa, which is why the museum as a thing in and of itself is not what Africa needs to keep objects safe.

He hypothesises what the discourse would look like if the situation was reversed and an institution like the British Museum was the victim of large-scale theft; “You can imagine how horrifying that experience would be, and how instantly the system would actually spring up to make sure that some things are plugged. It doesn’t happen that way in Africa.” Ultimately, he rephrases his question again: “So it’s multidimensional, and fundamentally we have to ask, why museums in Africa? Why do African countries need museums when the objects are regarded as living objects or intermediaries between the living and the dead?”

## V. Positioning Wrongdoing

In discussing their introduction to issues of looting and theft, participants demonstrate varying attitudes towards harmfulness and criminality within West Africa. These attitudes keenly reflect their individual positionalities and relationships to West Africa, particularly in terms of their disciplinary positioning on the anthropology to art history spectrum. Ultimately, participants’ representations of African peoples’ and institutions’ roles in the illicit trade not only reveals individual biases or sympathies, but likely shapes their relationship with West African peoples and institutions and affects how they convey the power dynamics of these relationships to students, colleagues, and the general public.

### a. Harms at the source

All five participants identify “insider” looting and illegal export as the principal harm associated with illicit antiquities trade overall. There are three types of perspective: those who believe most looting is done out of desperation and so view the situation sympathetically; those who largely blame people in power in source countries; and those who appear largely ambivalent.

At the far end of the spectrum, Nancy paints a broad picture of wrongdoing by West African museum officials, completely omitting any mention of Western actors. Her narrative is characterised by emphatic repetition of “internal” wrongdoing within source countries and the

tell-tale omission of Western involvement. While she often saw objects for sale during her time as part of a volunteer program in West Africa in the 1960s, her awareness of the trade as a larger system did not take place until she began work in curatorial and academic roles. She describes her introduction to the issues whilst working in New York in the 1980s. “In the aftermath of one of the big exhibits of, I think Sculpture of Ancient Nigeria, there were a group of these Ife heads that were stolen from the Nigerian museum by insiders. Yeah, unfortunately, a lot of this is inside.” She does not specify which Nigerian museum, but introduces her repeated use of “inside” and “insider”.

“So it was in that context and that would have been in the 1980s that I first became aware of it and the problems and how difficult it was. And then at the same time, I became aware that much of the exportation of the so-called Djenne or inner Niger Delta terracottas were coming out by way of the families of politicians in the country. And they were benefitting from it.”

She bifurcates her introduction to the trade through these two instances of illegal export, the first of which involved theft from Nigerian museums by museum employees, and the second of which was facilitated through political corruption in Mali. Her tone is consistently accusatory as she emphasises this sort of behaviour led to the loss of “ninety percent of all those works” from their countries of origin, via “the hands of people internal.” Her repeated accusations against West African institutions suggests an inherent mistrust of West African peoples and organisations due to this rampant corruption. To back up her claim, she cites various rumours she’s heard, “whether it’s airline flight attendants who were bringing things out or the role of antiquities in conjunction with the drug market, or any number of other things that are sort of part of this, including a fair amount of fakes that come into play.”

Harry’s discourse is characterised by a sympathetic view of West Africans who have engaged in and been affected by theft and site destruction. While such sympathy is shared by other participants, Harry’s is, uniquely, not characterised by pity.

“There’s a village that I’ve been going to for decades and the blacksmith family there had a mask that they used. And that piece was stolen. It was stolen by one of the young people in the family. And I was working on the collection of a

private collector in New York City and I took photos of his collection with me to Burkino Faso. I said, ‘Is this your piece?’ and they said, ‘Yes, it’s our piece.’ This is very common in Burkina Faso. It happens all the time and it’s very, very unfortunate and very unpleasant.”

Accounts of these types of community losses are ubiquitous across all participant groups, but Harry’s account hints at the complexity of an issue which other participants gloss over (see also Chapter 8). In his experience, it is not poverty in itself that has driven young people to looting; rather, it is a particular experience of “young men in the family who want to buy a new moped or new motorcycle.” He credits the farmers and police with being particularly attentive to such issues after having dealt with them for decades. “They’re very strict and very careful and they don’t accept bribes, and they get very pissed off when people go into farmhouses and steal objects or buy stolen objects from young men.” This statement seems to respond to other discourses which doubt the efficacy of crime prevention in rural African communities, suggesting a certain frustration with such assumptions.

Jack first became aware of the illicit antiquities trade as a graduate student in the late 1970s, during which time his interest in Ghanaian figurative terracottas introduced him to the crisis in archaeological looting. Uniquely, he describes learning about modern looting whilst learning of the colonial history of Ghana, about “the British presence there and the Anglo-Asante Wars and the looting.” This connection suggests that he perceives both modern and historical looting to exist within the same category of harm, as opposed to inhabiting different positions on a spectrum of legality. Where other participants in this group make clear distinctions between the legitimacy of colonial looting in opposition to modern looting, Jack’s perspective is politically progressive, in terms of considering structural conditions of inequality and deprivation.

However, a subtle paternalism characterises his discourse. His representation of his experience within West Africa is underlined by a repetitive and understated disparagement of West African resources, paired with a constant centring of the superiority of Western standards and resources. Like Harry, he is sympathetic to local market involvement due to the constricting nature of the poverty he has observed, but this sympathy is framed by a broad representation of indigenous peoples’ powerlessness: “You can take an ethical high ground and say, oh this is

awful, those people are corrupt, so on and so forth. But you're looking at people who are struggling financially, they have all sorts of challenges in their lives, and there's an opportunity for them to make some money." However, his sympathy has its limits. He unreflexively exerts the authority afforded to him as a privileged Western academic to attempt to block illicit trade at the source. He describes an incident when he witnessed attempted theft from a shrine during fieldwork in the 1980s.

"People were very much aware of the art market and they were very much aware of what held value in the market. There were several occasions where [local] people brought me things thinking that, because I was a European or American, I would be interested in purchasing that. In each case, I told the person that. This grew out of my actually visiting a shrine, because things were there and I was documenting them. I told the person, well there were a couple people involved in this, that I would give them the week to get the object back in the shrine and if it wasn't there, I would be informing authorities. And they were kind of shocked. Well, one, that I wasn't interested in buying it, and two, that I, in fact, was demanding that they put it back. But of course, as soon as I left, they took the pieces out and tried again."

This incident, while ostensibly demonstrating a willingness to take action against illegal trade, exhibits a certain paternalistic tone. His threat to use his power of authority is almost like an adult telling a child to improve their behaviour or their parent will be informed.

Charlie's account of West African art markets is distinctly neutral. Unlike most other participants in this group who have conducted fieldwork annually or biannually through their careers, his fieldwork experience in Africa itself is limited to research done in the late 1980s and early 1990s. As a result, his interactions and experiences with the illicit art market are fewer and, due to the nature of his research at the time, were merely noted rather than explored.

"I would say there were two kinds of illicit trades going on. One was the stealing of archaeological artefacts. There was a site that had just been discovered by looters in Ghana, the Komo region, and those pieces were

coming into the market in Abidjan around '87, '88. So I was seeing a lot of boxes of Komo terracotta figures. And again, I wasn't really studying that. The guys I was working with were mostly, were not involved in that so much. So I saw it and made a note of it in my head and then didn't really pursue it. And then the other illicit trade, I would say, was pieces that were being made as deliberate fakes and being sold. So illicit in a different way"

He speaks about the trade matter-of-factly, vilifying neither side. He only betrays moralistic surprise when discussing his experience studying fakes, which he explored further in his second fieldwork experience in the early 1990s.

"I had never actually seen any of the traders artificially age a piece or make it look older than it is. We went into a marketplace and we went into a village, and some of the traders were there. And all of a sudden, they just started faking this wooden sculpture, and covering it in mud, and telling us how they bury it and make it look old. [Chuckles] And asked us to film it, which I was really surprised about. Yeah, and I guess their feeling was...you know, they didn't, I think the whole concept of illicit trade, both in terms of faking and in terms of looting, is not understood the same way by the traders as the way we might understand it. So for faking, they didn't necessarily see that as an illegal or unethical practice. It's thought as just satisfying the demand. The people want things that look old, so fine, I'll make them look old."

This narrative demonstrates a perspective that views faking the age of an object as an illicit behaviour in itself; his description of the traders' perspective is presented as an "other" kind of belief and is contrasted in terms of what "we" believe versus what "they" believe. He acknowledges the validity of their perspective while simultaneously feeling the thrill or unease of witnessing what he believes is a form of wrongdoing. However, this indication of judgment is rare in his interview, which is marked most of all by an intellectual as well as geographical detachment from issues of looting, theft, or harmful representation.

## b. Harms of the West

Where participants from other groups besides art historians, as discussed in both the previous and following chapters, readily identify the role that Western actors have played in facilitating the illegal export of cultural objects from their country of origin, the art historians' representations of colleagues' or predecessors' wrongdoing are minimal.

Nancy mentions one incident in which a European visited her in the field and showed her “a cell phone on which were hundreds of objects from the museum that apparently had been given to him.” She is vague about how the situation resolved itself, but affirms, “I refused to deal with him.”

Only Abeo references in detail the role Western actors in the illicit trade, but not without reserve. His discourse is characterised by an equal-opportunity form of criticism, paired at times with a defence of Western systems. Like Jack, Abeo first became aware of the illicit trade as a graduate student in the 1970s. However, unlike any of the others in this group, his introduction to these issues is framed through an experience of isolation. “I became quite aware on my own visiting museums in the US here. I started asking myself several questions regarding how these, many of the objects that I saw in museums happened to find their ways to galleries and museums in the US. How did that happen?” Though he describes being “sensitized to issues that did not necessarily deal directly with the illicit trade” during his graduate school experience in the US, his description of his awareness of the trade suggests, firstly, that it was not openly discussed among his circle of art historians in the 1970s and 1980s, and secondly, that he kept much of his concern to himself at this time. He cites the 1993 Carter Lectures at the University of Florida's Center for African Studies (on the theme of ‘Africa's Disappearing Past: The Erasure of Cultural Patrimony’) as a critical moment in which “all of the concerns that I had harbored came in to the fore and it turns out that I was not the only one that was concerned about illicit trade in African objects.”

This is not to say that Abeo's perspective on Western involvement is damning. On the contrary, he is highly critical of the failings of West African governments and peoples for their role in the trade.

“The problems are not one sided. They’re not. I think people in Africa, as much as people from outside of the countries, they contributed. It’s a joint kind of venture with them, where people out there in Africa who willingly collaborated with looters throughout the country, and offer its own patrimony. So it is not just, I’m not willing to lay the blame squarely on the feet of people who travel from outside of Africa to loot the things. Although that is a significant part of the problem.”

In addition to African governmental ineptitude, he most prominently blames diplomatic collectors, but balances his blame with unexpected consideration. Initially, he voices his suspicion that their diplomatic pouches have played a part in the illegal export of cultural objects: “What I suspect, which I cannot prove as yet, is that there is also the diplomatic angle. There is those bags, diplomatic pouches, that were not subject to any checks at the airports, easily could be an avenue for coming home, quote unquote, with one item or the other that was not legitimately acquired. By diplomats.” However, while he maintains his suspicions, he describes personal experience with diplomat collectors that has provided him with a more sympathetic contextualisation of their involvement, which he believes is driven by innocent curiosity paired with ignorance of the culture they’re admiring. He describes his own experience in working with a specific collection donated to a university, for which he provided authentication. The collector was a prominent diplomat who had been posted to several countries in Africa and developed an interest in African art. “I am not accusing her of donating illegals. I’m using her example to highlight the fact that people who travel, diplomats who are in Africa, become interested, very generally, broadly speaking, in acquiring African artworks. And they too are without the knowledge of the culture and often end up with the good, the bad, the ugly.”

## VI. Harms of Representation

As will be remembered from Chapter 3, representational epistemic violence refers in part to the privileging of Western knowers/knowledges systems over local knowers/knowledge systems, and tactics of discrediting or misrepresenting these knowers/knowledges. The majority of participants within this group routinely centre the West as a moralistic and professional beacon whose standards of care, technology, and knowledge are key in

addressing West Africa's deficiencies in cultural heritage protection. The representation of West African peoples and institutions here is particularly unforgiving. Significantly, the views put forth relating to this theme, surrounding the rights of source countries to both their cultural objects and the narratives surrounding those objects, betrays multiple instances of racism, xenophobia, and persistent neo-colonialism.

#### a. Repatriation

The topic of repatriation acted as a lightning rod for racist and xenophobic views, which, as part of a violence of representation, I positioned as a key form of harm in Chapter 3. Of the five participants, four prominently emphasised their distrust in certain African countries or institutions, particularly in regard to their ability to properly care for objects that may be repatriated. This distrust was framed by participants as fearfulness for the potential harms that might arise in sending objects back to the same place from which they were unsafe once before. Nigeria figured prominently within these fears, with three of the four participants here citing the country's infamous political corruption as reasoning both for the extent to which looting and illegal export has occurred and as an incitement for exercising caution when considering repatriation. Expressions of mistrust in Nigeria are common throughout all participant groups; however, the methods of that expression vary greatly, often betraying xenophobic thought processes that embrace simplistic narratives.

Harry's discussion of the disadvantages of working in Nigeria versus the advantages of working in other West African countries falls most cleanly into this category of xenophobic speech. His disdain for Nigeria is communicated in hyperbolic extremes:

“Ok, well, a lot of us have a phobia for Nigeria because it is one of the most corrupt countries in the entire world, in the cosmos. Mali, on the other hand, is quite a pleasant place and Burkina Faso is a lovely place, which is why people like me like doing research in Burkina Faso or Mali, but not Nigeria. Even Nigerian scholars are afraid to go to Nigeria. I've got a graduate student who's Yoruba and the country is so corrupt he's afraid to go back.”

While others harbour similar frustrations, they more readily articulate the reasoning behind

their beliefs. Abeo states that the “porous kind of avenue for taking things out of Africa” can be blamed first and foremost on the failures of African leaders to properly secure ports of departure against both malicious and benign illegal export.

“Because many people come in and out of Africa with authentic objects and have very good intentions. And it is the responsibility of the respective countries to enforce the laws that they have on the books. There are laws that are meant to deter people from going with objects that are considered national treasures.”

The issue of the trade in Nigeria is, he says, “a basket case.” He decries that many issues have been taken for granted for so long: “They have taken for granted, for example, that objects in many museums across the country are not that secure. If you absolutely have to steal it, I figure that those who are in that business have mastered the way of stealing those things.” However, he believes that instances of such theft have significantly lessened since the market has shifted emphasis from historical to contemporary art.

Where Harry and Abeo provide outright criticism of Nigeria’s alleged inability to effectively enforce its legislature, Jack and Nancy discuss as fact their perception of West African countries’ inability to properly care for retained and repatriated cultural objects due to a lack of resources and properly equipped storage facilities.

Jack frames his criticism of West Africa’s lack of appropriate institutional support for objects through the expression of his hope that more Western institutions will partner with West African institutions “to create viable spaces to repatriate objects.” “I’m hoping that something’s gonna, I don’t know if it’s gonna happen in my lifetime. I hope it happens in your lifetime maybe, but we’ll see. Because that to me is an ideal.” He continues to identify two particular impediments to repatriation.

First, the lack of proper care facilities for the objects themselves: “One of the issues against repatriation is, you’re repatriating the objects to an environment, it’s gonna harm the objects. So you don’t have climate control, secure storage facilities.” Second, he cites the possibility that West African officials’ corruption may lead to objects loaned from Western institutions

being requisitioned, or to returned objects finding their way back onto the market. He cites admiration for the British Museum's 2005 exhibition in collaboration with the National Museums of Kenya, in which 140 Kenyan objects were put on display in Nairobi.

However, in discussing the possibility of more exhibitions of this type, he expresses reservations: "There's this big concern about this, one, there's the safety of the objects and also the possibility of the objects being confiscated. And put in harm's way, in terms of not being probably taken care of. Or disappearing into the private collections." His mistrust of African institutions is subtle and implied rather than openly stated. He ends his discussion by criticising the ease with which other academics call for repatriation:

"Academics can sit on their ethical high horse, it's easy for them, it's easy for me to say yeah, return, send all this stuff back. But if you have any sense of responsibility for the things, and for their important historical and cultural value, not only to the societies that might be seen as being the rightful owners to these objects, but to humanity in general. So then you move off into James Cuno [a prominent art historian who argues antiquities belong to humankind, not individual countries] and yeah, which I have problems with. But."

His sense of responsibility lies towards "the things". He centres them, and their historic and cultural value, above everything else. He vaguely references "the societies that might be seen as being the rightful owners" which suggests a personal sense of contestation of this claim. He sees these things as being most important to "humanity in general". He admits this perspective, when taken to its extreme, is representative of the views of James Cuno, who exemplifies the strong position on this point, which he does not agree with. However, he similarly holds the objects above all else, though for their historical and cultural importance rather than aesthetic value.

