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The Power of Provenance. Dr Johnson's Teapot and the Materialization of Fame

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Abstract: In the British Museum collection, there is an eighteenth-century Chinese teapot that is named on its label 'Dr Johnson's teapot'. Evoking the famous lexicographer and tea drinker Samuel Johnson (1708-84), this teapot has been given a name that associates it with a historical celebrity and suggests an authentic provenance. While it has been known as 'Dr Johnson's teapot' since the mid-nineteenth-century, provenance research demonstrates that the connection to Samuel Johnson is somewhat indirect. It also reveals the practice of what might be called 'provenance branding' which has a profound impact on the reception and interpretation of objects and works of art. This article explores and defines this phenomenon through the example of the British Museum teapot, tracing its history from its origins in China to several English collections and finally the British Museum. In the process, the names by which this object, and several closely related ones, has been known will be investigated with a view to revealing the strategic yet often haphazard nature of object names which are nonetheless an important yet understudied part of an object's history. Arguing for an expanded definition of provenance, this article suggests that the names given to works of art and objects are part of a provenance nomenclature that is a potentially innovative critical tool for the interpretation of objects and the evaluation of collecting and its contexts.

Keywords: Provenance; ownership; reception; naming; authenticity

Introduction

In the China section of the Sir Joseph Hotung Gallery of Asian Art at the British Museum is a display of 'Export Art and Transfer' featuring an unusually large Chinese porcelain teapot (fig. 1). Dated to circa 1760, it is decorated in what is known as the 'famille rose' style with pink enamels and gilding on a white porcelain ground. It also features a faux-wood handle and spout in a style that was fashionable in China during what would have been the reign of the Qianlong emperor (r. 1735-96). A porcelain vessel of that size most likely would have been made at Jingdezhen, the main production site for Chinese porcelain at the time, and then decorated in Canton (Guangzhou) at one of the specialist enameling workshops set up earlier in the century to produce decorated copper and porcelain vessels for export.

The label for this object in the British Museum display case names it as 'Dr Johnson's Teapot' and then describes how it 'belonged to Dr Samuel Johnson (1709-84) who produced the first English dictionary in 1755.'[1] In addition to being a scholar and lexicographer, Johnson is well known for his love of tea, as this object demonstrates. He was a famous personality in his day and someone to whom a connection might be celebrated. In his lifetime, many people cultivated his acquaintance and proclaimed any association with him, with biographer James Boswell (1740-95) being perhaps the best-known

1 The full text of the label in Room 33 reads: "5 Dr Johnson's teapot; This teapot holds more than six pints (3.5 litres). It belonged to Dr Samuel Johnson (1709-84) who produced the first English dictionary in 1755. British Museum curator Augustus Wollaston Franks bought the teapot from Fanny Palliser (1805-78) in the 1860s or 1870s. Her father Joseph Marryat MP purchased it at the sale of the diarist Mrs Piozzi's effects at Streatham in 1821. Piozzi was a great friend of Dr Johnson's. For her 35th birthday he wrote '....For howe'er we boast and strive, Life declines from thirty-five...'".

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Fig. 1: Teapot, porcelain with overglaze enamel decoration in famille rose style, China, c. 1760, 21,3 x 29,5 cm, London, British Museum, Inv.-Nr. Franks.597+.

example.[2] This celebration of him continued after his death in books, plays and historic house museums but also through objects, including the British Museum teapot. With his reputation so closely aligned with tea and intellectual discourse, it is not surprising that his celebrity should have been perpetuated materially through things such as teapots.

However, as with many iconic objects, the direct connection to a celebrated owner is often tenuous and this is true in the case of the British Museum teapot. Nevertheless, its journey to becoming a 'celebrity object' is worth exploring as this can uncover both actual and imagined provenance trajectories, illuminating historical and present ideas about objects, ownership and identification. Such an investigation would normally start with a reconstruction of the object's provenance or history of ownership and its 'life history'. Provenance traditionally is un-

2 James Boswell: The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D., London 1823. The friendship between Boswell and Johnson was recounted in Leo Damrosch: The Club: Boswell, Johnson and the Friends who Shaped an Age, New Haven 2020.

derstood as a source of information and its research is an investigative tool employed in museums, the art market and by art historians. This mapping of possession parallels the kind of object narratives employed by archaeologists and anthropologists to understand human history. A common methodology employed for the latter is one known as 'object biographies' which borrows anthropological approaches to human life histories in constructing similar stories for objects.[3] This methodology is seen to have its origins in the ground-breaking study *The Social Life of Things*, edited by Arjun Appadurai, which was first published in 1986. Appadurai's study focused on the shifting values of things as they are commoditized, a notion that Igor Kopytoff, in his chapter 'The Cultural Biography of Things. Commoditization as Process' in *The Social Life of Things*, memorably framed in terms of 'life histories', wherein objects have lives much as humans do and that writing their biographies can similarly position objects within materially-focused historical narratives. This historicism is limited by a linearity, as historical narratives often are, and by an assumption of cumulativeness, yet Kopytoff and Appadurai provided a new model for how to understand object histories, movements and changes in value over time. In his study of the ethnography of cultural practices, James Clifford extended the Kopytoff/Appadurai model to try to understand the mechanisms for creating authenticity in what he called the 'Art/Culture System'.[4] In diagramming this system, described as a 'machine for making authenticity', Clifford mapped the impact of object movements between specific consumption and display spheres on their categorization and associated perceptions of authenticity. For example, a tourist art object is donated to an ethnographic museum, and when put on display there is redefined as an authentic example of a culture-specific object; as Appadurai would frame it – a commodity becomes a work of art.

Clifford's example and others that apply the concept of object biography more broadly demonstrate that this model is not without limitations. Further critical studies of it have led to more nuanced and less limiting uses of the materiality approach to the world of things. Jody Joy, in her extensive reconsideration of the model and its applications (2009), revealed the equally valuable non-linear temporal moments in an object's story wherein it is active at some points in its history and inactive at others as it intersects with specific 'clusters of social relationships'.[5] Thus objects move and the values attached to them change as they entangle with and are encountered in different contexts at often random points in time. Joy's understanding of the atemporality of an object's life intersects with equally insightful models for understanding the agency of objects and their role in human life and cultural practice. Both Latour (1996) and Gell (1998) considered the interconnected networks between humans and objects and how this might demonstrate the ability of humans to imbue objects with power (agency) and identities, which might be retained even after the object's connection to that human ceases.

Objects thus are not independent of their networks, nor are they fixed within the points of these networks as Latour's Actor-network theory (ANT) suggests. Instead, as Ingold suggested, objects, and in particular their materials, are in a constant state of motion, even if they appear to be fixed, because of constantly shifting contexts.[6] Considering this mobility in relation to the traditional object biography model has led to a new model that seeks to frame this phenomenon as 'object itineraries' (Joyce 2015) which is defined as "the routes by which things circulate in and out of places where they come to rest or are active."[7] As Bauer explains, these itineraries should be understood as "open-ended and multidirectional, and they include elements, fragments, transformations, and intersections with other itineraries and lines."[8] Certainly,

3 The main source for this methodology is the chapter by Igor Kopytoff: The Cultural Biography of Things. Commoditization as Process, in: Arjun Appadurai (ed.): The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective, Cambridge 2014, 64-92.