Nancy expresses similar concerns as Jack, though where Jack hopes for the possibility that objects may be shared and institutions connected sooner rather than later, Nancy expresses concern for the implications of repatriation in the West. As cited in part IV, she worries that increasing calls for repatriation will play into a larger trend of marginalisation of African objects within the art historical field. This is where she believes "something like the Benin

bronzes and the whole movement to return them comes into play.” For her, the situation is clear: “There’s clearly no room for them until Nigeria is able to put together those kinds of resources, but I think that the resources probably could be better spent.”

Even in cases in which repatriation occurs as the result of institutional research into object provenance, she expresses intense mistrust and resentment toward origin countries. In describing the situation, she asserts, “I’m seeing moves of various insurrections. One could see moves and counter-movers, but you can’t exactly equate those.” Such a description suggests a long-form covert strategy employed by opposing sides. “Insurrections” is a particularly strange word as it is used here; it refers to “rebellion”, but has more in common with “revolt”, suggesting an unwanted change to a norm. She cites the Boston Museum of Fine Arts as an example:

“The Museum of Fine Arts in Boston recently acquired a major Benin collection and at the same time they returned several works of art that were taken out legally, like an Ife head and something else that actually had papers by a Nigerian official, papers that he would sell, right? So he was making money off it, this is part of the corrupt system.”

Her condemnation here focuses on the corruption of one Nigerian official. She does not implicate the museum for having acquired objects that were later proved to have shown signs of being illicit. “And so they gave those works back and it seemed to have gotten the ok of the Nigerian government to keep Benin works. So you get these kinds of plays and counter-plays.” She perceives this exchange as a political game between the government and the institution, in which the Nigerian government exerts an undue level of power over the museum.

Ultimately, she believes the real priority should be “to get funding to go to Africa to build their own museums, to pay for the education of specialists on the continent.” She speaks sweepingly of Africa, suggesting the entire continent lacks the appropriate infrastructure to care for their cultural heritage. It is this perceived inability to care for objects that she cites as her key objection to repatriation: “If one is even thinking about, in a very radical way, trying to get the return of objects, who’s going to care for them? You know, what kind of places are

they going to be put? There's really nothing." She admits, "I mean the Nigerian has a quite good museum system, Benin does as well, Mali certainly does. But there's nowhere near the degree of resources to actually do this."

### b. Criminality and Responsibility

Nancy's views on culpability and responsibility for harms within West Africa prove particularly complex, as she exhibits the most explicitly racist and neo-colonialist sentiments observed within this group. Such harms are all the more harmful due to her apparent unconsciousness of their violence and her high-level position within the art historical field.

When asked if she believes museum exhibitions have more of an impact upon market demand than academic publications, she responds with impatience: "You know, I don't, I think that this has been, I think it's worldwide. Objects around the world, I think it's gone on forever, whether in the context of war, I mean, look at Napoleon in Egypt. Look at the British in the Middle East, look at collections that go into national museums." Such deflections have much in common with Roy Sieber's response to how one can reconcile the troubling history behind many cultural objects. Not only does Nancy refuse to answer the question, but she argues that the issue of looting is normal due to its historic nature and worldwide occurrence.

"I think it's on-going, I think it's often having to do with contexts of colonialism, contexts of war, look what's happening in Syria and the Middle East. I think what one sees in Africa in a certain sense is less painful, it's less difficult. I did see a huge number of works coming out in the era of the civil wars in Sierra Leone and the Mende area, as people were just struggling for survival and were having to sell things. And so I think that's that where you got a lot of them happening."

She acknowledges that this issue of looting and theft is related to "contexts of colonialism, contexts of war", but shockingly suggests that the African context of looting, theft, and "voluntary" sale of objects under the atrocities of colonialism, civil war, and genocide are somehow "less painful" and "less difficult" than equivalent situations in other countries. As a powerful figure in the African art field, she displays an alarming level of ignorance and lack of

empathy to such situations. She acknowledges that she saw things come out during the civil wars in Sierra Leone, but remarks that “people were just struggling for survival” with a casual stamp of, “And so I think that’s where you got a lot of them happening.” It suggests a normalcy to that type of desperate situation, almost a “fair game” perception that people made the choice to sell things in order to survive.

She is defensive and irritable at my suggestion that one part of the market-academic-museum system is more to blame than another:

“So the idea of putting blame on it, on a situation [that] has been around probably since the beginning of time and at this point I actually think we’re probably at more of a responsible moment than we were at the end of the nineteenth century when colonialism was conjoined with missionary movements and the idea was to take everything that had any aspect of belief and simply to strip the areas of these works and, you know, use those to populate Western museums. I’m not seeing any of that kind of happening at this point in time.”

She views harms instigated by the West as purely historic events; because Western institutions are no longer engaging in types of violence that are as explicitly imperialistically or religiously motivated, she considers that absence to constitute “more of a responsible moment” for which the West cannot be blamed. If anything must be addressed, she offers her preferred solution: “I tend to promote instead the aftermath of the effects of dealing with the works in the Holocaust, where the approach to those works was simply to document as much as possible and to publish where the works came from, who owned them, and the histories of them.” The irony appears lost on her that she is both comparing the loss of African works as a kind of Holocaust whilst challenging the argument that any objects should be returned and minimising the severity of cultural human rights violations in Africa compared with elsewhere.

#### IV. Summary of Analysis

This group reveals the extent to which systemic and unconscious racism and xenophobia affect scholarship. I believe the discourse here is particularly significant due to the majority of

participants (4 out of 5) being white Americans. Undoubtedly, given the United States' sustained history of institutionalised white supremacy and anti-Blackness, the biases found within this group are indicative of the participants' unconscious and unexamined beliefs formed as a result of their privilege and positionality within the American race system. I believe this should alarm the Africanist field as a whole, and incite them to confront how racial injustice has affected Africanist art historical scholarship, given the field has historically been dominated by white Americans.

It is my belief that Black Africanists have borne the brunt of pushing the Africanist art historical field into a more explicitly decolonial discourse. White Africanists, on the other hand, appear to have largely avoided confronting or interrogating the ways in which the United States' institutionalised white supremacy and anti-Blackness have influenced Africanist research through the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Though this sample is small and so cannot be said to be representative of the field as a whole, the nature of the discourse held by the participants is easily recognisable as being typical of the silencing, representational epistemic violence, justificatory epistemic violence, and harms of omission frequently perpetuated by White people in reaction to racial injustice.

The most extreme of these is illustrated through Nancy. She exhibits the most explicitly bigoted beliefs surrounding the right of Western countries to obtain objects coming out of African countries in times of war or genocide and denies the continued effects of European colonialism and American and European neo-colonialism on African countries today. Most telling, however, is her inability to equate the genocide and war within various parts of Africa over the last fifty years with equivalent genocide and conflict within Europe, thus justifying the acquisition and retention of African cultural objects in a way she does not justify the acquisition of European objects stolen during the Holocaust. I believe this rationalisation is influenced by the same inherited and oft unspoken anti-blackness that desensitises Western peoples to the shock and tragedy of mass killings and environmental disasters when they occur on the African continent. Though very much a by-product of living in the United States, it is nonetheless unacceptable that such internalised bigotry has not been thus far addressed in one who occupies a position of power in the Africanist field.

However, it is the less explicit forms of epistemic violence which most clearly reflect white Americans' harmful silence and apathy in the face of racial injustice. Jack's belief in the superiority of American and European institutions' ability to care for African cultural objects is presented as merely a pragmatic solution to a complex and unpredictable situation. The harms of such a belief, which delicately invoke both the historic infantilisation and vilification of Black people, are veiled by the seemingly reasonable promise that things could be returned if they could be assured Western-standard protection and conservation. This belief is shared by many within his field, which normalises a seemingly benign perspective with unfortunately colonialist and racist origins.

Regardless of the explicitness of these biases, it remains alarming that they continue to persist within people in positions of power in this field. The question of race appears to be infrequently broached, with harmful results. In the next chapter, I will expand upon how this failure to address the racial politics and history of the Africanist field has impacted curators' ideology and practice.

## V. Conclusion

The art historians diverged on a number of issues, such as the views of, and participation, in authentication, repatriation and more generally, the role or blame that could be attributed to the West for past or ongoing harms to African cultures and communities. However, as a group, they also shared views that are distinct to this profession and position compared to those in other chapters. They all, sometimes grudgingly, sometimes openly, admit to the ethical tensions in activities like display and publication. However, they all report continuing to be involved in activities that they recognise, again to different degrees, as harmful. Their views perhaps fall along a continuum, rather than offer distinct or oppositional positions. This continuum is one which marks varying degrees of intensity of the past harms and their potential to contribute to present harms. They also display a particular consensus in their own discursive harm of representation, to a person deflecting blame of themselves or the West, onto the blanket castigation of Africa and its countries.

## Chapter 7

### The Curators: Representation and Responsibility

#### I. Introduction

This chapter explores the ways in which harms are conceptualised, then unconsciously and semi-consciously perpetrated by Africanist museum curators in the US. While these curators share a field in common with art historians, the history and methodology of museum curation sets them apart both in practice and ideology. Harms identified within this group vary significantly from those of the other groups, as a result of two factors: first, this group does not routinely engage in fieldwork; second, because they are a more public facing element of the Africanist field compared to the professions of the other participants, museum professionals are held to account on behalf of all those involved in the acquisition, trade and display of African culture.

As a result, participants' discourse on these topics is reactive. They are not only responding to the macro structural pressures of past museum scandals related to the illegal export of archaeological objects, but to the very current calls for repatriation of objects back to the living cultures from whom they were taken, in addition to the larger and less overt legacy of European colonialism and white supremacy. Their responses to these pressures are diverse, revealing a myriad of discursive harms that illustrate the generational, geographical, and ideological differences between the four individuals in this group.

In the follow section, I will introduce the participants and give brief summaries of their professional backgrounds. Analysis is broken down into three sections: in the first, I explore how participants' ideological positioning is affected by their country of origin's historical and economic relationship with West Africa; in the second, I explore how curators conceptualise their responsibility in representing West African objects and the communities from which those objects originated; in the third, I explore how curators justify current museum practices that carry a certain amount of harm; and finally, I explore how participants conceptualise solutions to issues such as a repatriation, and what obstacles they identify in making repatriation a viable option.

## II. The Participants

This group consists of four individuals, divided evenly into American and non-American, university curator and art museum curator, men and women.

Jane is an American university museum curator who began her career in the late 1970s. She identifies strongly as an Africanist and is active within the American Africanist art historical community. Her views exhibit the influence of art historian Roy Sieber (see Chapter 6).

George is a European art museum curator working in the US who began his career in the late 1980s. While he has been a part of the English-speaking Africanist community for many years, his approach differs notably from that of his American colleagues, which can be attributed to his education and early career history within Europe.

Alice is an American art museum curator who began her career in the early 2000s. She is the youngest participant in this study and, within this group, the least connected to the Africanist identity despite a strongly art historical background.

Steven is a West African university museum curator working in the US who began his career in the early 2000s. Unlike the other participants in this study, his career has focused more on contemporary art rather than so-called “traditional” or historical art, giving him a wider breadth of focus and experience within both the Western Africanist art historical field and the West African contemporary art world.

## III. Establishing Positionality: Relationships to Harm in the Course of Knowledge Production

Due to events such as the Getty scandal and trial of Marion True (see Chapter 3), curators demonstrate great sensitivity to the possibility of harmfulness in the course of knowledge production. However, such sensitivity is frequently rooted in fearfulness or discomfort, and responses may be characterised as justifications that lean heavily on displacing responsibility onto the authority of larger power structures or favourable legislation. In this section, I explore

1) how participants conceptualise harm and distance themselves from it, 2) how they position themselves in relation to larger power structures, and 3) how they conceptualise what constitutes ‘normative’ practice in publication and authentication.

a. Establishing Authority: European colonial legacy and American late capitalism

As described in Chapter 2, while Europe’s relationship with African peoples and resources was marked by the oppressive and appropriative grip of colonialism, the United States’ appropriation of African cultural objects occurred largely through the legitimising force of the African art market, as developed through the successes of late capitalism. The results of these relationships are particularly discernible in the disparate approaches between individuals within this group. George demonstrates keen awareness of the legacy of colonialism both within Europe and West Africa, while Jane and Alice unconsciously present the dominant influence of late capitalism, which legitimises Western ownership of cultural objects via the transfer of funds. However, such ownership is threatened through the disruptive force of legislation targeting the looting and illegal export of archaeological objects. Thus, George, Alice, and Jane’s approach to the differences between archaeological and historical objects further reveals the extent to which their countries’ historical relationships with the appropriation of African objects consciously and unconsciously influence their respective ideologies.

George cites this ideological difference explicitly.

“It’s a philosophical viewpoint which is different because of the colonial legacy in Europe, which obviously influences the study approach [to], and basically, appreciation of Africa and its arts. And then at the same time, one of the differences is that, especially in the museum field, museums in the United States are very active participants in the trade.”

This key difference between European and American museums is never cited so explicitly by other participants. George’s experience as a European citizen, having received his education and begun his career in Europe, appears to have fostered greater self-awareness regarding his

positionality and his colleagues' positionality. He expresses this unique perspective well when he says, "Being a native of [European country], I've always been closely confronted with some of the key centres of where some of these criticisms were directed to." While it is not overtly linked to his ideology as a European, his argument against the arbitrary separation of archaeological material and contemporary and art historical/ethnographic works in relation to issues of theft and illicit trade stands in contrast to Alice and Jane. Where they argue for this separation based on legalistic grounds, his criticism of this arbitrary discursive division appears to identify it as a form of violence in and of itself. "When people talk about these issues, they very often refer to archaeological material. To ancient art. When it comes to more contemporary arts as they are widely presented in collections, the question is often basically ignored and not the same kind of conversation happens around those kind of non-archaeological items."

Jane's view is expressed through her opinion on both the British Museum's retention of colonially looted objects and a defensive distinction between ethnographic objects (as reproducible objects for removal and study) and archaeological objects (that can be classed as irreproducible antiquities and thus holding particular value for commercial markets). She demonstrates a typical Western disconnect through her subtle vilification of the British Museum's retention of the Benin bronzes whilst justifying the non-consensual commodification of West African cultural objects.

"Personally, I think it's very dangerous to always assume that it's being stolen, that somebody's coming in, you know, under the cover of night and removing things from shrines because it's just as possible that local people who no longer believe in these things were taking them, or other local people realised there was a market and were stealing them. Or they were willingly sold because people wanted the money. So, I never like to assume motivation when things come out. But certainly, things have come out more and more based on what gets published."

Within this interview, this is inserted as an aside. She presents a sliding scale of ambiguity: what constitutes "theft" in a local African context is obscured by the geographical and academic distance of Western collecting. She appears to reinforce that distance by embracing

the ambiguity: “it’s very dangerous to always assume that it’s been stolen” suggests a wariness of the discourse that emphasises wrongdoing as a driving force in object commodification. Her reasons centre on how local people have become disconnected from these objects in one way or another, and thus their right to sell (and by implication the blamelessness of those buying) these things since they no longer sustain a locally cultural belief.

Jane makes a clear distinction between the figurative works studied by archaeologists and the figurative works in her own research, despite the fact that both kinds of works suffered the same consequences after publication. She describes her awareness in the late 1970s of how African-based archaeologists were reluctant to publish about commercially popular objects:

“They didn’t even want to publish pictures of it because they thought that just by getting pictures out into the world, that it would then become a roadmap for people coming and looting. And I actually even saw that with my own work, which was not of course archaeological material, but once I started publishing it in the late 80s, I think my first article was in that ‘89 issue, I started hearing about objects coming out.”

She describes the fear of theft as a result of publication as a distinctly archaeological worry. “They”, not we, were reluctant to publish. She frames her experience as being set apart from the specific worries and targeting within that field, even as she agrees that their fears were not for nought. Despite the shared losses, she remains uneasy about the possibility of an overlap in the objects valued by each. “I’ve always been a little bit nervous about the boundary between what’s an antiquity and what’s an ethnographic object.” She outlines her perception of the difference between the two:

“In my case with the [ethnic group], they could make another pot. They were able to replace it and plus, because the objects are ethnographic, we haven’t destroyed their context and the capacity to learn something. Where if something is purely archaeological or, you know, what you destroy by destroying the context is not replaceable.”

The key difference between the two types of objects is the perceived level of harm done when stolen. Because ethnographic objects, as she defines them, can be replaced by the living cultures that use them, there is less harm done than when archaeological objects are removed inexpertly, thus destroying their context. Consciously, she has attempted to distance herself and her work from the complications and severity of harms posed by working with material that is both commercially and historically valuable. Unconsciously, she has prioritised the harm suffered by the Western-based academic field in the loss of archaeological context over the more direct harms suffered by indigenous peoples whose religious and cultural objects have been stolen and their sites desecrated.