4 James Clifford: 'The Art-Culture System', in: The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-century Ethnography, Literature and Art, Cambridge 1988, 224.

5 Jody Joy: Reinvigorating Object Biography: Reproducing the Drama of Object Lives, in: World Archaeology 41 (2009), No. 4, Debates in "World Archaeology" (Dec. 2009), 540-556, here: 544.

6 Tim Ingold: Bringing Things Back to Life: Creative Entanglements in a World of Materials. NCRM Working Paper. Realities / Morgan Centre, University of Manchester, 2010, 3.

7 Rosemary A. Joyce: Things in motion: itineraries of Ulua marble vases, in: Rosemary A. Joyce / Susan D. Gillespie (eds.): Things in Motion: Object Itineraries in Anthropological Practice, Santa Fe, New Mexico 2015, 21-38, here: 29.

8 Alexander A. Bauer: Itinerant Objects, in: Annual Review of Anthropology 48 (2019), 335-352, here: 343.

thinking in terms of itineraries helps to free object-focused histories from the linear restrictions imposed by Kopytoff's model and the specificity of Gell's approach, yet when applied to histories of artworks and collected objects, the itinerary concept has so far offered a modified approach to object biography that incorporates agency and identity but still remains within a restrictive mapping framework.

In art historical object narratives, the biography model is still dominant with a form of the itinerary concept usually employed to highlight the points in an object's or artwork's travels – where it stopped and where it ended up – serving to assign the object itself a considerable amount of agency. But the focus in these object biographies lies on their journeys, their movement and their stopping places, documenting the impact of this travel and transfer on the object. What this modified methodology overlooks in its focus on the object's agency and its travels is the sometimes equally impactful externalized experience of possession by the object's owner(s). In this analysis, attention would be turned back to those who encountered the object and the traces left by such encounters on the possessors, the objects possessed as well as shaping the contexts of possession. The history of this possession, or its provenance, is more than just a record of ownership but also a window onto the forces determining its reception and identification, as noted by Gail Feigenbaum in her study of the 'visible marks of ownership' where she considers this as essential information about an object's itinerary.[9]

Ideally, an object's narrative would combine a study of provenance with an itinerized biography to provide a more complete understanding of the external influences on an object and the social contexts for its collection and possession in different times and places.

Provenance, as a field of study, has in fact developed along these lines in recent years with such works as Feigenbaum's and Reist's Provenance: An Alternate History of Art giving shape to what can be seen as a sub-field of art history that the authors align with the 'social biography of art'.[10] Traditionally, provenance studies investigate and map out histories of ownership, relying on verifiable information and documentation to provide an accurate and authentic association with an object's owner(s). Studies of provenance bring ownership to the fore, but there is scope within this for also considering the impact of ownership and ideas about ownership on the identification and meaning of objects and works of art at specific points in time. As Feigenbaum and Reist suggest, this could "offer an alternative way of narrating a history of art" bringing the field of collecting into it.[11]

Yet, a challenge raised by embedding provenance into an art historical object biography or itinerary is posed by the issue of how to address the way in which the provenance information has been attached to the object, in particular how the object has been identified in consequence. Specifically, objects and artworks are often named after a purported owner, who may have possessed it continuously or just at one stage in its history. This owner is essentially one stop in the itinerary or a stage in its ownership history, a temporal moment in its provenance. The problem arises when vaguely or imprecisely attributed ownership, which may even have been fleeting, defines the object's identity such that it impacts the experience and interpretation of the object, sometimes in perpetuity. The mechanism for this type of ownership attribution is often simply the naming of an object after an owner, for example Dr Johnson's teapot. As this example shows, the naming can be impactful because it has the potential to transform the object into a souvenir or symbol that has the power to materialize history.[12] However, the teapot was only owned by Johnson for a short period of time (if at all), yet this (alleged) provenance has defined its identity up to the present day. There are also other examples where the provenance naming is based on imaginary or misattributed ownership. In such cases too, the naming has transformed the object and impacted its value, reception and con-

9 Gail Feigenbaum: Manifest Provenance, in: Gail Feigenbaum / Inge Reist (eds.): Provenance. An Alternate History of Art, Los Angeles 2012, 6-28, here: 7.

10 Gail Feigenbaum / Inge Reist (eds): Provenance. An Alternate History of Art, Los Angeles 2012.

11 Feigenbaum / Reist (see FN 10), 2.

12 Deborah Lutz: Relics of Death in Victorian Literature and Culture, Cambridge 2015; Susan Stewart: On Longing. Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection, Durham 1992.

noisseurship in a manner that intersects with ideas of authenticity. Exploring the provenance names used to identify objects and their impact can therefore illuminate areas of art historical, socio-cultural and museological interest that have yet to be studied. As a case study, provenance identification will be the lens through which Dr Johnson's teapot is evaluated in this article with the aim of demonstrating not just the power of ownership, which is well understood, but also the power of ownership identification and the significance of the concept of possession for object research and analysis.

Names, Titles and Branding

It is well established that giving a name to a work of art, such as a title for a painting, for example, changes the way it is experienced and understood by the viewer. As Franklin, Becklen and Doyle discovered in their study of psychological responses to painting titles, "titles entered into viewers' constructions of meaning", functioning as guides to interpretation, much as a brand name does.[13] Names or titles, as a form of identification, can therefore act as heuristic cues, contextualizing a painting or an object and functioning as a form of branding. A brand, more than simply a name, is a distinctive identifying mark that classifies the thing that is branded. The act of branding, by definition, is intentional, a "strategic process that manages the presentation and influences the perception of a brand."[14] Thus the assignment of a title to a painting or a name to an object is selected to give it a distinct identity that operates differently than, but in concert with, authorship, impacting reception and perception, changing the work in question and the viewer's experience of it. A famous example demonstrates the power of this process. 'The Mona Lisa', as the painting in the Louvre is best known by, is a much more evocative title for this painting than 'Portrait of a Woman', or even 'painted by Leonardo' would be. It has a definite article, 'the', which singularizes it, and it is personalized, attesting to a specific subject. 'The Mona Lisa' is far more than a painting now, and its title, which was not assigned by the artist, is one of several factors which have transformed this painting into a phenomenon.[15]

The impact of such naming or branding is even more profound when it comes to three-dimensional objects. Unlike attributed paintings, for example 'a Leonardo', most collected objects are anonymously produced, made by many hands, or made in a factory or workshop, so one aspect of their identity is more difficult to encapsulate than that of a painting as they cannot be attributed. In addition, three-dimensional objects, with the exception of figurative sculpture, often do not have a subject. Paintings with representative imagery, for example, can be named or titled (accurately or not) according to their subjects or what they depict, such as 'The Arnolfini Portrait' by Jan van Eyck (1390-1441), showing a man and a woman in a particular setting, something which is not usually represented in an object unless it has some form of specific narrative decoration or provides a painted or figured surface.[16] Even then, because objects are three-dimensional, their imagery or narrative decoration does not transcend the surface to exist beyond the substrate, as a painting or photograph's subject does. Many objects with narrative decoration, such as ceramics, additionally are made in multiples and not usually as singular products, like van Eyck's painting.

In art historical terms, by virtue of their materials, three-dimensionality and regarding the manufacturing processes, objects typically are seen to belong to much broader material categories of things, such as 'ceramics', 'silver' or 'furniture', and are therefore less commonly identified as singular artworks, and thus as 'art', unless they are given a specific or unique identifying title, such as that of an owner or a location. Even a named designer, or maker, would not be enough to enable such objects to transcend their classification because the inherent functionality of objects, as opposed to 'artworks', elides their singularity. For example,

13 Margery B. Franklin / Robert C. Becklen / Charlotte L. Doyle: The Influence of Titles on How Paintings Are Seen, in: Leonardo 26 (1993), No. 2, 103-108, here: 107-108.

14 Giep Frantzen / Sandra Moriarty: The Science and Art of Branding, New York 2015, 5-6.

15 Kenneth Clark: Mona Lisa, in: The Burlington Magazine 115 (1973), No. 840 (March 1973), 144-151. The Italian and French names for the painting, La Gioconda or La Joconde, reference the name of the most likely sitter, Lisa Gherardini/del Giocondo, according to a recent study by Martin Kemp / Giuseppe Pallantini: Mona Lisa. The People and the Painting, Oxford 2017, 101, 116.

16 National Gallery, London, Inv.-Nr. NG186.

some of the most valuable items of furniture in the market today are those designed and/or made by Thomas Chippendale (1718-79) who was the designer/maker of 'the Harrington commode' which sold for a record price at auction in London in December 2010.[17] This price was impacted by the Chippendale attribution but equally by the named connection to a specific owner, the Earls of Harrington. As 'The Harrington Commode', the object was singularized and exceptionalized, similarly to an attributed painting. Much as a painter may have painted hundreds of paintings in his or her lifetime, so Chippendale designed and crafted equal numbers of furnishings in his. But as furniture is 'crafted' and usually assembled from parts, it is not seen to benefit from the value-making originality of authorship. A simple 'Chippendale' attribution would not be enough, in this particular case, to impact the market value of this piece of furniture so significantly.

How are objects, as opposed to paintings, 'named' and 'branded' therefore? And why are they identified in this manner? Not all objects are truly anonymous. Like an authored painting, many objects are produced and signed by individual makers, for example a stoneware bowl by the twentieth-century ceramicist Lucie Rie (1902-95), which then becomes 'a Lucie Rie bowl' much like a 'Chippendale commode'. In addition, some makers of objects who are seen to be 'artists' first and foremost, give titles to specific creations that use the same language as painting titles. Theaster Gates, for example, has titled a recent ceramic creation 'Tarred Vessel #5' (2021, Whitechapel Gallery) which singularizes the vessel and moves it into the realm of an attributed artwork. Lucie Rie was not in the habit of titling her work – and she made many bowls and vessels in her lifetime – so how would a particular example of her work be given a unique, signifying identity, as branding serves to do? One method, exemplified by 'the Harrington commode', that has a long yet unexplored history, is a title associated with an owner, whether that be a person, institution or even a collection. Lucie Rie herself owned a Korean porcelain 'moon jar' that was given to her by Bernard Leach (1887-1979) and is now identified in the British Museum with Lucie Rie whose picture appears together with it on the object label.[18]

'Dr Johnson's teapot', the case study for this article, was even more directly branded by ownership. As a ceramic it is of a generic type that was made in several factories and workshops, by multiple anonymous craftspeople and was probably for sale in shops catering to Westerners visiting Canton in the mid-eighteenth century. Yet like the anonymous Korean moon jar, which the museum has attempted to singularize, this Chinese export teapot came to be associated with a famous purported owner, Samuel Johnson. As such, according to Nicola J. Watson, it can be further classified, like other objects associated with him, as 'author's effects', objects that materialize an author's biographical narrative and metonymically stand-in for the author's presence.[19] Watson's study includes another 'Dr Johnson's teapot' which is in the collection of the Houghton Library at Harvard.[20] It began its life as a coffee-pot, thus evidencing at once the potential for imprecision, impermanence and inauthenticity of ownership branding. In art historical analysis, naming can therefore be seen as a specific kind of branding, one which can have as many layers of meaning as an attributed painter or a symbolic image.

The story of how the British Museum's 'Dr Johnson's teapot' came to be given this name or branding, and whether it is indeed accurate, is worth exploring as it provides a good case study for how an anonymous factory object can become, through the magic of provenance and association, a celebrity object. It exemplifies what this transformation tells us about both associated values and provenance concepts and practices. In one form provenance is simply a verifiable history of ownership, yet in another it is a construction – an assigned name, possibly an invention, which nonetheless has a significant impact on the reception, value and interpretation of collected and circulating objects. The constructed provenance of an object identifies and defines it, and equally can be subject to mythologization. Specifically,

17 Sotheby's London, Important Silver, Furniture and Ceramics, December 7th 2010, lot 69.

18 British Museum, Inv.-Nr. 1999.0302.1.

19 Nicola J. Watson: The Author's Effects: On Writer's House Museums, Oxford: 2020, 122-124.

20 Silver teapot, John Parker and Edward Wakelin, c. 1765. Harvard University, Houghton Library, the Donald and Mary Hyde Collection of Dr. Samuel Johnson, Inv.-Nr. 2003JM-63.

what needs to be explored is the role of provenance construction in the materialization of celebrity through objects and its impact.

As this is the story of an object that was made in the eighteenth century but gained its celebrity identity in the nineteenth, the provenance narrative will be recounted in reverse, starting with the current owner, the British Museum, and finishing with its titular and assumed first owner, Samuel Johnson. This provenance journey will encompass historically important places and noteworthy people, illuminating Dr Johnson's object world and its afterlife, with celebrity provenance being the driving force. Part one will introduce the object and explore its art history as a Chinese-made porcelain vessel of the Qing dynasty. Part two will explore its recorded provenance history as a British Museum object, how it was acquired and what it represented as a collected object in nineteenth-century Britain. The family who owned this teapot for much of its history, the Marryats, will be introduced along with their pivotal role in the branding of the teapot as 'Dr Johnson's', initiating its constructed provenance journey. As this section will recount, the Marryats acquired the teapot from the sale of the effects of Hester Thrale Piozzi (1741-1821), Samuel Johnson's good friend, biographer and possible mistress who apparently brought the teapot into Johnson's world. The final section, Part three, will unpack the celebrity object mechanism that created 'Dr Johnson's teapot' and its development in nineteenth-century Britain. This involves collecting, provenance construction, the art market, iconic historical personality worship and the parallel world of souvenirs which has led to so much of today's approach to 'art merchandising'.