Alice's capitalist positionality is demonstrated through her conceptualisation of 1) the harms associated with archaeological rather than art historical objects and 2) her belief that issues of provenance should have nothing to do with the art historical narrative surrounding the object, resulting in the erasure of commodification and market history from the narrative presented to the wider public. The terminology Alice uses to describe these issues – provenance, collection history, transition of ownership – are coded terms that erase questions of wrongdoing or appropriative violence, focusing instead on Western relationships with objects that are dominated by an “innocent until proven guilty” perspective. Alice first learned about the issue as a student, though not in class. “There's a group in New York that has lectures at the Met about the illicit antiquities trade, and I went to a lecture on pre-Columbian but then of course realised that this affects all sectors of art.” She cites a high level of consciousness in her field that was demonstrated through normalised discourse on the issues in classroom settings during her graduate school experience. However, she emphasises that it was never the focus of the course.

“I guess in the courses I took on Greek art, it didn't come up that often. It came up in the sense of professors being aware of things changing and talking about how things change where they live in museums based on restitution issues or talking about who had rights to what excavation and how they're partnering with governments, but it was never a focus of the course. Unless the course was on collection history, and then of course it was a major focus of the course.”

She argues that there should not be an expectation for these issues to be discussed unless the

context is considered relevant. In her view, this is a very limited context. “Typically, provenance is something that’s discussed more in a museum and market context. So, it definitely comes up if you’re looking at specific examples of an object in a group of object.” Though the topic of our discussion is West African objects, she uses the Ghiberti doors (early Renaissance Italian) as an example for why discussion on provenance would be irrelevant, before realising out loud that it was an unsuitable example. “But when you’re studying art in that way and there’s no question of the transition of ownership – it’s not like a grad student’s about to go buy art very often, a school’s not acquiring art – that the conversation about where it comes from doesn’t come up that often in a European context.”

When asked about the level of awareness of issues of looting and illicit trade within the art historical field, Alice assures that awareness is very high, “especially among people that work with material that is often looted. So, people who work with archaeological material are very aware, I think, of these issues. You know, because it affects the research they can do.” She then presents her next assurance as if it stands in contrast to the experience of archaeologists:

“Africanists are very aware of the sensitivity surrounding when things came out, how they came out, things came out during modern wars, you know, after the UNESCO Convention, things that came out during wars before. So I think there’s a very high level of awareness of provenance issues and sort of cultural patrimony issues that have to do with where objects came from and who took them.”

The terminology she uses shifts noticeably: while archaeologists work with “material that is often looted”, Africanists work with things that “came out”. “Archaeological material” is presented as inherently different, in terms of commodification, from the “cultural patrimony” that has left West Africa before and after the 1970 UNESCO Convention.

While these market-influences are not as overt as George’s perception of the difference between American and European museum practice, they are important to consider in understanding the motivations behind curators’, particularly American curators’, conceptualisation of harm and approach to mitigating or justifying participation in such harms.

## b. Harms in Practice: Authentication and Publication

Curators' conceptualisations of the harms present in market-influencing activities, authentication and academic publication, reflect the reactive nature of curatorial practice. In describing authentication, curators' responses echo those of the art historians in Chapter 6: individuals with closer ties to the Africanist art history circle, particularly those who have counted Roy Sieber as an influence, are more likely to engage with the market than those who recognise higher macro structural authorities. However, the majority of curators in this group cite the inhibiting nature of museum scandals and more stringent policy for the decline in this once normative practice.

When asked if it has ever been common or accepted in his experience for art historians to authenticate objects for the market or publish unprovenanced material, George immediately says, "No, and we're, two things: when I was in academia, you have more freedom and more liberty to be, to play a more active and, um, open role, if you desire to do this. But once you're engaged in a museum, you are very limited in what you can do for the market." His use of the words like "freedom," "liberty," "more active," and "open role", as opposed to "very limited" suggests a strong association of museums with restriction in terms of market relationships, while academia associates with freedom. He is the only participant to so plainly state the relative truth of academics' greater freedom to engage with the market sans regulatory oversight, while museums have struggled with increasing restriction. His expression of this indicates a certain self-awareness of how his actions as a curator are under more scrutiny than were his actions as an academic.

When asked the same question, Alice hesitates, and then asks for the question to be repeated. Ultimately, she gives a firm no. "No, I think for a number of reasons, curators are very shy to do that [authenticate] nowadays. And I think that some of that is to do with cultural patrimony but some of it also has to do with US court law, that people can be, in the past people have been sued for saying something is one thing and not another." No other participant in this study cites libel as a reason for desisting from authentication or publication and, to my knowledge, it has not been mentioned as a factor for desistance within the wider discourse on this issue.

Jane's answer to the authentication question proves more complex. She immediately replies, "Ah, that's a tricky question because the auction houses ask us about objects." The "tricky" aspect of this question appears to be twofold: first, there is the implication of some discomfort about the nature of market involvement generally. Second, the nature of my question is to determine possible wrongdoing, which she responds to by illuminating how I may be mistaken. She describes a case in which a wooden sculpture from Nigeria had been published with a caption stating it had been stolen from the Jos Museum. When the object "turned up" in a private collection that was then put on the market by Sotheby's, the head of African and Oceanic Art in New York stepped in.

"So, the Sotheby's African guy, Heinrich Schweizer, did a lot of research with, you know, he contacted the people who did fieldwork in that area to try to get a sense for what they knew about the object. And in the end, we were, he was able to prove that it had not been stolen from a museum, that it had come out, and who knows how, just like so many other things, and so now the piece is in a private collection and its currently on exhibition. And everybody's happy because, [laughs], happy, I mean, everybody feels like the piece was not stolen from a museum in Nigeria, it came out who knows how, and we know that it had to have come out after a certain date because it was photographed in the field, so, you know, that's the story."

The intent of such a case is to legitimise the cooperation of field experts like herself with market actors seeking to contextualise their wares. She presents a market actor as commendably dedicated to research, with the triumphant result of vindicating an object that had been falsely labelled as stolen. This form of justification seeks to demonstrate that providing information to market actors is ultimately beneficial to the process of art historical research.

Unlike the previous group, all four curators unanimously agree that museum exhibitions and academic publications increase market demand for objects in focus. However, there are three distinct perspectives about this phenomenon expressed by the individuals in this group.

George and Steven state unequivocally that this cause-and-effect is simply in the nature of the

field. George describes the limits placed upon curators' abilities to engage with the market, but concedes that there is an inherent power in the choices they make: "We are not allowed to share value or to make comments about value on objects. And we're not supposed, for purely ethical reasons, to actively contribute, participate in the trade. That being said, as we all know, when you do exhibitions, you make choices. When you publish objects, you make choices." This suggests he perceives a wary or resigned consciousness among his colleagues that, despite the limits he perceives have been placed upon market involvement, their decisions continue to have a discernible effect. "In many different ways, specific objects, whole regions and areas, collections have been validated indirectly or implicitly by such work." It is scholarly work in particular that he believes lends the most legitimising force:

"What I find striking is that even though an academic publication may not be about the quality or the financial appeal of, the financial value of X or Y object, that the more scholarly part of the conversation is used in the trade to reinforce those qualifications. Even if they may not have been part of the original reason for an academic to publish or write about something."

However, he specifies that the effects of exhibitions and publication are most potently, if not exclusively, felt by objects in private collections. "We don't have control necessarily over the subsequent life of these objects and indirectly or directly, we obviously contribute to the recognition of value of these objects, both in terms of quality and museum worthiness, but also implicitly in terms of financial value." This implies 1) that he believes there is more safety for objects in museum collections, where curators can control the subsequent life of the object, and 2) that he is speaking specifically about known objects in private collections rather than looted and undocumented objects. Ultimately, he is critical of those who do not willingly recognise their role in market valuation, no matter how indirect:

"So, to believe that we're totally harmless or we're totally disconnected from the trade because we're not actively contributing to it is of course naïve, especially also in light of the fact that a museum like mine and maybe others in the United States are buying, are purchasing works of art. And so we are obviously, in that sense, one player in this economic endeavour."

Steven similarly expresses his belief in the intrinsic connection between publications and the market. “I mean, it’s obvious, that’s the nature of the field.” However, he emphasises that it is art historians in particular who create this effect, and cites the post-colonial generation for having begun this practice.

“You have art historians of a certain generation, those who were in the field in the ‘60s and ‘70s, discussing objects they found in villages in the ‘60s and ‘70s, only for those objects, you know, make its way to Europe. One of the ways to give legitimacy to those objects, and then the dealers move in, and then get people to steal those objects.”

As an example, he cites the vigango totems of Kenya, which he cites as being commodified by a dealer in California after he had become aware of them through an art historian’s research. “So, art historians give legitimacy to objects and that allows the dealers and the market to stand in, begin to traffic the objects. And they know this. And it’s one of those things you can’t help.” His repeated use of the word “they” distances himself from the art historian of whom he speaks, dividing himself from harmful practice and emphasising the blameworthiness of others. He names a particular art historian whom he believes has had a particular effect on the market, though not intentionally. “They indict themselves, they gave legitimacy to some of this traffic. Not intentionally, but that’s the nature of how the market works.”

Because Jane has the most fieldwork experience of this group, she has the most personal experience of seeing objects she has studied unintentionally commodified and stolen. In the 1980s, she discovered that a pot she had recorded in the field was in the collection of a major European museum.

“It was a pot that I had documented in the field in probably 1981, that [fellow scholar’s name], who before me documented the same pot in 1971. And suddenly, I discovered the pot in the collection of the [European museum], and it was purchased through a French dealer. I mean, it was not difficult to trace it back to where the [museum] had purchased it, but of course the dealers in Paris who received it didn’t have a paper trail or any kind of record of, you know,

who's hands did it pass through in order to even get out of Nigeria.”

Her emphasis on the pot's significance focuses on its esteemed Western record: the importance of who discovered it and her recording of it ten years later, its longevity residing in the same place, and the importance of the institution that ultimately acquired it. She does not mention the original community from which it came, nor their response to this theft. Based on her centring of the loss to Western academic records and her emphasis on the unknowability of who took the object out of Nigeria, it seems she was not in communication with that community at that time. Instead, she expresses her knowledge of how the dealers reacted to an influx of objects that emerged in the wake of one of her exhibitions:

“In the wake of doing that project, suddenly I was seeing all kinds of sculpture from that part of [the country] on the market. That there were unusual forms that the dealers didn't know much about, they worried that it was some odd pastiche that had been created somewhere for the market in Cameroon or wherever. And then they saw the pieces in the exhibition, they saw that they had been field documented, and suddenly you see them in ads, you see them in dealers' booths at the tribal art fairs, and so yes, I think that there's a definite relationship between exhibitions, publications, and the market.”

She relays what dealers were thinking or saying about the objects they were unsure of, which suggests a closeness to the market that she never explicitly shares. The narrative has three parts: her representation of what dealers were thinking or saying, her representation of their seeing her exhibition, and then a dramatic disconnect from their discourse as she cites her own experience of suddenly seeing these things marketed in a more direct way.

In contrast, Alice presents a perspective on market demand that completely omits the possibility of looting or theft as a means to fulfil it. She suggests that dealers “maybe put things on the market, time things with an exhibition they know is coming because everyone will be talking about Senuso at this time, or everyone will be talking about Congo.” She perceives the demand effect as pre-meditated by the market itself, which she believes merely has its ear to the ground in anticipating what will be popular after certain exhibitions. However, she identifies the market as being more swayed by the entrance of existing

collections onto the market. “I don’t think it’s really super dramatic in its impact on the market because a lot of it has to do with what’s available for sale, and frankly, who died or who’s about to retire and needs the money and is selling off their collection.” She does not suggest increased looting or theft as a possible side effect of such demand, saying, “There’s no like back storage that allows people to masterfully produce exactly what is matching with the exhibition out for the year.” The complete omission of the issue of looting and theft is notable: whether or not she intends it, this omission erases the role of professional wrongdoing from the narrative of museum-market influence.

#### IV. Representing Others

The most dominant theme in this participant group is the issue of representation, as laid out in Chapter 3: how curators can serve the communities represented in their collections (and how failure to serve them reinforces epistemic silencing and essentialisations), how source communities and creators are represented or silenced through the process of museum acquisition, and how the curator’s own identity and positionality dictates the extent to which they may responsibly represent others through exhibition and curation.

##### a. Managing identity in representing others

Steven’s discourse surrounding representation focuses on three main issues: 1) the extent to which curators in the West may legitimately or accurately represent West African peoples and cultural objects; 2) the ways in which his positionality as a West African working in the United States both enables him to carry out his politics of decolonisation and complicates his practice as he attempts to mediate and respect multiple perspectives and forms of discourse; and 3) how he describes the necessity to avoid sentimentality surrounding issues of historical violence and repatriation, due to the ways in which sentimentality has been weaponised against Black African art historians.

Unlike any other participant in this study, Steven not only uses the word “decolonisation”, but explicitly states, “I come to the museum with a particular politics of decolonisation.” This approach is evident throughout his interview, but particularly when discussing the harms he has identified in how Africanist art history in the US is too often centred on Western voices

and, when challenged, disregards legitimate criticism from West African researchers. He cites an incident in which Nigerian art historian Rowland Abiodun criticised the American art historian Suzanne Blier:

“There was conversation around a recent book by Suzanne Blier, about her book on Ife. And the other argument by Rowland Abiodun, who’s also an Africanist professor at Amherst, the argument basically is Rowland is saying if you don’t have knowledge-access, you’re not able to understand a material culture effectively. That’s his argument. Suzanne Blier says, no, that’s not the case. Because he was really responding to Suzanne Blier’s book to say, whatever you’re writing in the book is not very valid because you don’t have knowledge access. You know, you don’t speak Yoruba fluently. So, when understanding the meanings, because meanings are not literal, you know. So, he’s making that point that meanings are not literal, you need to understand a language and to understand how meaning is constructed within the language to be able to make more sense of the objects.”

The books in question are Blier’s *Art and Risk in Ancient Yoruba* (2015), and Abiodun’s *Yoruba Art and Language: Seeking the African in African Art* (2014). In Abiodun’s book, he indeed devotes a significant part of his introduction to criticising Blier and an essay she published in 2012, which he perceived as perpetuating the Africanist field’s Eurocentric application of Western art historical terms and concepts to African art. He particularly criticised Blier’s neglect to engage with indigenous linguistics, thus erasing and silencing potent contextualisation and illustration that can only be attained through the study and application of indigenous language. Blier later responded to Abiodun’s criticism in an open letter (2015), in which she refuted the criticisms. Steven never outright states that he thinks Blier is wrong. Rather, he illustrates his argument through the systemic double standards that reinforce the silencing of critical African voices.

“Blier said no, I’ve been going to Ife since the ‘70s, I know Ife, I don’t think that knowledge is the be-all and end-all. Which is interesting that, if one is doing Renaissance, once is expected to speak Italian fluently. When you’re doing French modernism, it’s to be expected to speak French fluently. When

you're doing African art, then the expectation is, oh yeah, you'll be able to do it. One begins to study French to work in Francophone West Africa, or begins to learn Portuguese to work in Portuguese Africa. So, begin to look at the double standard and the reason being that the making of the field in itself had no African influence."

This refusal to be explicitly critical about such matters, regardless of the implied criticism, shapes much of Steven's discourse. He is careful to constantly reiterate his own positionality, particularly regarding how it affects his curatorial focus.

"For me, what I try to do as a museum practitioner is to try as much as possible to think about the voice of, of the African voice. Not in the sense of trying to speak for the African voice, because I mean, my curating's very subjective. It's not objective. No matter what any curator tells you, every curator, every person, even an art historian, people write from a very subjective position."

Thus, in situating his curatorial voice around African objects and mediating his reaction to how Western colleagues approach African objects, he argues that "there's a limit to the argument I can make in the US because I'm not American." He is keenly aware of the fact that the American audience "understands Africa through a set of tropes, in the same way an audience in Africa will understand Western art through a set of tropes." As a consequence, his goal as a curator is to "walk within the frame of legibility" in order to push Americans' preconceived tropes of Africa, which automatically places him between two worlds, attempting to serve two audiences.

"I think my greatest challenge is how to mediate Africa in ways that is very respectful to those in Africa but also my immediate audience. So, I have the two audiences in mind because I'm constantly in the middle. It's different from, say, Western curators socialising a particular way in a particular culture, you're working in that culture. I was already formed intellectually before I came to the US for a PhD. So that should also show when I make exhibitions that has to do with Africa."

However, it is this full formation as a West African scholar working within the US that gives him a certain sensitivity to the ways in which he may be tokenized. He carries a keen self-awareness of how his voice in the US is rendered more valuable due to Americans' perceptions of authenticity. As a Black African man, he reported often being treated as more of an expert on all things African compared to his white colleagues, despite the fact that, just like everyone else, he cannot speak for everyone or everything relating to Africa.

“Because they are very few male art historians, male, Black, African art historians, people tend to listen to you because in the US, the notion of authenticity still carries that kind of value.... One of the questions you ask yourself is, who gets to speak and for whom? For example, to what extent can an African who lives in the US, whose lived in the US for, say, twenty or thirty years, whose not really connected to the tradition, get to speak in a museum setting?”

Consequently, he is critical of diversity rhetoric. Gebrial (2018) describes the focus on racial diversification within educational institutions as a distraction from the inherent structural inequalities that exist due to historically and politically situated injustices, which further distances narratives from the deeper need for decolonisation. Steven cites the pitfalls of this diversification focus:

“Of course, the African comes with a different perspective, you know, but of course, some of the persons who then come to speak are very clueless, because they're not cultural practitioners, they might be just somebody in the community who might not even know what to say. What you do is, you have them on board, you take the diversity, you know.”