Part One – A Teapot from China

The story of Dr Johnson's teapot necessarily starts with the object itself. The teapot is very large, measuring 21.3 cm high and 29.5 cm wide, across the handle and spout. Most ceramic teapots for domestic use are about half that size. However, producing such a large pot out of porcelain was not a challenge for the makers at Jingdezhen in Southeast China which is known as the 'home of porcelain' and in the eighteenth century was the largest porcelain manufactory in the world.[21] At the time it was made, Jingdezhen produced both finished pots as well as blank forms that could be sent elsewhere for decoration, such as Canton (Guangzhou) where small shops and workshops were set up in the early eighteenth century for decorating enameled wares in both metalwork and porcelain.[22] In the eighteenth century, porcelain was a well-established ceramic product in China, unlike in the rest of the world, having been invented here as early as the seventh century CE. The decorative technique used on the teapot, known as 'overglaze enamels', was also not a new technique in the eighteenth century as enamels on porcelain had been in production since the fourteenth century and those on stoneware appeared even earlier in China (late 11th to early 12th century). What was new, however, was the palette for the enamels used on the teapot. With its characteristic inclusion of pink, the palette is widely known as 'famille rose', or fencai 粉彩 in Chinese, and consists of a range of pastel colors which were developed initially in palace glass workshops from around 1700 onward.[23] Pink, made from colloidal gold, was one of these new colors and was very popular on export wares.

That this teapot was made for export is in no doubt because the enamels have been used to paint European-style flowers, such as could be seen on Meissen or French porcelain of the time, surrounded by borders of Rococo-style latticework of the type seen in grand European palace interiors in the eighteenth century and on European porcelain. These European-style elements are combined with the kind of Chinese-style motifs that are commonly found in export wares such as the model of a peach on the lid and the fish-like sculpting of the spout, which, along with the handle, may also be imitating wood or lacquered wood. All of this is set

21 For a history of Jingdezhen, see Anne Gerritsen: The City of Blue and White. Chinese Porcelain and the Early Modern World, Cambridge 2020.

22 There is still some debate about the date of the establishment of porcelain decorating workshops with the Guangdong Museum attributing it to the early 18th century, other scholars to later, even the 1750s and 1760s. See Guangdong Museum (ed.): Guangcai Porcelain: Highlights from 300 Years, Guangzhou 2014; Tang Hui: The Colours of Each Piece. Production and Consumption of Chinese Enamelled Porcelain, c.1728-c.1780, unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Warwick 2017.

23 Emily Byrne Curtis: Glass Exchange Between Europe and China, 1550-1800. Diplomatic, Mercantile and Technological Interactions, New York 2017.

off by the pure white porcelain body that is so characteristic of eighteenth-century Chinese porcelain. Thus, as an example of Chinese porcelain, it is not in the style of domestic wares but it is typical of the blended styles so often found on export wares. It also has no mark or inscription, which was characteristic of later export wares.

A teapot of this type would likely have been purchased in Canton in one of the numerous shops that were set up for the sale of porcelains. According to Tang Hui's research on the East India Company purchases of porcelains in China:

"In eighteenth-century Canton, porcelain shops were the main source of porcelain for the European East India Companies. Between 1720 and 1770, around 25-30 million pieces of porcelain entered the English market through the English East India Company (hereafter EEIC). Such large quantities of porcelain were all sold to the Company by Chinese porcelain dealers in Canton."[24]

After arriving in London, it may have been further offered for sale in a shop, at auction or if it was purchased by order, it would have been delivered to the purchaser along with the rest of the special-order cargo. In eighteenth-century England tea wares and tea could be purchased in a range of locations including goldsmiths, cheesemongers and grocers.[25] Specialist tea merchants, such as Twinings in the Strand, also sold 'china' (as porcelain was commonly called) and it has been noted that "The nation's love of tea was directly responsible for the growth of Chinese porcelain imports and the explosion of home-grown china manufacturers."[26] Tea was first introduced in Britain in the mid-seventeenth century and became a widely drunk beverage in the early eighteenth century. Initially consumed as a medicinal drink, it became fashionable at court and was associated with the temperance movement, maintaining an association with health throughout the eighteenth century.

However, the benefits of tea were not universally accepted and there was considerable criticism of both the drink and its consumers. For anti-tea campaigners, consumption of tea was associated with bad habits and was particularly harmful to the poor, in part because tea sold cheaply was usually adulterated with harmful substances. As the poor were seen to emulate the habits of the wealthy and fashionable, but without the financial means to do so safely, they were in danger of falling deeper into poverty and becoming idle and indulgent. This was the mode in which the rich consumed tea, as Dr Johnson himself noted, while also recommending tea for the 'studious', such as himself when he was able to afford pure tea.[27] Tea was also a foreign product, further reflecting the xenophobic sentiments of many who felt that tea was unpatriotic. There was both class and social anxiety surrounding the drink, in addition to economic implications for the commodities market of the time as well as taxation. Until 1785, tea was very expensive and heavily taxed so it was only the wealthy who could afford to drink pure, unadulterated tea regularly. At this level of society, there was also a gendered element in that it was women who controlled the tea table, and its 'equipage', thus also the display of such tableware.[28] Among the equipment for the tea table in use in the eighteenth century was the teapot, which could be either porcelain or a type of unglazed red stoneware from the Yixing kilns in Southeast China. As noted by Lars Tharp, a painting in the Tate Gallery collection, formerly attributed to William Hogarth (1697-1764), demonstrates the mix of materials that populated the tea table around 1720: red stoneware, blue and white porcelain, and silver.[29]

In the early eighteenth century, teapots were a new form in England, but as a vessel they already had existed as a form much earlier in China, with those in the familiar shape featuring a round body, long spout and domed lid dating to the Ming dynasty (1369-1662). In England, stoneware copies of

24 Claire Hui Tang: Chinese Porcelain Shops and Export Porcelain Trade, in: Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society 82 (2019), 103-112, here: 103.

25 For example, the notice in the Stamford Mercury, March 14th 1723, that "S. Haughton, goldsmith from London, will be at Stamford fair, selling goldsmith's ware, also china, tea, coffee, chocolate, fans, glass…."; and the advertisement in the Stamford Mercury, March 1st 1733, for a sale at Mrs Denton's shop "fresh roasted coffee, fine tea…, mohogony [sic] tea boards….'. The British Newspaper Archive.

26 Stephanie Pickford: Introduction, in: Stephanie Pickford (ed.): Tea and Coffee in the Age of Dr Johnson, London 2008, 1-4, here: 3.

27 Pickford 2008 (see FN 26), 53.

28 Pickford 2008 (see FN 26), 3.

29 Lars Tharp: Hogarth's China. Hogarth's Paintings and Eighteenth-Century Ceramics, London 1997, 27.

Yixing pots were among the earliest locally-made tea wares, produced at the Fulham Pottery in the 1670s.[30] Porcelain teapots were not made locally until the second half of the eighteenth century, so those used before this date in England were made in China or imported from Europe as the Meissen and Vienna factories were making porcelain teapots from around 1715.[31]

Further evidence that the British Museum teapot is of a generic type can be seen in the existence of a closely related example in the collection of the Fitzwilliam Museum.[32] This example has a replacement metal spout but is otherwise very similar and almost identical in size. It is not named nor is any reference made to an owner or to Dr Johnson in the item title. The sizes of these teapots are notable however. At 21cm high and almost 30cm wide, they are both much larger than many teapots of the period, and even those of today, leading some to suggest that they may not have been teapots in the first place, especially considering the high costs of tea before 1785 noted above. A red stoneware pot of similar size with a branch handle and spout, made around the same time at Staffordshire in England, is defined as a punch pot,[33] and it is known that from about 1750 onward, punch was served from bowls as well as pots.[34] There are a few written references to punch pots from later in the century and the teapot form was adopted for serving punch. So, the possibility of specifically identifying the function of these teapots is limited and it may actually have been fluid.[35] Even in China, wine was served from pots, large or small, that could well be used for tea which speaks to the universality of design in warm liquid serving vessels.

Part Two – Becoming Dr Johnson's Teapot

Nonetheless, in the British Museum, object records demonstrate that this teapot appears to have always been identified as performing this function. The pot was purchased by the keeper A. W. Franks (1826-97) around the 1860s or 1870s for his own collection and then was donated to the British Museum. An old label on the base of the pot notes that 'Dr Johnson's teapot' was purchased from 'Miss Palliser' for £20. Miss or Mrs Palliser was Fanny Bury Palliser (1805-88), born Fanny Marryat, who was the author of several books on lace, china collecting, travel in France and translations of books by the French scholar and collector Albert Jacquemart (1808-75).[36] As a collector she may have known Franks through the Fine Arts Club in London, of which both were members.[37] She was also the sister of the author Captain Marryat (Frederick; 1792-1848) and the Member of Parliament, turned author Joseph Marryat II (1790-1876), who published the British Museum teapot in his seminal book A History of Pottery and Porcelain in the 15th, 16th, 17th and 18th Centuries (1850) where he notes in a discussion of the development of teapots:

"…it is interesting to trace the gradual increase in the size of the teapot…. to the capacious vessel which supplied Dr Johnson with 'the cup that cheers but not inebriates.' … but this sinks in insignificance compared with that in the possession of the late Mrs Marryat of Wimbledon (his mother) … This teapot, which claims additional interest as being the one generally used by Dr Johnson, holds more than three quarts."[38]

The British Museum teapot was therefore a Marryat family heirloom and Joseph Marryat's description accords with its appearance. Surprisingly, howe-

30 Fragment of a red stoneware teapot, John Dwight, Fulham Pottery, c. 1675. Museum of London, 97.90/16a.

31 For example, the early Meissen teapot and cover, c. 1713-15, sold by Bonhams: Important Meissen Porcelain from a European Private Collection, London December 6th 2018, lot 224.

32 Porcelain teapot, famille rose, China, Qianlong period. Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, Reitlinger collection, Inv.-Nr. C.676 & A-1991.

33 Minneapolis Institute of Art Collection, Inv.-Nr. 2007.131 AB.

34 Karen Harvey: Barbarity in a Teacup? Punch, Domesticity and Gender in the Eighteenth Century, in: Journal of Design History 21 (2008), No. 3 (Autumn 2008), 205-221, here: 214.

35 Harvey 2008 (see FN 34), 214.

36 For example: History of Lace, with numerous illustrations, London 1865; Brittany and its Byways. Some Account of its Inhabitants and its Antiquities, London 1869; The China Collector's Pocket Companion, London 1874; and translated from French: History of the Ceramic Art, London 1878; and History of Furniture, London 1878, both originally written by Albert Jacquemart.

37 Anne Eatwell: The Collector's or Fine Arts Club 1857-74. The First Society for Collectors of the 'Decorative Arts', in: The Journal of the Decorative Arts Society 1850 – the Present 18 (1994), Omnium Gatherum, 25-30.

38 Joseph Marryat: Collections towards a history of pottery and porcelain, in the 15th, 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. With a description of the manufacture, a glossary and a list of monograms, London 1850, 289.

ver, Fanny Palliser seems to have loaned another 'Dr Johnson's teapot' to the Crystal Palace exhibition in London in 1856. A newspaper article about the ceramic court mentions this pot yet describes it as "plain and coarse".[39] It seems that even in the 1850s there was some looseness with the attribution of teapots to Dr. Johnson.

That the Marryats had owned the British Museum pot is not in dispute as it appears in their mother's will of 1855 where she seems to have left it to another daughter, Ellen.[40] However, Charlotte Marryat (d. 1855) and her husband Joseph Marryat I (1757-1824) had acquired it from the sale of the furnishings of Streatham Park which were auctioned by Mr Squibb, London in 1816.[41] In the sale catalogue for day three, "Oriental China", lot number 27, "large punch pot", is likely to be the British Museum teapot and the name "Mr Marryat" is noted next to this lot. The pot is not associated in any way with Dr Johnson at this time. It has been noted elsewhere, however, that the teapot was purchased in a sale of the effects of Hester Thrale Piozzi (1741-1821) in 1821, but this sale actually took place in 1823 and no lots appear to match the teapot.[42] Nonetheless, Hester Thrale Piozzi had lived at Streatham Park in Wimbledon with her husband Henry Thrale (d. 1781), and it was here that she entertained her friend, Samuel Johnson, who even at one stage lived at the house.[43] The journey to becoming 'Dr Johnson's teapot' therefore began with Hester who is a much more likely owner of such a pot.

Hester Thrale was a prolific correspondent and biographer of Johnson. There are numerous diary entries recorded by her recounting life at Streatham Park and with Dr Johnson as well as accounts by others in his circle including Johnson's biographer Boswell and Hester's friend 'Mrs Montagu' – Elizabeth Montagu (1718-1800).[44] In all of these sources Johnson's consumption of tea and his thoughts about it are reported as are details about Hester's domestic life and its accoutrements. While Johnson was known for his love of tea, which is characterized by his biographers as an addiction, he associated it with a luxurious and studious lifestyle, a lubricant for convivial social interactions which also aided his abstemiousness. Nonetheless, his passion for a drink associated with the wealthy and fashionable did not extend to his ownership of expensive ceramics, especially porcelain, which is harder to confirm. An 1881 source states that Johnson purchased a large number of items of Derby and Chelsea porcelain that were sold by Christie's from 9th to 13th May 1783, and that he attended earlier sales.[45] If true, this would have been at the end of his life when he had more money and perhaps was less disdainful about porcelain.[46] However, he was not in good health in 1783. In 1777, he had written a letter to Hester in which he explicitly stated that he is not yet "infected with the contagion of China fancy" and in any case would not like anything which "can so easily be broken".[47] Even worse, Johnson was said by Boswell to have been disdainful of anything Chinese so a Chinese porcelain teapot is unlikely to have been owned by him.[48] Given the social circumstances of the time, which ensured that women served tea,[49] and the fact that the large pot appears in the Streatham Park estate sale of 1816, in the lot purchased by 'Marryat', it is

39 The Crystal Palace – Ceramic Court, in: The Standard, September 29th 1856, No. 10.025, front page.

40 National Archives London: Will of Charlotte Marryat, widow of Wimbledon, Surrey, 3rd January 1855, PROB 11/2205/25: 3.