However, he is emphatic that a diversity of African scholars doing curatorial work in the US can only improve the situation: “It will be interesting to have more African curators curating African arts in Western institutions, if not for anything, they will bring a different perspective... And I believe if there are more African curators, they will bring that richness to the conversation.”

Ultimately, he is reticent to speak at length about his personal feelings on the repatriation debate, particularly involving colonially appropriated objects. He says, “I try not to be sentimental about the issues.” Such a statement points to two things: first, he *tries*, which indicates that perhaps sentiment is something that may get the best of him; and second, he identifies sentiment as a disadvantageous position to be avoided.

“There’s a sentiment on my own part, but I try as much as possible to maintain a critical distance. So, while going through the storage at the Museum of Ethnology in Berlin, I’m not from Benin in Nigeria. But when you think about, it’s part of my patrimony as a [West African]. And I begin to look at the best of those bronzes in the world, and the holding of a Western institution, I mean it’s going to move you sentimentally. You’ll find it very hard, because you’re human.”

He acknowledges sentiment, but deftly moves the conversation away from his sentiment as a West African, which he argues is as valid as an Africanist’s from the West “to an extent”, in order to circle back to where we began, in addressing the ways in which Western Africanist research is built on the silencing of Africans. “What the problem is, is when the epistemology around African historical objects have been constructed in a way that does not necessarily include the voice or the voices of Africans.”

Viewed in conversation with the other voices in this chapter, Steven’s discourse illustrates the ways in which his role as a Black West African working within a Western context necessitates a level of self-awareness and careful control of his arguments that is not required or exhibited by the white Western curators in this group.

#### b. Representation and connection with source communities

In the few years prior to our interview, Alice’s museum struggled to maintain a relationship with the local community of Edo people from Benin City, Nigeria. The museum contains a collection of objects stolen from Benin City during the Punitive Expedition of 1897, and efforts to make the museum available as a cultural resource to the Edo community had proved unsuccessful. Alice’s new role as curator at this museum saw her inherit a delicate relationship

that required careful navigation. Both parties were keen to maintain the relationship, but found it difficult to agree upon a mutually beneficial means of collaboration.

The point of contention emphasised most by Alice was the Edo group's hope to hold a festival for Igue<sup>3</sup> at the museum. "They wanted to do it at the museum, which we unfortunately couldn't do, because Igue runs until two or three o'clock in the morning, and it's really expensive to keep the building open after we normally close." Alice's institution proposed an alternative:

"We were encouraging that group to think about doing a culture day, which we have for a Persian community and the Jewish community. There's a couple different communities that do a day at the museum each year that introduces cultural practices to museumgoers. Not actually having the festival here, whatever festival they're celebrating, but sort of introducing cultural aspects of that festival, because it just isn't super practical to host, you know, a cultural event in the museum."

These perceived impracticalities stem from how the museum perceives itself as strictly an art museum. "We would want to get more people visiting or to sort of bring an arts focus, because that's our mission, but at the event that they're hosting, they're having what is a religious festival, so it's not really an appropriate time to bring like, an art-making activity." She describes competing interests: the museum can't pay for a late-night event and wants an arts-focus that brings in more guests, while the community wants a space to hold an important cultural event relevant to the material in the collection. Most importantly, she describes that the museum doesn't perceive this ceremony as being relevant to the mission of the institution; the religious festival of this ethnic group whose historic legacy is represented in the museum collection isn't art-focused enough for the museum's mission and attendance targets.

She exhibits regret and discomfort that the nature of this relationship has a bittersweet conflict at its heart in their inability to collaborate. "It's great to be connected to this community, I think we both want to work more with each other, but can't quite figure out yet how to help

<sup>3</sup> Igue is a new year festival, celebrated between Christmas and the New Year in the Gregorian calendar, that originated during the time of the Benin Empire, which includes a blessing from the Oba over his land and people.

each other.” She maintains some confidence that the museum is doing what it can: “The museum has tickets available for members of the Benin community who contact us that are free tickets for people who want to come see their heritage can come do that. And I think those are used, the monthly allotment does get used. So, it seems like there’s some connection.”

This case illustrates that even as this institution negotiates directly with members of the culture from which its collection was stolen, there is very little awareness on the institution’s part for its role as a cultural gatekeeper. At one point, Alice cites that because the objects represented in the collection are court objects, they will not hold a great deal of relevance for the non-royal Edo. Such justifications do not come from a place of discomfort or disavowal, but appear genuinely rooted in the categorical separation of historical art object from living cultural descendants, omitting all consideration of how generational inherited trauma and the diaspora’s simultaneous struggle to assimilate whilst maintaining cultural identity may imbue such politically and culturally charged objects with greater significance.

In defence of her inability to achieve the desired collaboration with the Edo community, Alice justifies her reasoning for not seeking out stronger relationships with communities related to the museum’s collection. “I’m a little bit nervous as a curator to sort of push different groups to be part of the Africa gallery.” She attempts to draw a parallel with European immigrant communities in the surrounding area, arguing that an exhibition of a famous Italian painter did not involve the museum reaching out specifically to the Italian-American community. “It seems strange to say, hey, this was made by people you were related to five hundred years ago, why don’t you come see it? And I kind of don’t want to presume that people who are of African ancestry are only interested in that African art.”

This is not the first time in her interview that she has used unsuitable examples centred on European art in order to justify her approach to African art objects. Such justifications and comparisons betray a lack of appreciation for issues of representation in the wake of colonialist violence and capitalist appropriation. This is not to say such a perspective is malicious. She has good intentions in her avoidance to stereotype or segregate museum-goers. She cites the experience of her colleague, Africanist art historian Michael Kan, who was pushed to study Chinese art in graduate school instead of African art because he is Chinese-American. “This is exactly the sort of thing I don’t want to be doing. It’s so incredibly narrow-

minded. I'm trying to strike the balance between being inclusive and welcoming, and also not trying to act like this is the only route to entry to enjoying the museum for different communities." However, it remains significant that as a person of power in representing these objects and their history, she appears to lack sensitivity to their recent colonial past.

### c. Representation in acquisition and collections

Though Jane has not conducted fieldwork for many years, her narrative fixates upon her experience in the field, and the discovery of objects she recorded now existing in private collections. In one such case, while working on an exhibition, she discovered three or four objects that she had photographed in the field at about the same time she had established a relationship "via the internet with several men from the community that had produced the pots originally." These men had discovered her work in the course of writing their own history, and so they corresponded on this particular issue. "We began a dialogue about, you know, how do you feel about these pots that are now outside of [West Africa] and what about the ritual leaders who are still in, you know, in other words, the pot still had currency in the traditional context. And you know I got some really interesting answers."

She presents this information with a tone of triumph in response to a discourse with which she appears uneasy. "I got an answer like, you know, it isn't the pot that matters, it's the spirit that inhabits it, and once the pot goes away, we haven't lost the spirit, we just make a new pot for the spirit. So, there was a kind of resignation to the realities of the day where people steal things and they can't protect them twenty-four-seven." Instead of emphasising the harm of the theft (by which the pots had come to leave the community), she mitigates it by emphasising the replaceability of the pots and the resignation of the community that this type of violence is inevitable.

"They probably know that in their own communities, there are believers and there are disbelievers and people who have been made to believe that all of this kind of thinking is barbaric and primitive, and if you really want to be a member of modern society, you need to be a Christian or a Muslim. Or so, you know, how do you separate the internal dynamics of change from the outside forces of the art market? And they were in fact, greatly honoured that I would

actually show their objects in America, in Paris, in the world. So, it was like, for them it was beyond belief that their little community that they understand as being a kind of remote pocket of the universe, is out there on the world stage.”

There are three parts to be examined in this section. First, she describes the communities in which this theft occurs as consisting of conflicting ideologies: believers, disbelievers, and the people “who have been made to believe” (a gesture towards aspects of colonialism and neo-colonialism) that believing in what these objects represent “is barbaric and primitive”. This description of division is used to justify the second point, in which she asks, “How do you separate the internal dynamics of change from the outside forces of the art market?” This suggests she sees the two things as separate but linked. She does not seem to recognise them as two prongs of the historical force of colonialism. This harks back to the previous discussion on the legacy of European colonialism as opposed to the characteristic American perspective, which has not internalised the historic effects of nationalistic colonialism, due to capitalism’s legitimising of money as a valid means of transferring ownership.

Third, she emphasises that these men from “their little community” were “greatly honoured” that their objects were the source of such interest and admiration in places in the West. Her representation of their excitement and apparent sense of validation is submitted as evidence justifying the current process of acquisition. It is intended to demonstrate that the museum-market relationship is beneficial to all parties involved. As a result, she may wash her hands of the iniquities of illicit trade through the virtue of indigenous peoples having expressed surprise and delight that their objects are so valued by the West. Meanwhile, she disregards the fact that these men have played no role in their objects’ valuation, have not provided their consent for the objects’ commodification, and have not benefited financially from this arrangement. “I think sometimes we forget that it’s not always a bad thing, and it’s dangerous to just presume that everything that’s happening is malevolent when it’s not.”

Much like Charlie (an art historian, see Chapter 6), she perceives this method of acquisition as an opportunity to educate the wider world about the material culture of these peoples. “For me the greater valour is in the ability to share the pieces with the public, have this remote community that I worked with be exposed for the brilliance of its art, its conception of the spirits that protect them, the use of an object to do that, and the very particular prescribed

ways in which those objects have to be made.” She clearly has a great deal of admiration and respect for these people and their art forms, and has good intentions in wanting to see them recognised for their “brilliance.” However, she fails to represent them as her intellectual or creative equals through this unfortunate instance of epistemic misrepresentation and privileging of the Western market and knowledge system.

## V. Justifying Current Museum Practice

In spite of increasingly stringent museum policies and critical analysis surrounding museum practice, justifications for and deflections of harmful behaviour are a prominent theme within this group.

### a. The Discomfort of Collectors

Both Jane and Alice, despite beginning their careers 30 years apart, contrast their perception of collectors’ increasing discomfort and unease about their collecting practices with their belief in their own museums’ progressiveness and lack of culpability.

Alice, the younger of the two, praises the “particularly strict process looking at cultural patrimony” favoured by her institution and explains that twenty or thirty years ago, it was much more difficult to take such a hard line. “You have difficulty explaining, to your donors for example, why you won’t take an object that they’re offering you, and they don’t quite understand it.” She maintains that “the field has all moved in the same direction at the same time”, meaning that there was no point when art historians and curators were unaware of these issues. “But unless there’s a consensus in your institution or the field you’re working in, it is hard to get any traction on cultural patrimony issues.” Now, she believes, the tides have turned and it is collectors rather than curators of a certain generation who are feeling the sting of changing policies. “Most collectors are aware that this is an increasing issue. Older collectors are very frustrated and upset and disagree with many of these new rules, but older curators and scholars I think totally understand why this is an issue and I think sort of welcome the increasing consensus about what the right way to behave is.” She seems to believe that curators have always been somewhat blameless, constrained by institutional and cultural norms and then freed by them as time moved on.

Similarly, Jane defensively transfers the sense of rightful uneasiness to collectors, deflecting discourse away from art historians and museums.

“So, you know I think there’s more uneasiness in the collectors who don’t want to feel that they’ve got a stolen object. And so, they’re not, they have very mixed feelings when you say, look at this context shot, this is your pot, and there it lives. Because you know, there’s just this anxiety about, are they the rightful owners of this particular object?”

She presents herself in the second person, confronting collectors with the provenance of their purchases. She does not present a particular event or conversation on this issue, but a generalised sense of confrontation and anxiety. She cites them, and only them, as being anxious about wondering if they’re the rightful owners of an object. This deflects away from any question about whether the museum might be asked the same question.

#### b. Legality vs ethicality in acquisitions

While George’s awareness of the differences between European and American relationships with the art market inform some of his progressive views, particularly surrounding repatriation as discussed in the next section, they do not prevent him from adopting a certain defensiveness around his American museum’s past purchase of a Nok terracotta. When asked about his perception of the institution’s justification for buying the piece in 1995, before his arrival there and at a time when the looting of terracotta figures across West Africa was of particular concern, he became noticeably uncomfortable. “So, the Mali agreement applies to the Malian terracotta and that was acquired ten years before the agreement was signed. So, it’s not affected by that issue. The Nok is a totally different issue because that relates to Nigeria and when we bought that object here, it was at a time that many other museums in this country bought Nok terracottas.” He argues that these objects are subject to two separate issues, based on their geographic distance and differing regulations, as opposed to my suggestion that they are part of one issue of figurative archaeologically looted ceramic works that were in vogue at roughly the same time.

Next, he puts the onus for repatriation on the source country, blaming Mali in particular for ambiguously worded laws. “The problem with the laws in the country itself is twofold. The laws themselves have changed and are very, very difficult to interpret. But more importantly, unless a claim has been made by a culture or a country of origin, there, the only thing that remains are the ethical concerns.” He circles back to the Nok head, producing a myriad of justifications.

“I think that at that time, in 1994-95, when we acquired the Nok head from a reputable dealer in Belgium, actually, at the time that other museums bought similar things from even the same dealer, that the questions were very different at that time. And that no matter what, this object has never been the target or focus of any claim because at least, as far as we can tell from the paperwork, it all seems to be surrounded by a confirmed documentation as far as its presence in this country and in this particular institution goes.”

Eventually, he concedes that the UNESCO 1970 Convention is an arbitrary marker for demarcating legality:

“It’s a very artificial kind of framework that it establishes. And I think that the reality is much more complicated. Because to just say, you know, the law was put in place on that date and everything that happened before that doesn’t really matter, it’s very, again, maybe hypocritical but also very, I think, not unrealistic.”

Such discourse illustrates the ways in which Western individuals and institutions more readily recognise Western definitions of legality/illegality over non-Western identifications of harm. George’s discourse is entirely preoccupied with the defence of the institution and how its behaviour relates to a Western set of rules dictating good and bad market involvement. At no point does he critically engage with the role of the museum in legitimising such objects for the market, or how this type of interaction with an object demonstrates the geographical and intellectual distance between source communities and Western museums. Having been assured anonymity, and considering these events took place long before he joined the museum, his

strong position of justification indicates personally-held feelings rather than mere political loyalty to his institution.

## VI. Negotiating Solutions

When discussing the source of problems related to illicit trade and identifying possible solutions, this group focuses heavily on the role that the museum as an institution can or should play.

### a. Source country problems and responsibilities

Because they have spent the least amount of time in West Africa, the three non-African participants in this group are notably vague in their identification of problems specific to West Africa and the responsibilities they believe source countries have in addressing these issues. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this group identifies a special anxiety, held both by themselves and the field as they perceive it, about whether objects loaned to West African source countries might be seized and prevented from return.

When asked why a particular exhibition did not travel to Nigeria, Jane immediately admits, “I think that you would never get the lenders to agree to have it go there.” This anticipated refusal is due to a number of factors:

“There’s the reason of the conditions or the environment in which the show would travel to would be, would not be really up to standard. So you’d have that problem. You’d have the problem of security and how would you really protect the material with the knowledge of the history of what’s gone on in Nigeria, in terms of things being taken from museum. Sold, even, though, we know, people who work at these museums. And things, and what would be, to protect, what kind of protection could you give against, you know, there’s this clause in agreements that’s called immunity from seizure. You know, that you have to provide immunity from seizure, that a piece that’s been lent won’t get taken.”

These reasons are presented as facts; not merely things that lenders believe to be true, but that she believes to be true as well. George discusses such fears as well, but from the perspective of hopefulness that colleagues' hesitations to work with Africa will soon be dispelled. "I think it has to do with security and the logistics of it. It also has to do, obviously, with the fear that the countries of origin may not, may use this opportunity to make claims or at least make statements about the potentially unrightful ownership over certain objects and what that entails."

Instead of finding great fault with security and storage issues in West African museums, George believes the main issue is the ambiguity of antiquities legislation in West African countries.

"I think there's a great need for more clarity on the part of countries of origin because, I don't know if you noticed that, but there's, in the most recent *Tribal Art* issue, there's an article that came out that talks about the UNESCO convention. And I haven't read it very thoroughly yet myself, but, this is from the French edition, but it sheds some light on some of the problems. The problems that have a lot to do with terminology and with what the countries of origin understand under certain terms and words."

He exhibits frustration for not having clear legislation and implies they have not set themselves up for success. However, he also takes issue with the UNESCO convention: "There's not necessarily a clear understanding of what a convention like that actually applies to and how it can be invoked. So, for me, there's really a lot of groundwork to still be done. And it's ironic, because we've been talking about these issues for so long, but a lot of it remains unclear." Much like participants in the post-colonial generation (Chapter 5), he puts the onus of trade management onto source countries.

Alice has the least amount of field experience of all the participants in this study and, as such, has the least experience with on-the-ground issues of theft, looting, and illicit trade. She readily admits to not having "personal knowledge in the sense of hanging out at the bar and having someone say, I know so-and-so took such-and-such from this place." However, she readily emphasises her perception of West Africa's lack of museum security. "I definitely had

the experience of seeing how easy looting can be. You know, Nigerian museum storerooms are not as well secured as [her museum] storerooms are, for example. And it would be pretty easy to take something from the Benin Museum storerooms, if you were interested.”

Where other participants seek to emphasise the inadequacies of Nigerian museums in particular, Alice emphasises that internal thefts are in fact a global issue not specific to Nigeria. “Of course, around the world most art theft happens by people who work at the institution, no matter how many great locks you have on your storage.” However, her lack of direct experience eventually leads to speculation, rather than information sharing: “It certainly would be very easy to take things out of that storeroom, and also, you know, staff aren’t paid very well and I think that the temptation is there for, maybe anyone working in a museum, but particularly people who are paid as poorly as those museum staff are paid, relative to their peers in other sectors.” It is this perceived poverty she then digs into as she speculates on how looting occurs.

“I think if you’ve spent any time in West Africa, of course you’d be familiar with the poverty of people who might be finding things in the ground, farmers who are discovering things that are buried. So I guess I don’t have any personal knowledge of looting that has occurred, but I can see how the context could make it easy, the context could make it more tempting to loot, I suppose, or more tempting, not *more* tempting, but there are fewer...there are fewer things in place to bar looting, I suppose, and maybe greater factors that would make it seem an economic necessity.”

Her discussion is based entirely on her perception of West Africa rather than on discourse with people there.

#### b. The Ideal of Reciprocity

It has been suggested before that a possible solution for the asymmetric retention of cultural objects globally would be a loan scheme: the opportunity for objects held in Western institutions to return to their country of origin under a loan for a specific period of time. In this way, origin countries might enjoy the presence of previously lost objects while Western

institutions would be assured of continued ownership. This potential solution is discussed by George and Steven from opposite points of view: where George believes the reciprocity of object loans could better disseminate the knowledge currently held by European institutions, Steven argues the Western vision for the ideal of reciprocity is in fact a continuation of colonialist knowledge/power control over disenfranchised peoples.

George's belief in this possibility stems from the challenges he has experienced in expanding the collection of his institution. For him, regardless of the perceived ethicality of the acquisition, the harms intrinsic to collection-building as it currently stands are inescapable.

“I'm not just saying it because you are talking to me but I think there's many other ways to expand a collection that are...different than the traditional purchasing of objects in a market. And of course, one way would be considering gifts and donations and encouraging them. But at the same time, those kinds of accessions, additions to the collection, do not necessarily circumvent the issues at stake when it comes to patrimony, ownership, et cetera.”

He proposes the solution may be an international loan network. “I am very interested in the notion of international loans between Europe, the United States, and Africa in every possible direction. And I think that there's much more to be gained from this than to remain focused on the possibility of buying in the market.” However, in contrast to other visions of this scheme, George believes such a project could put into circulation the hidden and under-utilised objects within colonialist collections of European museums.

“And I think that one of the great side effects would be, that it would also be finally a way to basically unveil and make accessible a lot of the material that is not readily available because it's basically lost, so to speak, in storage. And I'm mainly thinking of European museums where an average German collection would have between twenty and fifty thousand objects, of which maybe a hundred are on view. So what do you do with all that material?”

Such emphasis on Europe as a source for the widespread dissemination of objects stolen and

obtained through colonial occupation is entirely unique among these participants. Not only does he see European collections as a valuable resource ripe for disseminating, but he believes his own identity as a European is fundamental to his objective in manifesting this network.

“When it comes to Europe, I think there’s a very open and rich opportunity awaiting to be explored. And that’s something, because of my European background and connections, I would hope that I can go beyond just playing with the idea and sharing the idea with colleagues and actually one day implement something or work something out.”

While he maintains hope, he is realistic that the possibility of such a scheme is not immediate, largely due to his field’s reservations about the trustworthiness of West African institutions. “There’s a lot of uncertainty and therefore trepidation when it comes to Africa at this point. But I hope that at some point in the near future, we will be able to overcome those hesitations.”

In contrast to George’s proposal, Steven argues against this ideal. He describes attending a panel where he met an individual “attached to the British Museum,” who was suggesting “reciprocity in terms of sharing cultural materials, which I felt he...it was a very bad argument.” The identification of the man’s association with the British Museum strikes a significant note, as it gestures to the reputation of the British Museum as an inherently colonialist institution. Steven addressed the man’s argument directly. “I mean, I told him the reasons why I felt it was a bad argument.” He systematically breaks down his reasoning in four steps.

First, he condemns the inaccessibility of West African objects in Western collections for West African peoples.

“It’s easy for museums in the West to claim they’re universal museums and they make the collection available to everyone. And then imagine the irony of [an individual], who has to get a visa to go to Germany to go the museum of ethnology to see the Benin bronzes that belongs to her family. There’s an irony there. There’s an irony that mobility, especially for people from my part of the

world, it's not easy, you know?"

This form of distributive epistemic violence is not merely a harm in itself, but is made more harmful by the fact of Western blindness to its harm. "So, when you're thinking about reciprocity in terms of universal museums and the fact that those museums are accessible mainly by those who do not own the property, then that's one argument."

Second, he criticises Western universal museums' insistence that West African museums are unfit to host loaned or repatriated objects.

"One of the arguments of this so-called universal museums make is that if they repatriate materials, there's no conducive museums. Say Nigeria for example, or in Mali for example, to receive these materials. So that the materials are best served if they remain in those Western institutions. When one begins to think about reciprocity, how then can you create that environment for reciprocity when those objects cannot travel?"

Third, he criticises the obligation of equitable participation in a reciprocity loan scheme, which would unfairly wield yet more distributive violence against origin countries.

"For example, if we are travelling an exhibition from here to, say, the Smithsonian, there is a loan fee involved for the objects, you know. And there is also facilitator report, and all that. So, if one pays loan to receive works, that initially belong to the person, I think there's something disingenuous about that."

Fourth, he condemns the financial burden of reciprocity on source countries, who would be obligated to insure objects within their care.

"Also, the question of insurance. For every work to travel, there's an insurance for every work, you know, and so when you make the argument of reciprocity, who gets the burden of paying for insurance? Mostly it's the receiving museum that takes care of the object when it is in their collection, and the reality is that

most museums on the continent are not in a position to bear that burden.”

In this manifestation, in which Western institutions continue to benefit from systemic injustices founded through the violence of colonial and post-colonial appropriation and oppression, Steven rejects reciprocity as a viable solution. “It’s a very fraught argument to make. So, I basically laid that out to him and I say, reciprocity’s not going to work.” However, he does not reject the idea of reciprocity entirely. He lays out two scenarios in which the reciprocity of cultural resources may be acceptable.

First, he concedes that the British Museum representative argued that if the Lagos Museum wants to borrow Egyptian materials from the British Museum, “they should be able to give them those materials to show in Nigeria. That is a valid point.” He prods the concept further, arguing,

“So, for example, the National Museum in Lagos might not necessarily want to show the Benin Bronzes, so because they did an exhibition of Benin Bronzes at the US does not necessarily mean you should take that exhibition down to Africa. But what the people in Lagos want to see is an exhibition of American art. So, the idea of reciprocity begins to make sense.”

Second, he suggests that true reciprocity addresses a longer-standing imbalance rather than seeking equity between two countries in one transaction. “One Ford Foundation wanted to view a conservation lab in Lagos, what they said was, the National Museum in Lagos was supposed to bring a matching fund to do that. I think if one wants to do conservation, go ahead and do it rather than tying all kinds of conditions to the money.” Such reciprocity would more accurately address the distributive violence at the heart of the issue that Western propositions of international loans seeks to address.

## VII. Summary of Analysis

This group builds on themes from the previous two groups. As we saw in Chapter 5, there is a strong correlation between the length of time participants have spent living and working in West Africa and whether or not their position on these issues will be progressively Afrocentric

or traditionally Western colonialist. And as we saw in Chapter 6, the dominance of white Americans in the Africanist art historical field has resulted in very little reflexivity in examining the effects of institutionalised American racism upon the development of the Africanist field. I believe both these factors are at play in forming the discourse within this group, and that the intersection of these factors has shaped the ideologies particularly of Jane and Alice, and played critical roles in the current practice of George and Steven.

The three white Westerners within this group exhibit strong unconscious loyalty to Western institutional norms, policy, and definitions of harms. Being the furthest removed from community connections in African countries, all but Steven appear oblivious to their biases. Their subsequent confrontation of issues relating to race, contested ownership of objects, and the ethics of representing others is riddled with epistemic violence borne out of discomfort, uncertainty, and a privilege that has made it unnecessary for them to engage with critical race or post-colonial discourse in either their personal or professional lives. The clumsiness of their justifications and dismissals only serves to underline Steven's heightened self-awareness and carefully measured statements which belie his positionality as a Black West African working in the United States.

I believe that because the institutional racism endemic to the Western academy has not been adequately addressed by white Africanists, Black Africanists like Steven face additional barriers in their work as they bear the brunt firstly of white colleagues' instances of epistemic violence, and secondly of the emotional labour involved in processing and addressing such instances in both professional and personal contexts. Steven's discussion of avoiding displays of sentimentality when confronting the history of colonially-appropriated objects gestures to the Western belief in scientific objectivity; objectivity that is afforded most readily to white individuals. West African scholars like Steven are considered to be inherently less objective, thus forcing them to work doubly hard to demonstrate their capacity for objectivity in order to gain the trust of a predominantly white field.

Jane and Alice in particular are not just geographically distant from the communities and sites of their research, but continually distance themselves from complicated context surrounding the illicit antiquities trade. Jane does so through her justificatory case studies that illustrate her belief in the positive power of the art market. In the process, she demonstrates a greater

familiarity with and affinity for market discourse than with the discourse of local knowledge systems in West Africa, betraying her Western-centric comfort zone. Alice reinforces her distance through her repeated professional belief that issues of provenance have nothing to do with the art historical narrative surrounding an object; this deeply held ideology is much more confidently communicated than Jane's, and appears to draw its strength from her perception that it is an institutional norm, rather than a personal belief.

In almost fully divorcing themselves from the contexts surrounding the illicit trade, they consequently stumble over questions that confront their responsibility in representing others and the histories of objects. At no point do they appear to feel the same pressure in representing others as Steven, nor do they appear to have considered the issues as thoroughly. I believe their disconnect from African knowledge/power systems, combined with their particularly American ideologies on ownership, further combined with the Africanist field's failure to address the influence of American racism and modern colonialism, results in regrettable and dangerously normalised instances of epistemic violence that are that much more dangerous due to the privilege of the distance and "objectivity" afforded to them based on their national and racial positionality.

### VIII. Conclusion

As noted at the outset, this group, while bound together by profession, are the most diverse in terms of age and career generation, gender and nationality. This is reflected in the widest range of views about the harms within the Africanist field, from Jane's quite defensive and justificatory posture, to Steven's explicit mention and consideration of decolonisation debates in relation to museums. At the same time, this group shares certain important features that distinguishes them from the art historians, archaeologists and the old guard of Chapter 5. As the professional group at the 'coal face' of heritage debates, they are most likely to have been exposed to public, policy, and media criticism about the acquisition, authentication, and display of objects originating in Africa.

What is particularly interesting is how their responses to this front-line exposure varies, according to their points of individual difference. Jane seeks to explain in defensive tones how her work and that of museums helps and is in the interest of the communities from which

objects are stolen. Steven's response has been to reflect on and in some ways agonize about his own and museum's role in colonialism. Despite this, Steven remains in the museum profession, and along with the others, does not fully repudiate the display in stolen objects. This group also is the one where reciprocity was an important theme, predictably given their location in the field. The discussion of reciprocity opens up new lines of considering the relation between Western countries and those of Africa, with some seeing this as the solution, while others see it as the continuation of a colonial relation of subordination and denial.

## Chapter 8

### The Archaeologists: Service and Responsibility

#### I. Introduction

This chapter explores the perspectives of the archaeologist participants; this consists of six such professionals who have routinely or notably addressed the illicit antiquities trade in West Africa. Here, we come full circle. Themes explored in the first three groups are revisited, but through the lens of decolonisation and human rights held up by these archaeologists. In contrast to the neglect, helplessness, and justifications exhibited by previous groups in responding to issues of illicit trade, this group's perspectives are dominated by themes of service and responsibility.

The majority of participants, save one, argue for a service-oriented approach, by which I mean a professional and personal commitment that prioritises working within the African communities where their research is based in order to collaborate with locals in knowledge production, and engaging themselves politically in national and international issues of site preservation and trade legislation. While this group, like all analysed in the previous chapters, is not exempt from harmful practice, the forms of discursive violence I have identified here are more typically harms of omission that are systemic rather than personal failings.

This chapter not only explores the ways in which archaeologists have challenged colonialist structures and ideologies within their own field, but posits that such practice should be more widely adopted across the Africanist field. The following section introduces the participants and provides brief summaries of their professional backgrounds, while the subsequent section provides a brief overview of the historical context surrounding the positions and beliefs of this group. Analysis is divided into three parts. In the first, I explore how participants' experiences have led them to adopt a service-oriented approach and what this approach consists of; in the second, I explore how archaeologists describe and discuss West African market and academic actors in comparison with groups one and two; and in the third, I explore how archaeologists have criticised involvement with the art market, ranging from condemnations of publishing and authenticating to disappointment in how art historians have failed to address these issues.

## II. Participants and Context

As with the cohorts in previous chapters (and see Chapter 4), the participants in this group are by no means representative of their fields as a whole. However, they stand out in comparison to the previous three cohorts in their emphasis on addressing the problems of illicit trade not as a tangential issue of their main professional activity, but as a core concern both professionally and personally. Perhaps this is not surprising, as most embarked on their careers at a point in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (see Chapters 2 and 3) when post-colonial perspectives were finding their way into academic and market discourses. The participants are:

- a. Sean, an American archaeologist who began his career in the post-colonial era.
- b. Patrick, a British archaeologist whose career began in the post-colonial era and has been focused at North American institutions.
- c. Sam, an American archaeologist whose career began in the late 1970s.
- d. Gareth, a British archaeologist whose career began in the early 1990s.
- e. Fred, a European archaeologist whose career began in the early 1990s.
- f. Louis, a European archaeologist whose career began in the early 1980s.

Notably, archaeologists of the mid-century period, who had been tightly bound to art historians and public museums as part of the Africanist field, gradually began to distance themselves from this domain from the 1980s onward. Archaeologists today are the least connected element of the field as reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3, and have become its most dedicated critics. This is not to say that their work has constituted a steadily active protest against the Africanist field. Journalism and field discourse surrounding looting and trade in Africa have been notably less prominent in the last ten years, and this research offers a prime opportunity to consider the views and interventions of those who have the most critical stance towards the trade.

## III. The Service-Oriented Approach

Archaeologists' relatively resistant stance to the illicit antiquities trade appears most directly influenced by the long-term nature of archaeological fieldwork. The closeness between archaeological teams and indigenous communities is not consistently practiced across the

field, but has become increasingly encouraged. This is a result of the increased popularity of community archaeology, as well as a post-colonial archaeology that seeks to address the harmful effects of archaeological and anthropological research that fails to engage with local communities. Such archaeology is seen as profiting from the ignorance of local communities whilst engaging in silencing of their local knowledge systems (Schmidt, 2009; Munene and Schmidt, 2010; Schmidt, 2014). Most of the participants in this group are advocates of this system, demonstrated both through their overt discussion of this ideology and through the description of their practice and the issues they have prioritised throughout their careers.

#### a. Proximity to looting and journeys of awareness

Those who have dedicated the most effort to addressing these issues began their career in institutional environments that prioritised discourse on looting and illicit specifically, and decolonisation generally. The presentation of participant views in this section reflects their shared ‘awareness stories’, in which individuals would tell me of their personal journeys through which their concerns about the Africanist field came to form a dominant aspect of their work as archaeologists. These stories often revolve around first-hand knowledge or witnessing intensive forms of heritage destruction and theft.

Sean learned about the dark aspects of the trade first as a student and then as a teacher at a university in East Africa, where he developed an interest in human rights alongside his archaeological research. It is through this lens that he conceptualises the harms of looting and site destruction. “I came to an awareness that one of the most blatant violations of human rights was in the area of the looting of sites and the destruction of heritage. The desecration of heritage was a manifestation, I thought, in a very kind of empirical sense of violation of human rights to a cultural past.” In contrast to the participants whose perspectives were covered in previous chapters, he does not approach the topic from a perspective of Western concern or fearfulness of the losses to universal ownership or understanding, but from one that prioritises the “long-ignored rights” of political, cultural, and economic rights for indigenous people. He approaches heritage destruction in and of itself as not being the main violation, but the symptom of a greater ethos that participates consciously and unconsciously in the oppression of one group of people for the profit of another.