41 Auct. cat. London (Mr Squibb, Savile Row, May 8th, 1816): Streatham Park, Surrey. A catalogue of the excellent and genuine Household Furniture…, valuable paintings….. a Quantity of valuable Oriental China…, the …extensive Library,….., and the genuine property of Mrs Piozzi,… 8th of May 1816, Day 3: 'Valuable Oriental China'.

42 Auct. cat. Chester (J. Broster, September 17th-25th 1823): Collectanea Johnsoniana. Catalogue of the library, pictures, prints, coins, plate, china, and other valuable curiosities, the property of Mrs Hester Lynch Piozzi, deceased, to be sold by auction, at the Emporium Rooms, Exchange Street, Manchester, by Mr Broster, printed by J. Broster, Exchange, Chester.

43 David Nokes: Samuel Johnson: A Life, London, 2010, 228-229; Damrosch 2020 (see FN 2), 205.

44 See, for example, Katherine C. Balderston (ed.): Hester Thrale: Thraliana: The Diary of Mrs Hester Lynch Thrale (Later Mrs Piozzi), 2nd ed., Oxford 1951; and the letters of Elizabeth Montagu, eg. Eng MS 551/25, letter to Hester Thrale Piozzi, 4th April 1781, University of Manchester Library and digitized: http://emco.swansea.ac.uk/emco/letter-view/1822/?q=Streatham, <30.04.2022>.

45 J. E. Nightingale: Contributions Towards the History of Early English Porcelain from contemporary sources, Salisbury 1881, xci. He also thanks his friend "Mr Franks" on xcii.

46 According to J. V. G. Mallet, it was far more likely to have been another Dr Johnson who purchased this set. See J. V. G. Mallet: Johnson and Porcelain Manufacture, in: Journal of the Royal Society of Arts 133 (1985), No. 5349 (AUGUST 1985), 624-628, here: 628.

47 Samuel Johnson, letter to Mrs Thrale, 23rd September 1777. Cited in Mallet 1985 (see FN 46), 625.

48 As cited by Qian Zhongshu: China in the English Literature of the Eighteenth Century, in: Adrian Hsia (ed.): The Vision of China in the English Literature of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, Hong Kong 1998, 117-214, here: 135.

49 Pickford 2008 (see FN 26), 3.

more likely that the British Museum's 'Dr Johnson's teapot' (or punch pot) was Hester Thrale's. It may well be that he was served from it but it appears to have gained its new identity through association with Thrale during its ownership by the Marryats. Thrale, who died in 1821, was well known by then for her association with Johnson, something which she cultivated and capitalized on. The sale of her effects in 1823 included a section called "Johnsoniana", which by then had come to mean more than its original definition, first provided by William Kenrick in 1766: "Johnsoniana, or the witty sayings of Sam. Johnson, M.A.".[50] She also published a book after his death called Anecdotes of the Late Samuel Johnson, LL.D in 1786, referencing this kind of 'Johnsoniana'. Thus, before and after Hester Thrale died, and through her writings and collections, in addition to Johnson's own literary output, certain objects and artworks came to represent the materialization of Samuel Johnson, becoming Watson's metonymic 'authors effects'.

A teapot, or something that could be described as a teapot, would be a natural object for such a transformative reidentification given Johnson's fame as a tea drinker and commentator. Considering the nature of provenance branding, it is not surprising to discover that the British Museum's teapot is not the only 'Dr Johnson's teapot'. It is one of at least four such 'teapots' and no doubt there are others described as such. One of these teapots can be found in the Samuel Johnson Birthplace Museum in Lichfield. It is a black-glazed earthenware pot with chinoiserie-style gilt decoration that the museum identifies as being made at the Jackfield Pottery in Shropshire. This style of gold decoration on a black ground was consistently used for Jackfield wares in a range of forms and was probably meant to imitate japanned furniture which was lacquered and gilt. The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York has a similar example with more elaborate gilt decoration that it describes as a punch pot (Inv.-Nr. 45.12.81a, b) without any justification. The Lichfield teapot's link to Johnson is somewhat tenuous however, having been donated to the museum by a local man, the Reverend Houlgate whose mother had been the servant of another Lichfield man who had owned the teapot from 1794.[51]

A slightly less tenuous link to Johnson can be made for the Worcester blue and white teapot in the collection of Pembroke College, Oxford, where Johnson had been a student for just a year, but apparently frequently visited.[52] It was given to the college in 1858 by a descendant of the Reverend Samuel Parker, whose wife Elizabeth was part of Johnson's social circle.[53] Similar Worcester teapots have come up for sale in recent years, with some intriguingly labelled "Of the type known as Dr Johnson's teapot".[54] Another sale description for one of these teapots notes that it could be used for either tea or punch on account of its form.[55] It seems that in English porcelain, such teapots at some stage came to be classified with a style name that references a type named after Dr Johnson and is noted for its large capacity. This formal association with capacity may have first been made by Boswell, whose biography of Johnson notes that he drank from a teapot that held "two quarts",[56] and whose work was very widely read, if not uncritically, after first publication in 1791.[57] Around the time the Pembroke College example was donated, there were already references to 'Samuel Johnson teapots' in the popular and scientific press, including in a review of a book on the composition of urine

50 Auct. cat. Chester, 1823: Collectanea Johnsoniana (see FN 42); William Kenrick: A Review of Doctor Johnson's New Edition of Shakespeare, London 1766, 89.

51 Samuel Johnson's Birthplace Museum Blog: Featured Object: Samuel Johnson's Jackfield Teapot, February 5th 2019, https://sjmuseum.wordpress.com/category/featured-objects/page/2/, <30.04.2022>.

52 Damrosch 2020 (see FN 2), 16-17.

53 Damrosch 2020 (see FN 2), 85.

54 For example: 'A Worcester Punch Pot or Massive Teapot and Cover, circa 1768', Bonhams London, Fine British Pottery and Porcelain, November 2nd 2011, lot 91.