In the mid-1980s, he developed and taught the archaeology program at an East African university, where he had his formative experience in confronting the illicit trade through the unexpected involvement of his own European colleagues. “I only put it together later, and it deeply, deeply shook me. Because it was literally done right under our noses. And we were not attuned to it because the people doing it were so exceedingly shrewd and clever about it, it was downright cunning.” In theatrical detail, he unfolds an account in which a German professor of geography and his ethnomusicologist wife systematically stole objects from the national museum before fleeing the country. Sean first became suspicious when the professor offered him a deal on some furniture and became increasingly “real twitchy and kind of nervous” when questioned. As he dramatically relates,

“Only a week later, as we were living in a hotel for a few months, my wife was walking down the path and she heard voices. People haggling. There was bartering going on in one of the bungalows. So, she summoned me and I came to the spot and she said, you got to go listen to what’s going on in that room. And I crept up the pathway and secreted myself and listened to these two women bartering for what appeared to be an absolutely incredible museum specimen-quality Makonde, original Makonde carving. And I was flabbergasted. Just absolutely stunned. I could turn to peek in the open doorway and see it sitting on the table. I could not see who the other woman was, but I did know who the bungalow belonged to and it was a Hungarian lecturer. Later I approached her and said, ‘What are you doing? Who was selling that object to you?’ She said, ‘ah that German woman was trying to sell me that sculpture but she wanted too much money.’ I said, ‘Well how much money was she asking for it?’ She said, ‘She wanted a thousand dollars, it was just much too much.’ And I thought, dear God, you know, where would she have gotten something like that? I asked around and then they left the country.”

Not long after, rumours spread that objects had gone missing from the national museum and the assistant director, a friend of Sean’s, was fired. Because the director of the museum was on sabbatical at the time, the assistant director became the scapegoat. “He said, I’ve been accused of theft, there’s been a big police investigation, much of our collection, our ethnographic collection, is missing. I said, ‘how in the world did that happen?’ He said, ‘I don’t know, all I

do know is that I'm not responsible for it.” Convinced absolutely of his friend's innocence, Sean hired him to teach at the university. It came to light that over a period of two years, the German ethnomusicologist (not the assistant director) had gained the confidence of the museum guards and ticket takers. During the course of the day, as she worked in the ethnographic collections, she would take breaks to buy the employees tea and ingratiate herself to them. “And over that period of time, ripped off almost all of the ethnographic collection.” When the director returned from sabbatical, he too was fired, but no further effort was made to investigate the issue or have the objects returned.

Sean emphasises that such cases are common across the continent. “Back up the truck, you know, break the gates down, with the collaboration of insiders, you loot the museum. This was just much more cunning.” However, it is not the ubiquity of such events that he focuses on, but his own perceived inability to stop it. “It was pointed out to me that I had not been vigilant enough.” Where the participants in Chapter 5 describe such struggles in alternately playful and defeated terms, blaming the tenacity and reach of the market above all else, Sean emphasises the extent to which he holds himself responsible for the loss of objects. “I hadn't put together the pieces fast enough to be able to intercede, but I didn't have really strong clues that anything illegal was going on except that one instance, the overheard conversation. And I just didn't make the association at the time.” This account notably lacks the paternalism and victim blaming that characterised participant views in Chapters 5 and 6, who sought to address issues of wrongdoing in source countries.

Patrick was first introduced to the problems of looting and removal in the late 1960s. Uniquely for this group, he did not become aware of the issues whilst in the field but while still in the West, working as an assistant curator at a university museum, and being offered clearly stolen objects. “I had dealers coming to see me from Africa, and sometimes there were museum numbers on the objects.” It was while he was at this institution that the leading curators “made, I think, quite a powerful statement about not accepting to buy objects that had no proper pedigree. That was when I became aware of the extent of the trade and talking to colleagues and so on.” Patrick's subsequent career, and his ideology surrounding the illicit trade and site preservation, are clearly influenced by this institutional discourse and organisational culture that had embraced a radical perspective of self-scrutinising transparency.

Patrick spent significant periods of time in various West African countries during the course of fieldwork. His comments are characterised by a unique unwillingness to accept and work from taken-for-granted ‘truths’ about the illicit antiquities trade. Where other participants in this study have readily discussed their perception of Nigeria’s corruption as a widely agreed upon truth (exemplified by Nancy and Harry in Chapter 6), Patrick is careful to clarify his belief or disbelief in the trustworthiness of a particular source. He most notably demonstrates this vigilance when discussing the work of Patrick Darling, who drew critical attention to the looting of terracottas from Nigeria and the role of European thermoluminescence labs in validating them for the market (Darling, 2000). Patrick is reticent to believe what he perceives to be quite dramatic accounts, putting himself in the contradictory position of accepting the probability of Darling’s truthfulness while remaining unconvinced due to lack of evidence.

“Patrick [Darling] is a very curious fellow. He’s very brave in some ways, I mean he’s made accusations against directors of antiquities and so on, which I would say open him up to quite possible physical retaliation. I’m never quite sure how much to believe of what he says about all this looting and robbery, I think it’s probably the case. But it’s never really documented. Well, put it this way, I have never seen a documentation that really convinces me, that makes me think this is proof. I mean I accept it’s probably true, but I’m not sure it actually is. I certainly wouldn’t stand up in a court of law, put it that way.”

Darling, who died in 2016, was considered unconventional but effective in his methods.

Sam similarly developed awareness through his experience working at a Western institution. Unlike nearly all the others who expressed concern about the trade, he did not develop his awareness within archaeology, but through involvement in an interdisciplinary university course that included palaeontology, classics, art history, and anthropology. Through palaeontology, he learned about the breadth of illicit trafficking; “With the palaeontologists, with whom I did several courses in geology and geophysics, there was a constant buzz about the problem of the sale of paleontological material.” He observed his Classics and Art History professors’ reactions to the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s purchase of the Euphronios Krater and their changing relationship with museums. “Many of the professors in classics and art

history here were very upset by the publicity and by the ethics of it all, so in several of the courses on Greek and Hellenistic art, that would come up. There wasn't a lot of discussion amongst them about the ethics of their relationship with museums and museums' issues of accessioning. But that really broke a dam to a degree."

In anthropology, he was introduced to the work of Michael Coe, who spoke openly on the ethics and value of working with looted objects. Coe was a Mayanist scholar who phonetically deciphered Mayan writing and argued viable information can be obtained from looted objects. Finally, Sam built on this awareness upon going to West Africa for fieldwork, where he saw first-hand an intensity of looting "so horrific I just decided I had to do something about it." His fieldwork has focused primarily on one site since the late 1970s, which has seen him and his team develop a strong relationship both with the local community and the network of government officials and organisations dedicated to stemming the illicit trade. As a result, his discourse is characterised by an emphasis upon the importance of local knowledge systems and the autonomy of West African institutions.

Fred's awareness began before he arrived in Africa, but was crystallised by his fieldwork there. "I think I was aware before going to Africa. I arrived in Africa in 1993 and I was trained in this field, so some of the people I trained with were already talking about it, especially in Mali at the time. And lamenting about the practice and the fact that all these archaeological sites were really destroyed." It is this destruction that stood out for him the most: "We are talking of kilometre squares of landscape that are completely becoming, you know, you think you are on the moon, basically. It's really, really impressive. The destruction is really impressive."

Fred spent nearly twenty years as an expatriate in three West African countries, during which time he developed a comprehensive understanding of both the legal and illegal cultural object trade systems. His discourse is characterised by a certain defensiveness against Western views that disparage the capabilities of West African institutions, such as those expressed by participants in Chapters 5 and 6. He is particularly critical of the "counter-argument" to repatriation which says, "we cannot return these objects because they are not safe in Africa. Which is a fallacy, I mean, most probably. But still, it creates this impression that while the land is so corrupt that if you return these objects, they are not going to be protected. They are

basically going to get lost.”

Louis and Gareth both became aware of the issues through their first fieldwork experiences. For Louis, it was in 1983 or 1984 “that we speak together with another archaeologist” about illicit trade, followed by the discovery of plundering at his own research site in 1988. Similarly, Gareth states he became aware “almost immediately on starting work there beginning in the 1990s.” Louis resides in West Africa as well as Europe, and has become so invested in the community and country where he works that he considers himself a local. “I’m almost [West African]. [Laughs] I speak [local language], so of course, my home is in [country], my house is in [country].” Such a perspective provides the strongest statement of local identity in this study, standing in contrast to the oft-used “expatriate” used by most to describe their long-term residence within Africa. As a result, Louis’s discourse is distinguished by this identity, which positions him sympathetically to indigenous actors and institutions.

#### b. The service-oriented ideology

What I am calling the service-oriented approach that has been adopted by these archaeologists sits in opposition to what they perceive to be the dominant career-centred approach taken by their colleagues in the field as a whole. In the following sections, I explore how participants themselves define this approach, as well as what forms it takes both in the day-to-day nature of fieldwork, the activism of challenging normative practice within one’s field, and the political process of pressing for stronger legislation.

In interviews with all the participants in this group, I noted that it appears there are only a few people in this field who are actively concerned about issues of looting, and asked if that perception was accurate in the participant’s experience. Sean affirms this, and attributes this inaction to the self-interest endemic to the academy.

“I don’t know of many. People are more concerned about their research. It’s very inward-turned. I won’t use the word ‘selfish’, but I mean, self-interested. To try to advocate and bring to the attention of fellow academics and the outside world, matters like this takes a lot of energy. And it, ipso facto, distracts

you from your academic trajectory, which some people consider to be the most important thing they do.”

A careerist perspective was most clearly expressed by Nancy in Chapter 6, when she justified her own lack of overt participation in combatting issues of looting or theft. Sean holds himself to a different standard. “I have never felt that way. I do a lot of things that are separate from strictly academic things like developing human rights institutes and departments of archaeology in a couple of places. I’m service oriented.” However, he acknowledges the difficulty in redressing normative practice that is harmful but conceivably too entrenched to alter.

“I mean, how do you create change? What kind of activist dance will lead to change? You need, basically, a fundamental overhaul in values. You need economic change, you need a new crop of young professionals who are deeply dedicated to issues of interdiction of illicit antiquities, proper management of sites, and basically that means local management. It doesn’t mean state management.”

This distrust of state management is not unique within this study, but none advocate quite so clearly for the devolution of powers from central government to local communities. He is particularly critical of the structure within which heritage management and education currently operate, citing that “it’s taught according to precepts that were invented in colonialism” and consequently reproduced in the post-colonial era by independent African governments.

“But you’re talking about revamping the entire philosophy of heritage management and tossing out the old system and replacing it with something altogether different and rather heretical. Because the state doesn’t trust locals. And that’s a vestige of colonialism. Local people don’t know what they’re doing, only we know. Only the experts know. Again, you know, it’s part of what Smith refers to as the authorised heritage discourse, isn’t it? It’s just another manifestation of it. So that’s colonialism in action.”

He is referring to heritage theorist Laurajane Smith's concept of the authorised heritage discourse, which draws attention to the ways in which "heritage" is in fact a Western construction that dictates what *must* be preserved for future generations (principally, aesthetically pleasing material objects, sites, and places) and who bears the responsibility for 'caretaking' this heritage (Smith, 2006). Sean shares that even his students who are now running departments in African institutions are loath to make radical changes. "I'm trying to get them to totally reframe how they're teaching it and it's a struggle. [Laughs] But it's very difficult because it means, essentially, that they've got to go back to school, and rethink how they do this. And I think they're willing to do that, but it just takes a lot of brainstorming and revision of a curriculum in that direction which is a lot of work."

In contrast to Sean's affirmation of my perception of the field as predominantly inactive on issues of looting, Sam disagrees, contrasting two examples showing mixed results. "Now, one of the things is that journals like *African Arts* really have not dealt with this issue at all for a long, long time. The second thing is that there are individuals working with their host national governments." He cites Scot McEckert and Nic David, who have both worked with Nigerian and Cameroonian governments. "So, to work on things like monitoring archaeological sites, keeping inventories, national inventories, inventories of sites. There's still a low level of work going on. And there are some places like Senegal where a new generation of archaeologists have now kind of taken over the heritage apparatus."

Louis echoes Sean's sentiments, and similarly divides the field into two contrasting positions. "There's two different schools. You have young professor that says, no no no, we've nothing to do with politics, nothing to do with illicit trade, nothing to do with human rights." In the second school, there are "other people like Dr [Peter] Schmidt, me, Nic David." He classifies himself as having an inherently political perspective, aligning himself with values that prioritise community and human rights. "If you work in Africa, you are also involved to protect the cultural property of the country."

In contrast to these views, Gareth presents a series of justifications for his lack of political involvement in addressing these issues, both at the local West African level and Western academic level. When I ask why he has not engaged more frequently with these issues, he says, "Well, in Mali, they did do something about it, that they went out and stopped more or

less the looting at that particular site. The Djenne-Djenno issues aren't anything really to do with me." It appears that his first instinct in answering my question is to distance himself personally from the issue and waive his potential responsibility. He provides justifications: the looting has stopped at that particular site; that looting, which was especially high profile and garnered strongly negative attention and publicity, had nothing to do with him; thus, his responsibility for speaking about that (or seemingly any other related issue) does not exist.

He provides a second justification, citing people who have already written about the topic and whom he believes have more of a right to speak publicly because they have more experience with the direct harms of looting. "You know, there are a lot of other people who have written about that, Peter Schmidt in particular and Rod McIntosh as well obviously, and then the Dutch scholars that write about it, Walter van Beek and such like. So I personally haven't encountered it to the same extent."

His third justification seeks to remove himself from a politicised discourse on ethical grounds: "I feel that now it's not so much my voice that needs to be heard, that the voice of the people in Africa itself. It's all well and good for me to pronounce about it, but I'm going through their research permits and such like. So it is for them to do too, which they're doing."

When asked the same question about my perception of the field's (lack of political) involvement in these issues, he justifies this inaction as well, citing archaeologists' reticence to involve themselves that may betray or alienate the communities within which they work.

"I would say that that is true. I don't think that's because these individuals are involved in it in any way, I don't think that. I think it's more a question of not wanting to cause trouble, you know, in these societies. They're small societies, essentially, academically, and you don't want to necessarily raise your head above the parapet. No, certain individuals are, and they're doing a good job with it. You know, but they are getting criticised, I know that."

This predominant failure to engage with discourse constitutes neglect, a form of epistemic violence that I describe in Chapter 3, and his reasoning for this neglect constitutes justificatory

epistemic violence. Though such behaviour is uncommon within this group, it is likely that it is common across the field as a whole.

### c. Fieldwork engagement

The service-oriented approach as described by many participants often consists not of major political protests, but more routine day-to-day tasks undertaken during fieldwork that nevertheless have significant implications for addressing illicit trade. Of the six participants, Sam and Louis offer the most insight into their own practice.

Sam describes two aspects of routine engagement. First, he confirms that he and his colleagues discussed these issues during informal talks at conferences, in which they would share information about their individual experiences with the looting at their research sites.

“Africanist archaeologists would get together at conferences and, in addition to certain sessions at the conferences, we’d just get together around pitchers of beer at the dinner table afterwards and kind of share stories. And at a certain point it was clear that, yes, the situation is bad on the Swahili coast, but there’s someone somewhere else that had something to do that might be useful.”

This type of informal communication, which leads to formal expressions of concern in publications and conference presentations, is described by other participants in the abstract, as events they are sure happen but do not necessarily have experience of themselves. Alice from Chapter 7 specifically spoke about this in her interview, during which she suggested that much knowledge surrounding individual sites remains largely within the bounds of private exchange between field experts. In drawing attention to the nature of ‘conference chat’, I aim to show how informal interactions at formal network encounters participate in this process of organisational transformation. It is striking that the professions which were once so directly complicit in various forms of violence now also form the channels by which this violence is exposed and acted on. This is not to privilege ‘Western’ actors in a narrative of saving natives, but rather to show how the disciplinary setting which facilitated and legitimated colonialism is coming to be penetrated by and reflexive about local concerns.

As a second example, Sam describes the creation of a radio program at the station local to his dig, which discussed the archaeology happening at the site.

“We had a Friday afternoon hour and a half, every Friday afternoon it was the archaeology of [Site]! And I hear, I can only take the testimony of my workmen, that everybody in town turned on their radios to hear what was going on. Now this is of course in, at this point we’re in the late 90s or so, and a lot of the good things had happened. But it was very, you can imagine how gratifying it was to have this kind of sea change in attitude toward the archaeological past. And I can’t help but think that part of the elimination of the looting, at least within a forty-kilometre radius, was because of this generation of local pride.”

While this happened many seasons into excavation and occurred in tandem with other national efforts to curb looting, it demonstrates a dedication of the archaeological team to the community within which it works, as well as a responsibility to these people that is taken seriously instead of being fobbed off onto the government.

Louis describes three types of routine action. First, in the most tangible form of direct action, he describes physically blocking looting and transport of looted materials at the site. “We watched many time in the field, we try one or two times to block.” However, he cites that the other locals were reluctant to contribute because “they know the people, they know everybody. And the only one time we can block some people with a lot of objects in the car, it was a German people, it was so difficult and there was so big trouble after that, it was very, very dangerous, yeah.”

Second, he describes taking notes about the local market as he observes it in order to share it with relevant people in West African systems. “As I record, I take notes, a lot of names, but I never publish. It’s impossible to publish name from people that sell illicit trade goods, it’s difficult.” When asked if he shares this knowledge with others directly, he says, “Yes of course, especially with [people from the country he is in], yes. When we see something very, very strong or very important.” This kind of knowledge-sharing remains relatively unique. Other participants spoke about what they know and how they know it, but have not yet made the leap to sharing that information with authority figures within the African country in which

they were located.

Third, he describes his role as a customs advisor, in which he determines the authenticity of confiscated objects that have potentially been stolen. “We block a lot of thieves coming from Africa by the customs there. And I go every month, I go make an expertise for the customs for them to block the goods, these illicit, they block it and we take it. And it’s a lot of thing to do. It takes time, it takes time.” This type of role is similar to one suggested by Charlie from Chapter 6, in which Charlie outlined how, if he had the resources, he would establish an in-house authentication service at major West African airports to curb illegal exportation. This illustrates, firstly the dedication and level of involvement taken on by Louis; secondly, it emphasises the discursive gap between the two sub fields of archaeology and art history (Chapter 6), suggesting that those within the art historical community are unfamiliar with the work being undertaken by their archaeological colleagues.

Such efforts, extending to the risk even to one’s own safety, indicate a very strong investment not just in the preservation of objects, but the protection of community.

#### d. Political intervention

Throughout their careers, this group has regularly made political engagement a core part of their work. Through influencing international antiquities legislation, lobbying for site preservation, publishing books and articles on their experiences with the illegal trade, and demanding accountability from colleagues and Africanist publications, these individuals have played a key role in publicly addressing issues of illicit trade.

Patrick describes two types of political involvement, representative of his work both in Western academic arenas and West African heritage management. First, he describes an instance in which he and a colleague protested two issues of *African Arts* for including problematic advertising. “There was a thermoluminescence lab which was offering to do this, to authenticate objects, and we made a fuss about that and said *African Arts* shouldn’t be advertising that.” He references Walter van Beek’s documentary *The African King* and how “he skewered the Oxford labs for doing exactly the same thing.” This readiness to call out problematic behaviour is more common among the archaeologists than any other group.

Second, Patrick describes taking initiative when he watched from afar as his research site in Nigeria was badly affected by an incoming terrorist group. In a bold move, he made the case to UNESCO for the site, a World Heritage Cultural Landscape, to be declared endangered. “Before sending it, I wrote to the Director of Monuments, I think he was called, and I warned him that I was going to, I told him I was going to do this, I didn’t warn him, I said I do hope that you will associate yourself with my request. And within 24 hours, they had sent a letter to UNESCO laying out the problems.” Eventually, he received acknowledgement from UNESCO that the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) intended to proceed with the case, but he heard nothing from the NCMM.

His representation of this event is notable for two reasons. First, his depiction of his own political engagement contrasts with Gareth’s rejection of responsibility, and even with Sean’s intentional self-awareness of his own service-oriented work in relation to the dominant career-oriented culture. Patrick seems to undertake such actions as a matter of course, demonstrating an intense personal investment in the place where he does his research and a dedication to its maintenance even from afar. Second, while he feels negatively about the NCMM (“They are an inactive bunch of sods and it really wouldn’t have taken much effort to do something about this,”), he does not reduce them to an essentialised body of corruption and inaction, as is the case with other participants.

Instead of writing them off altogether, he continues to work with them and self-consciously avoids overstepping their authority. “I didn’t really have the time to do much about it myself and I didn’t want to unnecessarily antagonise the NCMM.” His involvement in this case is derived from the motivation to provide protection and opportunities for recovery for this community, and the frustration of feeling that if they will not do something, then he will. The focus of his comments settles on his frustration with this organisation and the harm that has come to this site, lacking the self-flattering paternalism that characterised Jacob’s involvement in Chapter 5.

However, the service-oriented approach, particularly in its political iterations, is not devoid of personal consequences. After working for over a decade to stem looting at his research site and petition for stronger international legislature against the trade, Sam is honest about the

emotional toll it has taken on him, and his reasons for minimising his current activist involvement.

“I have to tell you that I’m a little burned out by it all. [Laughs] And it’s really...even though we had the good results, I’m just...I don’t know how anyone could be a criminal lawyer. I, at least, just have a low tolerance, if you will, for the kinds of lies and misrepresentations and character attacks that the dealers and some of the museum people present. And I don’t think I’ve been particularly subjected to that, but I have a low tolerance to it. At a certain point I just said, you know, I just can’t deal with these creeps anymore. This is just too much.”

Sam’s political involvement spanned two decades, during which time he not only worked closely with his host country to stem looting at his research site and improve education nationally, but involved himself widely on pan-African issues of illicit trade and the development of international legislation like the 1995 UNIDROIT Convention. In Africa, he references attendance at numerous Pan-African Congresses and the topics discussed there, principally dealing with “trying to encourage the nations themselves to set up things like inventories of archaeological sites, to have proper and well-funded non-corrupt heritage organisations, with a clear sense of who was responsible for giving permission to researchers to go out into the field.” No other participant discusses the Pan-African Congress, which was founded in 1945 at the start of the anti-colonial movement and designed to support pan-African decolonising efforts. Sam’s descriptions of these events illustrate the extent to which he was actively and intimately involved in African heritage politics beyond the politics of his own research site.

Sam’s international political involvement proved not only his investment in these issues, but the extent to which he took the subsequent losses to heart. He cites the breakdown of negotiations at the 1995 UNIDROIT Convention as the primary factor in his decision to distance himself from political engagement.

“The Africans, I think quite rightly or understandably, saw that as a symbolic gesture. So in other words, if the European countries would sign onto

UNIDROIT and address this fiction of one ‘droit, then the Africans were saying, and we’d say this very explicitly in conversations, that it showed that there was a new respect, a new respect amongst nations.”

He takes very personally the systemic disrespect inherent in former colonising powers’ relationships with former colonies, taking the African side of this discourse in demanding new respect. To date, the Convention has thirty-two contracting states, none of which are major market countries like the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, or the United States. “And when that was scuttled, in part because of the lobbying of the art world on the legislators of the European countries, the Africans were disgusted and I was disgusted.” His use of the term “disgusted” conveys the depth of his investment, emotionally and professionally, in this event.

“And so that was part of, a not insignificant part of why I kind of, I won’t say washed my hands of it, but became less vocal. Because I put a lot of effort into the arguments of UNIDROIT as well and went to a number of the conferences where the... Well, we thought it was where the lawyers were just working out the details. Never imagined that right up to the end that it was absolutely be scuttled as badly as it was. So that was a real blow, that was a real blow.”

While he does not speak as publicly or frequently about these issues, he does maintain awareness of how the trade is changing and the current challenges to regulation and prevention. At the time of interview, he particularly cites the increasing Chinese market for African objects. “Whereas the movement may have gone a little quiescent in Africa, certainly amongst the Chinese and the Chinese scholars, it’s picking up a lot. They’re taking it in directions that we never imagined.” He emphasises the work being done now by his students, one of whom he is “grooming to be the next generation on the archaeological side”, with others following paths to law school. “I’m hoping that they’re not going to be seduced to the dark side and go into corporate law or something. But they went in with the intention of wanting to do international law and dealing with the, specifically, about the international illicit trade part of it.” He is emphatic that while he has reduced his public involvement on these issues, his energy has been channelled into mentoring students to pick up where he left off. “I’m certainly trying to encourage others, including you, to fight the good fight.”

Both these of these men's experiences demonstrate a multi-pronged approach to political engagement, which emphasises action both within Western and African contexts. It is important to note, however, that their engagement within African contexts is careful to respect the authority of the local knowledge/power systems within which they work and serve.

#### IV. Representing Others

The language used to describe West African peoples, institutions, and trade-related problems is markedly different within this group compared with the language used by participants in the previous chapters, especially the post-colonial generation of Chapter 5 and the art historians of Chapter 6. This section takes a comparative look with the first three groups in how West Africans are discussed.

One of the strongest themes which divides this group from those in previous chapters centres on conceptions of harm, both to African communities and to Western notions of cultural preservation. Where previous groups have spoken sweepingly of African countries and governments, participants in this group tend to differentiate between individuals, communities, and levels within African governance when discussing victims and perpetrators.

While Sean cites many of the same issues as others, his lexical choice makes clear distinctions between the harmful and the harmed. He speaks of corruption at the government level, but is clear in his description that corruption at one level does not mean corruption at all levels. "You take your national antiquities officials and, if I can use Tanzania as any index, they're just not involved. They're short-staffed, they're under-funded, they can't get out into communities to enforce the law, and when they do, they're just ineffective. Unfortunately." Subtly, he notes the ways in which employees at West African institutions are victimised by government corruption, which diverts funds away from heritage projects. "It's compounded by corruption, poorly funded institutions, underpaid stewards, the list goes on and on and on." Notably, he does not equate "underpaid stewards" with corruption. Compared to other participants who paint with a broad brush, such as Harry and Nancy in Chapter 6, Sean makes subtle but important distinctions between state corruption and the limited capabilities of stewards.

While he is very critical of the NCMM and Nigerian corruption, Patrick's discourse surrounding these issues is based firmly on his own personal experience working with these organisations, and ways he has informed himself using others' research. Compared with other participants, he does not generalise his criticism. His language can be contrasted with those in particularly in Chapters 5 and 6, who speak sweepingly in their condemnation of the failure of a whole country relying on examples often focused on the actions of an individual or point in the illicit trade chain. This is particularly well illustrated in the way he relates theft from within Nigerian museums:

“I'm told that the [Ife] museum has been very substantially looted, there's practically no more bronze, Ife bronzes, left. But I've heard this from people that I think are probably telling the truth. African and European. I haven't seen it for myself, and I don't, and I haven't talked to any Ife resident. I've always been talking to people who sort of gone through that and so on.”

Patrick's discourse emphasises the difference between informed and uninformed criticism. Even when criticising the NCMM, he highlights the empathy he has for them as an organisation and for the few good directors he knows.

Sam's discourse in describing West Africans is marked by a notable self-consciousness in applying broad criticisms. He is the most reluctant to apply sweeping generalisations regarding Nigeria's corruption, and contextualises his criticism by focusing on the ways in which he has seen particular harms affect young Nigerian archaeologists.

“I hate to condemn a whole country, but Nigeria is a basket-case. I run into so many Nigerian archaeologists who just pull out their hair, particularly young archaeologists. Over the summer, we had the Pan-African Congress of Prehistory. All archaeologists from all over the continent come to together and a number of the younger student Nigerian archaeologists were talking to me about this situation. So this is a blanket statement and I can't back it up, but there's a sense that the whole museum organisation has been thoroughly corrupted, that it's very difficult to know that pieces that are known to be

curated in Nigerian museums are going to stay there. So there's just a kind of a sense of despair and despondency about that.”

This criticism of Nigeria, particularly as related through the perspective of young archaeologists, mirrors Harry's own dismissal of Nigeria and its effects on students in Chapter 6. However, where Harry readily condemns Nigeria in sweeping terms, Sam voices discomfort and regret in speaking in any way that could carry essentialising violence.

Fred's discourse focuses on the main issues he has identified with the market system and the extent of harm he ascribes to each. This knowledge has been accrued through years of experience in living and working, in his words, as an expatriate, which is particularly evident in the ways in which he describes local knowledge systems.

He describes a legal system in which cultural objects, sometimes obtained via illegal mining for precious metals, are bought and sold by an established and nationally contained network of dealers. Depending on the value of the objects, some find their way up to specialised brokers in bigger cities, while most are shuffled around local dealers and their customers, who are “usually expatriates”. He is keen to stress that this system of buying and selling objects is not in itself illegal, though the objects being bought and sold may have been obtained through illegal means.

“This is one network. I think this is a network we don't talk about so much, which is this very, very well-organised network of people are not really doing illegal stuff because none of this is illegal as long as it doesn't leave the borders of the country, basically. But no one cares about that locally. All these guys are doing that completely legally and the collectors are also doing it, are not indulging in some kind of illegal business by purchasing these objects. These are really brokers, these are not people who are excavating, they are people who are just marketing these objects.”

Emphatic words like “brokers” and “guys” recalls similar terms used by Jacob Chapter 5, which stood in contrast to repeated use of terms like “thieves” by Noah. Like Nancy in Chapter 6 and Jane in Chapter 7, Fred emphasises that sometimes, objects on the market have

been put there by people who don't want them anymore. "They are not always archaeological objects. They also gather all the shrine objects. All kind of things people don't want anymore. All kind of old cloth, all kind of old material that people want to sell in villages." However, unlike other participants, this is never used as an excuse for dismissing or neglecting to examine the market as a whole. It is used rather as a contrast for the two main routes through which he sees archaeological destruction occurring: firstly, through illegal mining, and secondly, through organised excavation by farmers.

The large demand for precious metals, particularly in the construction of smartphones and computers, has led to a surge in mining throughout West Africa. Fred describes a system in which miners, called *gallamsey*, are able to obtain permits for small-scale operations. "Just sometimes a few dozen guys, sometimes a few hundred. They are often time after gold, and so you find them basically working in ancient cemeteries, all kinds of places where the gold they struck is not mineral gold, but archaeological gold." However, Fred identifies two key harms within this system which stand apart from the obvious harm of archaeological destruction. Firstly, he cites the lack of governmental oversight for how these mining ventures are carried out and where: "One of the main issues as far as I'm concerned is the fact that there is very, very little framework in these African countries for mining. And so you can operate a small-scale mining industry anywhere, nobody really controls anything." Secondly, he cites the health risks and personal safety to those involved in mining, particularly involving mercury.

The role of farmer-looting is more explicitly focused on archaeological destruction. "It's a different network. These people work specifically with some networks, some international networks, and they are well-connected." This network is distinct from the brokers he described previously who work within the legal boundaries of the national market. But in contrast to other participants, Fred's description of this network lacks the characteristic judgment of Western experts.

"It's the farmers' work during the dry season or when there is not much to do in the farm. It's a side occupation and there is a very long tradition of that in West Africa, I think. These people are very, I mean, the overseers of these type of operations are powerful. They know their stuff and they know their site and even the archaeologists cannot do without them."

Fred's description of the farmers not only does not focus on their poverty, as most other participants would, but respectfully and matter-of-factly presents their practice as a distinct local knowledge system that has as intrinsic a relationship to the land as farming. Such a presentation belies a perspective that, firstly, respects indigenous practices and knowledge systems without morally condemning or despairing over such practices, and secondly, acknowledges that even when they are not engaging with the market directly, archaeologists still must maintain a necessary relationship with this aspect of it.

In contrast to Fred's descriptions of farmer looting as a local knowledge system specific to certain places, Louis describes a completely different system in which it is not local people doing the looting, but poor people from other areas. "It's very difficult to do something. We can speak with the people but the people that make the plundering are often people coming from outside the region.... They go in the field and during January, February, March, they have no money and they go to try to find one terracotta. It's difficult." Like Fred, the language Louis uses is not vilifying, but compassionate, differentiating, specific.

Like Fred and Nancy from Chapter 6 and Jane from Chapter 7, Louis also describes occasions when the commodification of an object is not due to looting, but to community decisions to sell. "Sometimes it's not plundering. Sometimes it is a decision from the village to sell an archaeological object or an ethnographic object because they need money for a well or a school or hospital." This is the only time in this group that a participant discusses a community decision to sell an object, in this case in order to get funds for a community-centred purpose. This kind of community-agreed decision is referenced by others, particularly among the art historians of Chapter 6 and the curators of Chapter 7, but not in these terms, as a collective, reasoned decision as opposed to a desperate or blameworthy one. It suggests he has personal experience with these unique situations, rather than knowledge of them via hearsay.

Gareth, being something of an anomaly within this group, takes a different tactic when describing harms at the local level. Like Jack in Chapter 6, Gareth emphasises the poverty of the people whom he sees engaging in the market. Here, he describes his feelings about those who run an antiquities market right next to a regional museum. "I'm not particularly blaming them because they're just making small money from it. They've got a supply, you know.

When these people have got multiple children and...it's difficult, isn't it? What do you do? So I think you have to come down on the Western market in particular." Like Noah in Chapter 5, he fixates on a sense of helplessness. This helplessness is magnified, ironically, by the fact that the problematic market in question sits immediately next to the kind of regional, Western-style museum that Gareth has earlier identified in his interview as the necessary answer to the problem of the ignorance of archaeological significance in local knowledge systems. He has advocated for a certain answer to this conundrum whilst lamenting the problem as it currently sits in front of his idealised answer, and appears unaware of the paradox.

He absolves this local market system of blame for this harm, citing belief that one should "come down on the Western market in particular." However, this is a responsibility he clearly believes lies elsewhere. He has already made it plain that he has no interest in engaging in that particular discourse any further (see page 205). He does briefly gloss over his own professional efforts to rectify the situation, describing it in a tone that suggests it's the usual rigamarole of confronting such issues in the field. "We try and educate at the source area, as I said, it's best to leave it in the ground and the researchers can come, you're destroying your own heritage, et cetera et cetera."