55 Brian Houghton Gallery, London: "An extremely fine and rare Massive First Period Dr Wall Worcester Teapot, Of the rare type known as 'Dr Johnson's Teapot', of globular shape with a pointed acorn finial, decorated in blue on both sides with the 'Thorny Rose' pattern, showing full sprays of roses and lilies, the border and cover with fruit and flower sprigs tied by ribboned love knots. An identical teapot preserved at Pembroke College, Oxford belonged to Dr Samuel Johnson and was mentioned by Boswell as holding two quarts. It is conceivably possible that this shape and form could be used either for tea or for fruit punch, the border decoration shows pears, berries and grapes within garlands linked together with ribbons and loveknots." https://haughtongallery.co.uk/portfolio/massive-first-period-dr-wall-worcester-teapot/, <06.06.2019>.

56 James Boswell: The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D, London 1832, 134.

57 Damrosch 2020 (see FN 2), 383.

from 1861.[58] In advertisements for large Worcester teapots for sale in shops in Johnson's time these are not yet described specifically as 'Dr Johnson' style so this must be a later classification.[59]

Perhaps the one 'Dr Johnson's teapot' that actually can be traced to his ownership is the example in the Houghton Library at Harvard University.[60] This 'teapot' is made of silver and is in a different form than the others because it is actually a coffee pot. While its shape betrays its function, its ownership connection is purportedly documented through Johnson's will, in which he left a "large silver coffee pot" to his manservant Frank [Francis] Barber (d. 1801).[61] As noted in the collections information for this vessel, Barber was deprived of this bequest as it was sold off by one of Johnson's executors for its silver weight.[62] It was not melted down but subsequently entered several collections, including that of A. Edward Newton (1864-1940) in 1927 when it was reidentified as a teapot and given a new name, 'Samuel Johnson's Teapot', which appears on a plaque affixed to the base of a wooden stand on which the vessel has been placed. The plaque lists several owners up to Newton, and subsequently it was purchased by Donald and Mary Hyde, whose extensive Johnson collection was bequeathed to Harvard University in 2003. Its reidentification as a teapot seems to have been purposeful and convenient. As Nicola Watson notes, the coffee pot was transformed into a teapot after its use at a Johnsonian tea party recreation, and thereafter it functioned very efficiently as a portable metonym for the author's presence.[63] The inauthenticity of its attributed function, and assumed ownership by Johnson, are part of the mythology that attaches to such objects whether they operate as 'author's effects' or iconic material goods, demonstrating the subjective and often optimistic nature of provenance branding.

Part Three – Materialized Fame

Dr Johnson's teapot in the British Museum is thus one of several so-named objects that gain value through their invented or assumed connection to a famous person. That Johnson is still famous today helps to maintain the recognition that such assignations require to be effective. But whether the naming of the object transcends time or not, this name has become a brand that is associated with ownership and therefore its provenance, yet is not necessarily documentable. As the provenance research into the teapot outlined above demonstrates, a provenance brand may not be an authentic reflection or record of ownership. As with most brands it is both recognizable and aspirational. The Johnson provenance brand has been assigned as a title for the teapot, but while provenance naming is somewhat different from titling, as discussed earlier, it has a similarly powerful effect on the reception and interpretation of the object. Without the name 'Dr Johnson's teapot', none of the four vessels examined in part two would be seen as exceptional within their object category. Similarly, is 'the Mazarin Venus' (Getty Collection, Los Angeles), a heavily damaged Roman copy of a Greek sculpture, more interesting or culturally valuable because of the assumed connection to the collection of Cardinal Mazarin?[64] The object label in the Getty Museum's online database chooses to use a two-part name for the object, 'Statue of Venus (the Mazarin Venus)', thus signaling and referencing a definitive title for the object that notes a famous name.[65] The owner's names attached to such objects signal and evoke different associations in the viewer, whether a famous English author or an infamous French

58 Reviews and Notices of Books: The Composition of the Urine in Health and Disease, and Under the Action of Remedies by Edmund A. Parker, London 1860, in: The Lancet 80 (1861), part I (January 5th 1861), Pathological Society of London, 10.

59 "John Kendall, at his CHINA ware-house.... Bath, sells .... All sorts of Useful China, foreign and English... A large assortment of Worcester China.... – Large China Tea-pots...." Pope's Bath Chronicle, November 22nd 1764, 27.

60 John Parker and Edward Wakelin, silver teapot, c. 1765. Harvard University, Houghton Library, The Donald and Mary Hyde Collection of Dr Samuel Johnson, Inv.-Nr. 2003JM-63.

61 Samuel Johnson. Deed for Silver Teapot. December 6th 1784. Manuscript. MS Hyde 50 (17), Houghton Library, Harvard University. A dedicated biography of Barber was recently published: Michael Bundock: The Fortunes of Francis Barber: The True Story of the Jamaican Slave Who Became Samuel Johnson's Heir, New Haven 2015.

62 https://library.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/static/onlineexhibits/johnson/household/4_6.html, <22.10.2021>.

63 Watson 2020 (see FN 19), 122.

64 Judith Barr: Provenance as Palimpsest: The Mazarin Venus, in: Jane C. Milosch / Nick Pearce (eds.): Collecting and Provenance: A Multidisciplinary Approach, London 2019, 113-125.

65 https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/6477/unknown-maker-statue-of-venus-the-mazarin-venus-roman-2nd-century-ad/, <22.10.2021>.

cardinal, but these names exert equal power on the object through the mechanism of exceptionalization. With such provenance branding, these objects and artworks then enter into a new category which is shaped by collecting and concepts of provenance: 'famous objects' or 'celebrity objects'.

The celebrity object phenomenon, as defined by objects that have celebrity status by virtue of an association with a specific name that may be related to a person, institution, event or building, can now be seen as a form of branding and provenance construction. While the examples of famous objects that come to mind are likely to be European, the phenomenon itself has a long history in many cultures and is global. In China, for example, the jiu ding九鼎, a set of nine cast bronze ding, or tripod vessels, said to have been made circa 2000 BCE, became material symbols of rulership and so famous that they are the inspiration for a Chinese proverb.[66] The fact that they are most likely mythical has had no impact on their celebrity and in fact may have fueled it, similarly to Johnson's teapot(s). In a related form of provenance branding, genuine bronze vessels from ancient China survive that have been given names which relate to the apparent commissioner of the objects, such as the 'Bo Ju gui' which came up for sale in London in 2013 (Eskenazi).[67] Naming this object after a name that appears in an inscription on the inside of the vessel has additionally linked it to the textual authority that underpins antiquity collecting in China and can be seen as an example of culturally specific provenance concepts and construction. Another famous set of bronzes is named after their original place of manufacture and display: Benin, in modern-day Edo state, Nigeria. The 'Benin bronzes' are famous today because they were plundered by British troops in the late nineteenth century and have come to symbolize the devasting effect of looting on cultural heritage sites. To modern viewers, the names of examples that have not been returned to Nigeria also elides their individual qualities, impacting their reception and interpretation. A single example, such as the 'Plaque, cast brass, depicting standing figure of Oba flanked by two warriors' in the British Museum (Inv.-Nr. Af1898,0115.38), when not grouped with others from the same site under the name 'Benin bronzes' or 'Benin plaques' (as in the British Museum) is experienced quite differently by the visitor. This also applies to another object that is in the collection of the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C. – a large blue diamond set in a pendant (Inv.-Nr. G355100). A spectacular object in its own right, it is better known by the name 'The Hope Diamond' which associates it with its late eighteenth-nineteenth century English owners, the Hope family, and is a widely publicized provenance brand.[68] Originally mined in India in the seventeenth century, the diamond then passed through the ownership of the French court, then the British royal collection and subsequently the Hope family, after whom it was named sometime before 1839. Today, it is displayed as 'The Hope Diamond', even though it was sold many times from the end of the nineteenth century. That it was given its current name in the first part of the nineteenth century, and in England, situates it within an object discourse that began to be employed in the popular press, manifesting itself in sensationalized stories involving objects such as 'The Elgin Marbles' (1814), 'The Portland Vase' (1818), 'The Hope Diamond' (1839), and ultimately 'Dr Johnson's teapot' (1856).[69] These evocative names centered around famous people: Lord Elgin, the Duchess of Portland, Henry Hope, Samuel Johnson. This exceptionalized the objects and positioned them in a popular cultural understanding of materialized fame. These objects could be made interesting through purposeful naming, provenance branding, that, as we have seen, may not even reflect verifiable ownership or uniqueness. Yet our experience of the similarly evocatively named 'Dr Johnson's teapot' as viewers is made richer through this name as it enables us to form a connection with the object that in turn exerts a power over us. It is this other side of the 'power of provenance' that the study of the teapot reveals.

66 一言九鼎 yi yan jiu ding – true to their word.

67 Eskenazi, Ltd.: Bo Ju Gui: an important Chinese archaic bronze, London 2013. It was recently exhibited in the exhibition of the Oriental Ceramic Society at SOAS: no. 50. Sarah Wong / Stacey Pierson (eds.): Collectors, Connoisseurs and Curators. A Century of the Oriental Ceramic Society, 1921-2021, London 2021.

68 Marian Fowler: Hope: Adventures of a Diamond, New York 2002.

69 The earliest designation of a vessel as 'Dr Johnson's teapot' in the popular press was in: 'The Crystal Palace – Ceramic Court', in: The Standard, September 29th 1856, No. 10.025, front page, in which "the doctor's favourite tea-pot" is mentioned in a paragraph on Samuel Johnson.

Conclusion

Provenance can therefore simply be a form of ownership documentation but as a construction it is also a tool for identity formation when used in naming. Whereas documented provenance information transforms the object, providing data for narrating object histories and assigning ownership, assigned provenance can also exert a strong influence on the viewer of an object and on its interpretation. Functioning as a brand, an assigned provenance can imply significance. We see 'Dr Johnson's teapot' on a label and automatically assume it is an 'author's effect' – an object once possessed by a famous person that therefore directly connects us to that person through a material passageway. Or it connects us to a place of plunder, an ancient building or an aristocratic lineage. As suggested here, broadening the understanding of provenance allows it to be defined as more than just tool for creating an ownership history. This makes it a lens through which to interpret both, the object and its audiences, expanding the biography of an object or work of art to encompass its reception history. In the story of the teapot's provenance naming, we have seen just one example of this in the materialization of fame that became embedded in 'Dr Johnson's teapot' and is a characteristic common to a wide range of works of art and objects from famous paintings and sculptures to furnishings, ceramics and glass. The 'celebritization' through naming is also a globally executed practice, both, in objects' internal localities and likewise in the external destinations of art and artefacts that have been transported. Understanding the mechanism for such naming, and the transformative impact of it not only expands our definition of provenance and how it can be interpreted, but also hints to a hitherto unrecognized role for provenance in art and collecting histories.

Attributing this teapot's ownership to Johnson was shown to have impacted its reception and historiography through singularizing a generic, exported porcelain pot made by many anonymous hands and associating it with a famous owner, whether or not this makes the object more generally 'famous' beyond those with specialist knowledge. However, as we have seen, this attribution to Johnson as owner, accurately or not, would further have reflected just one moment in the teapot's life or itinerary that nonetheless, due to provenance branding, has served to fix it in time. Recognizing this contrary effect is important because object movement theory would situate this teapot in multiple times and places, with ever shifting meanings, values and identities. Yet for collected objects associated with specific owners, their itineraries and life histories would seem to have just a singular destination. The provenance identification has frozen them in a place and time that needs to be identified and understood in order to situate such objects and artworks within an art historical narrative. The study of provenance as identity construction therefore problematizes the methodological concept of object biography and suggests that the model needs to be expanded to include ownership (perceived or actual) and its impacts.

The geographical and cultural dimensions of provenance construction have been touched upon here but are worth further study, particularly within a more globalized art history. Attributing this teapot to Johnson has anglicized a Chinese object, changing its geographical context and identity. The 'nationality' of objects and the role of assigned provenance in defining this has implications for our understanding of restitution and decolonization. The naming of this teapot has also impacted the historiography and biography of Johnson. This contributed to the mythologization of his tea drinking and social/personal interactions with a woman who was prominent in her time but whose own historiography is overshadowed by Johnson's, to a great extent by her own actions. As we have discovered, it is to Hester Thrale that the teapot should more accurately be attributed, but doing this would contribute to an obscuring of the teapot's 'fame', and therefore its reception, as Hester Thrale is much less well-known as a historical figure than Dr Johnson. This would also change the Johnsonian tea narrative but it would reflect historical fact more accurately, and would therefore be more authentic as a provenance. The significance of authenticity in provenance, and the understanding of the concept of it, would be a further area to explore in expanded studies of the subject.

Historical object studies would suggest that the value of Dr Johnson's teapot is ascribed from the outside, and that its agency is limited to and acti-

vated by its owners. The case study has confirmed this to some extent, but it also suggests that provenance branding gives the object a particular form of agency, one that enables it to form a connection with its viewers and therefore shapes its reception and its interpretation. The provenance names given to objects are powerful, but they in turn give power to the objects. Therefore, they should be analyzed as part of the object's narrative and critical contexts, particularly when the names are invented or inauthentic, however that narrative is mapped or framed.

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Illustration
Fig. 1: Teapot, porcelain with overglaze enamel decoration in famille rose style, China, c. 1760, 21,3 x 29,5 cm, London, British Museum, Inv.-Nr. Franks.597+.

Reference
Stacey Pierson: The Power of Provenance. Dr Johnson's Teapot and the Materialization of Fame, in: *transfer* – Zeitschrift für Provenienzforschung und Sammlungsgeschichte / Journal for Provenance Research and the History of Collection 1 (2022), DOI: https://doi.org/10.48640/tf.2022.1.91511, 29-43.