This sentiment about the destruction of heritage by indigenous peoples also appears in Patrick's interview, when he tells local dealers and peoples "that this was not a good idea to sell your heritage, even if you were very, very poor." The turn of phrase used by both Gareth and Patrick suggests a view that indigenous people are obligated to view such objects as their own cultural heritage, casting the indigenous person in a position of ignorance and destruction whilst casting the researcher in the role of knowledge holder. Gareth argues, "In fact if they leave it in the ground and let researchers come, the researchers will build museums and then they'll get economic benefits to tourism, which is better than just having a denuded landscape with nothing in it." This approach was criticised by Sean earlier in this chapter for emphasising the authority of larger institutions in perpetuating Smith's authorised heritage discourse (2006). It also does not hold up in situations Louis describes, in which men from other regions travel to dig in archaeologically-rich areas with which they have no connection.

This section illuminates two things: first, the ways in which discursive representation of others differs when one has developed much closer working and personal relationships with

communities and places. Second, the ways in which colonialist ideology lingers even in the more progressive segments of archaeological discourse. This presumptive and prescriptive approach to heritage is a relic of colonialist belief that Western institutions are best placed to define and care for global heritage. But optimistically, it's a view held by a very small percentage of this group. The overwhelming majority demonstrate an intimate knowledge of these issues and a respectful form of compassion and engagement that could only be formed by long-term investment in communities and African knowledge/power systems. The language and perspective illustrated here is not found in groups with weaker ties to African communities.

## V. Criticising Market Involvement

No group is more unified in their condemnation of market involvement in relation to cultural objects than the archaeologists. Unlike previous groups, which either assume practice is no longer normative (such as Charlie and Jack from Chapter 6) or who participate in publication and authentication of research sites and unprovenanced objects with mixed justifications while attempting to distance themselves from market participation (such as Noah in Chapter 5, Harry in Chapter 6, and Nancy in Chapter 7), this group overwhelmingly takes an explicit stance against unethical participation in the publication of unprovenanced objects and the authentication of objects in the course of commodification. Such criticism extends not only to the practices themselves, but to the art historians (see Chapter 6) whom they identify as still participating in such practices, and to the corrupt academics and museum officials within both the West and West Africa who have sought to capitalise on and profit from their positions of power through engagement with the market.

### a. Condemning Publication

Without exception, this group condemns authentication of objects for the market. However, perspectives on the ethicality of publishing illicit objects falls into two camps: those who acknowledge the effects of publication as an aspect of academic practice (Patrick and Fred), and those who outright condemn academic publication of unprovenanced and illicit objects (Gareth and Louis). In the middle is Sam, who reflects on his previous position in the latter camp before he evolved into a more flexible middle ground.

Patrick and Fred discuss the effects of academic publication on market commodification as an inherent risk to academic practice. Fred admits, “I think every publication in some ways benefits the market, yes, because the market uses these publications to validate and to add value, build context when there is no context, and therefore they basically say, you know, [an] academic report on this thing means it’s valuable. It adds a lot of value, it’s rare.” Thus, he argues, academic publications involuntarily support the market in some ways by providing data, whether or not that data is correct or applicable to the object being legitimised. “What is important, once again, is to build the illusion rather than anything else.” His presentation of this belief is characterised by a dual sense of self-awareness of his positionality within this systemic violence of appropriation and his resignation to the fact.

Patrick appears similarly resigned, as he cites the same case surrounding publication effects as was cited by Noah in Chapter 5. “There was a very bad case where Marla Berns published some pots in *African Arts* from shrines in what was then I think called Gongola State. She published on these very interestingly figured pots and within three months, they were appearing in New York.” When asked for further experience, he shares that this is the case that is most familiar to him, indicating that such phenomena have not occupied the majority of discourses on such issues with which he has concerned himself. Nonetheless, this type of effect of publication plays a large role in his relief at not discovering market-valuable objects during fieldwork. “That was one reason why I was so happy that the shrine in [Place], that there was nothing but fragments, un-figured fragments.”

Occupying the middle ground, Sam speaks briefly but meaningfully about his own experience of changing his attitudes towards the selective publication of works. He recognises that at one point in his life, he took a radical view. “For the longest time my stance was, I wasn’t even going to write about those things.” It was through his experience of seeing looting first-hand that he altered his view, allowing for the publication of objects as illustrative of the damning effects of illicit trade. “The reason I talked about those pieces is because they clearly were there in the universe of the Africanist art historians and I wanted to use them as examples of how little information you get from looted pieces as opposed to the mass of information that you get from the archaeologically sound pieces.”

Gareth and Louis, on the other hand, focus on the specific harmfulness of publications produced by academics working in collaboration with private foundations and art museums. Gareth draws particular attention to the Barbier-Mueller's annual magazine, *Arts and Culture*.

“There are pieces in there, for example, by Frank Willett. This is a journal produced by a private museum. So you'll see that sort of viewpoint put out there. I think it would be very useful for your research to give you that other perspective. They're desperately trying to get a sort of academic validation to what they're doing. They're sort of begging these scholars to take part. But have a look, it's interesting. It's a different generational thing.”

His criticism is implied, as he does not say anything explicitly condemnatory. Rather, his disparagement takes place in the othering of this publication and those who take part in it, particularly through phrases such as “that sort of viewpoint” and “that other perspective.” The description of them as desperate for academic validation implies that, on their own, they lack legitimacy and are aware of such. His categorisation of such a publication as “a different generational thing” positions this type of literature and those who participate in it as antiquated, tied to an era of colonial ideology and systemic inequality. This was characterised by “a sort of patron-client relationship, a sort of colonial mindset whereby we owned them, so to speak, their lands and therein.” Journals like *Arts and Culture* “cross the grey line” of academic publishing, in which academics lend expertise to the market via the indirect route of a well-respected institution's publication, thereby validating the argument that even objects without clear provenance may still provide valuable information. “All that stuff is essentially reduced down to pretty objects. It doesn't have the context around it. But some academics are doing it. It's quite surprising, some of the names that crop up in there. There are people in there who should know better.”

Louis similarly condemns his fellow academics who publish stolen and unprovenanced objects in publications by private foundations. “I think writing a book on illicit trade objects for a private foundation, or for a dealer or for a private museum is support for the illicit trade.” However, unlike Gareth, he does not hesitate to single out and name specific individuals. “[Name], he's the director of the ethnographic museum. He writes a big book and the contents of the book is forty-five percent illicit trade. Totally, totally illegal pieces, just coming out

from fifteen years. It's from Mali, from Ghana, from Niger, all the pieces." The book he is referring to is a well-known introduction to African art that is regularly used in courses and as a reference by those involved in the trade. Louis claims that a collection of objects featured in the book went from being appraised at €2.6 million to €7.2 million as a direct result of their inclusion. "I can give ten, fifteen examples in Europe or in America. People, they write books about pieces in West Africa, in the Gambia, it's all pieces in private collections coming out of Gambia since fifteen, twenty years. This is plundering."

Such disparate views demonstrate that there is still much debate, even within the most progressive group in this study, about how publication may help or hinder the illicit trade.

### b. Criticising Art Historians

Inter-group criticism between art historians and archaeologists is common within this study. This group of archaeologists are particularly critical of how art historians have neglected to engage with these issues. However, they are largely critical of the system in which art historians work or the position art historians are in, rather than critical of named individuals. This is in contrast to the art historians in this study who were more willing to be critical of individual archaeologists who they feel are too restrictive in their practice. Instead, the archaeologists' criticisms of art historians tend to emphasise the harms resulting from the historically close relationship between the market and art historical practice.

Sean is particularly critical of art historians who foster a wilful ignorance of these issues. "I think there's an awareness amongst art historians, yes, there has been for some time. There can't help but have been that kind of awareness. People love to put their heads in the sand too, especially when they're culpable." This culpability extends to the branch of art historians whom he has observed acting "as facilitators and conduits, by advising collectors what objects to buy when folk pass through the itinerant marketers from Africa." He describes such art historians as opportunistic, almost manipulative: "These guys pass through, suddenly the art historian will be at the elbow of the collector saying, I think you should purchase this piece and that piece and then, as the collection is accumulated over time, lo and behold it's given to the museum as a tax write-off." He suggests culpability is shared even by the Africanist art historian who directs the museum at his university. "There are objects which should not be in

that museum. I have put pointed questions to her, saying, ‘Where in the world did those come from? They look like they’re looted out of Mali.’ Yeah, and she very nervously said, ‘Oh, I have to go see what the provenance is attached to those.’” After accepting her invitation to help write a policy of acquisition, he notes disappointedly but resignedly that his attempts to follow up were repeatedly brushed off. However, he does not paint with a broad brush; he attributes much of the momentum behind the 1993 Carter Lecture series and *Plundering Africa’s Past* to the work of concerned art historians like Henry Drewal.

Sam echoes Sean’s description of art historians’ relationships with the market, but expresses sadness rather than anger or frustration at their lack of activism. “I have to say also that I’m very saddened, I think that’s the best word, by the fact that the art historians haven’t made more of an explicit argument against authentication and valuation. I really don’t know about the rest of the art history world but I do know about the Africanist art historians.” He attributes their inaction to the historical structuring of their field:

“The first generation of art historians dealing with Africa, those who got their degrees between maybe in the 50s, maybe even the early 60s, there were very few of them, there were basically four guys in the states. And they were very locked in unnatural positions with the dealers and the major museum directors. Their students were disgusted by the practice but the way a number of them said to me or talked to me was, they were still respectful of their elders and you know, we’re Africanists, like Africans we’re respectful of our elders. And they didn’t want to explicitly go against the practice.”

The language he uses is visceral: “locked in unnatural positions with the dealers”, “disgusted by the practice”; such wording suggests perverse behaviour. His view of the art historian-market actor relationship is marked by disgust, revulsion. As such, he paints their students as almost being victims; they’re disgusted too, but dedicated to their teachers and respectful of them nonetheless. It is possible to see in passages such as these how the structures which have held together centuries of epistemic violence are maintained through professional structures of training and knowledge production, overlapped and interwoven with personal commitments.

However, despite his understanding of why things are the way they are, Sam maintains his disappointment that his colleagues have not been bold or brave enough to make the necessary changes. “Many of these people were my friends, but they just didn’t have the, if you will, I hate to put it in terms of moral courage, but you know frankly...So I know that a number of them made themselves the personal promise not to do authentication, but I’m very sad that there hasn’t been a body-wide condemnation of these practices as we were able to do amongst the Africanist archaeologists.” Fully overcoming colonially-developed models of the Africanist field will be a challenging project given the strength of these sorts of fears and commitments to existing practices.

Though Fred and Louis do not speak at length about art historians, their discourse mirrors Sean and Sam. Fred says, “And art historians, because of their training and because of the institutional networks they are in, I’m not sure they are really the best people to react to that or deal with this.” Louis criticises museums who have “a very bad attitude to the illicit trade.”

## VI. Summary of Analysis

Bringing us full circle, this group neatly demonstrates how key variables discussed in previous chapters either facilitate or discourage the identification of harms and the necessary systemic and personal alterations that must occur in order to address harms.

The most important of these variables is the degree to which geographical positionality affects personal and organisational cultural ideology. This study presents a strong case that deep personal and professional connections with communities in African countries increases the likelihood that participants will engage in radical, decolonising discourses. However, it also suggests that working predominantly within the West, with little connection to African institutions and communities beyond brief fieldwork forays, reinforces inherited colonialist ideologies and perpetuates unhappy pillars of those ideologies, such as racism and xenophobia.

Creating a life in another country (or countries) appears to have the effect of widening participant perspective, forcing a certain level of self-reflexivity to understand one’s own beliefs and practices in contrast to the normative beliefs and practices of a new place. When

one becomes a part of a community, it becomes much more difficult to “other” the people of that community. In being exposed to more explicitly anti-colonial ideologies, one is able to self-identify and reject a) certain levels of inherited racism acquired through living in the post-apartheid and still overwhelmingly anti-Black United States, and b) colonialist ideologies that may have been internalised through the early part of one’s Western-based education.

We first see this effect in Elijah in Chapter 5. His notably Afrocentric perspective on the harms of the illicit trade and the exploitative nature of the Western academy are likely rooted in the many years he spent living and working in African countries, for African institutions, with African peoples. This stands in contrast to the other two participants in this group who, though they lived in West Africa, did not establish strong community connections with West African peoples or institutions and maintained their deeply-set connections with British institutions. We do not see such a strong Afrocentric perspective from a white Westerner again until this chapter, with both Afrocentric perspectives in Chapters 6 and 7 provided by West African men now living in the United States. Where Elijah’s discourse illustrates the effects that this background has had on his ideology and individual practice, the archaeologists in this group illustrate the extent to which long-term investment in non-Western institutions and communities does not just facilitate individual awareness of the harms of colonialism and Western knowledge/power systems, but spurs larger discourse and communal involvement in decolonising those systems.

Without this connection to non-Western community, inherited anti-Blackness and colonialist ideology continues to operate largely unchecked. We have seen this most clearly in Chapters 6 and 7, in which a predominantly American and US-based segment of participants perpetuate beliefs and praxis that prioritise the protection and promotion of Western knowledge/power systems at the expense of indigenous African knowledge/power systems. Thus, a Western-based practice is far *less* likely to stimulate the kind of radical decolonisation that is needed across disciplines, and far *more* likely to perpetuate harmful beliefs that continue to make it that much more difficult for African individuals and institutions to gain access to Africanist discourse.

This expansion of one’s perspective is not limited to illicit trade and cultural heritage issues, but includes one’s view of the field as a whole. The more Western-centric one’s practice, the

more intensely siloed one's field appears. Despite being the most independent segment of the Africanist field, the archaeologists within this group do not speak with the same dismissiveness and anger against art historians as the art historians speak of archaeologists (see Chapter 6). Their practice as archaeologists has been intensely cross-pollinated by engagement with social justice issues – both at the local level within their respective fieldwork and professional communities, and at a global level with policy development – and curatorial practice. As a result, they are highly resistant to the silo effect displayed by art historians and curators, whose dismissal of these and other issues has limited their access to more diverse and progressive forms of discourse.

The ramifications of this as a whole are clear: without radically dismantling the Western-centric system and rooting out the colonialist ideology in Africanist research, as suggested by Elijah in Chapter 5 and Sean in this chapter, the Africanist field will continue to perpetuate physical and discursive violence with deleterious effect.

## VII. Conclusion

This chapter has sought to bring full circle the themes and chronology covered throughout this study, illustrating through the discourse of these archaeologists the ways in which practice can redress harmful behaviour rather than simply perpetuating it. While these archaeologists are not (yet) representative of all in their field, this service-oriented approach and defiant discourse is becoming more common (as I discuss in the conclusion of this dissertation) and demonstrates the ways in which participants in the field become aware of and harness the political aspect of one's practice to material effect.

## Chapter 9

### Conclusion

Since I finished fieldwork for this study, the discourse surrounding the ethicality of colonially-appropriated African objects in Western institutions has expanded in unexpected and exciting ways. In November 2017, President of the French Republic Emmanuel Macron broke with tradition and official French discourse when he called for conditions to be put in place that would see the temporary or permanent repatriation of African objects to African countries within the next five years. A year later, in November 2018, Senegalese economist Felwine Sarr and French art historian Bénédicte Savoy published the commissioned report on the President's request. Titled, "The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage: Toward a New Relational Ethics", the report detailed the ways in which colonial occupation and administration was tied inherently to the creation of African art collections within French museums, and defined the timeline and methodology through which the restitution of African cultural objects should be carried out. By late November 2018, President Macron agreed to the repatriation of 26 objects to Benin from the Musée Quai Branly that were seized in 1892 (Ross and Pennetier, 2018).

At the time of my interviews, between 2013 and 2015, it was inconceivable that France would ever agree to the repatriation of such objects, let alone set the precedent for former colonising powers in how to begin redressing the violence of the colonial empire. While other countries have so far been reticent to follow in France's footsteps, I believe it is only a matter of time. From the Rhodes Must Fall campaigns at universities across South Africa, Oxford University, and Harvard Law School, to international discourse on what it means to decolonise the museum, to the cultural effects of Erik Killmonger's reclamation of stolen African objects in *Black Panther*, it is clear we have fully entered a new era of decolonisation.

This study will, I hope, provide illicit antiquities researchers, Africanists, heritage experts, and decolonising activists alike a cursory understanding of how knowledge/power production around West African cultural objects has evolved through the 20th and 21st centuries. I have set out to explore the ways in which colonial harms have been inherited through decades of normative practice, and I have argued that both the overt violence of the colonial period and the inconspicuous violence of the post-colonial period must be acknowledged and addressed

across criminological, art historical, and museological disciplines. However, much more detailed research is needed moving forward in decolonisation, particularly in regards to the breadth and depth of the illicit trade in cultural objects and antiquities within West Africa. Ultimately, I hope that the persistence of unconscious harms represented among many of the participants in this study will not be seen as a failure in their practice or character, but will illuminate the ways in which all of us, as researchers situated in colonially-founded institutions, have inherent biases and beliefs that still carry age-old forms of discursive violence. This work is a call to action in decolonising ourselves as we look to decolonise our knowledge/power systems.

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