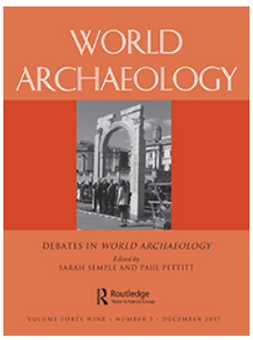

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ARTICLE

From value to desirability: the allure of worldly things

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, the author takes the approach that value is a judgment that people make about things based on desire, and the potential of the effects those things engender. On this basis, she argues that there are five principle ways that people desire objects: through material properties; in expense and exclusivity; as materials with conspicuous, sensory appeal; through object biography; and where objects can be substituted one for another, an attribute known as fungibility. These principles provide a multiple perspective through which to investigate why and how people desire things. This approach to value is explored through a case study of the desirability of textiles during the emergence of the early urban centres in central and northern Italy (900–500 BC) within its wider geographical setting. Addressing desirability, rather than fixed concepts of luxury, wealth or prestige, opens up questions as to how and why materials and objects are valued across social matrices and according to changing ambitions during the life course.

KEYWORDS

Value; desirability; Mediterranean; Etruscan; textiles; representational artefacts

1. From value to desirability

'Value' is a perennial topic in archaeology. For archaeologists faced with the material world of others, a concept of value is essential to interrogating people's decisions surrounding the material culture they make, transact and use. Recently, research has moved away from a strict definition of value found in monetary worth and measure, towards a concept of value where the interconnectedness of people, objects and things (Bokern and Rowan 2014, 2), and mutable categories of value, incorporating bodies, places and objects (Papadopoulos and Urton 2012, 21) is the new status quo, leading to 'unashamedly synthetic approaches to object value' (Bevan 2010, 36). Value then is a broad concept, found in the significance, relevance, worth, sentiment and potential of an object, material or thing (see Porter [2012, 337]). And value is found in all manner of things, material and immaterial: metal, beads, jewellery, coins, ceramics, statues, textiles, gardens, buildings, abilities and events, to name the most obvious.

When addressing value, one of the crucial questions that recurs is desirability. Why do people desire things? What is the allure of worldly goods? Why do people want stuff? To Simmel, writing on the philosophy of money, value is not an inherent property of an object (thought or event) in the way that colour or temperature can be, but a subjective judgement made by people (Simmel 1978, 59–63 [1907]). From this, he asserts that value is found in the longing for things that resist our desires, that raise possibilities to us, that in the moment before they are ours create the frustration of wanting (Simmel 1978, 66–8). In this juncture of desiring, value is created though the

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reciprocal sacrifice required in economic exchange (Simmel 1978, 80). In this way too, value is found in comparison, because people are discerning, evaluating one object or category of objects in terms of another.

Simmel's text provided a foundation for the consideration of value. Archaeologists widely reject the idea of intrinsic value within a material, object or skill. Instead it is commonly held that 'value is a property that is assigned to an object in a manner that arises from the social context in question, and it is to some, usually significant, extent arbitrary' (Renfrew 1986, 158). Simmel's ideas have been used to question object value based on levels of accessibility and desirability, a combination Wijngaarden (1999, 3) applies persuasively to analyse the value of different forms of Mycenaean pottery in Ugarit, Syria, 1600–1050 BC. Foxhall (2005) enlists this balance to differentiate staples, luxuries and semi-luxuries when investigating the expanding volume of goods that were moved around the Mediterranean in the eighth to sixth centuries BC.

For Appadurai (1986, 13), it was Simmel's nexus between desire and the circumstances in which objects were circulated that caught his intellectual curiosity. Appaduriai's edited volume on the 'social life of things' proved pivotal in exploring the desirability of objects in transactions, whether as commodities, gifts, heirlooms or bribes. A rich interpretation of the Iron Age Mediterranean now exists using this approach (see Crielaard [2003]; Lyons [2003]; Mueller [2010]; Whitley [2013]). Additionally, Marx's idea of labour value remains relevant, as the organization, time and skills devoted to making objects can change their level of desirability (e.g. Jarva and Lipkin 2014). In the same way, the glossiness, patterns, colours, weight, durability, smell and other inherent properties of materials are also appealing (Bokern and Rowan 2014, 2). The caution is not against the inherent properties of materials or the value accrued by labour, but in the assumption that these objects are universally desirable. This debate has been well developed in the field of metals (e.g. Primas 2011, 129–30; Stork 2015, 122).

Just as value is not intrinsic, neither is it universal. What may be valuable in one time and place may not retain this status elsewhere. The value of an object may indeed change across the social matrix; what is of value to elite women may not be of value to lower-ranking women, men or children. For the value choices people make about material and immaterial goods are not so much about the thing itself, but in what objectives it can help them attain (Douglas and Isherwood 1996, 48–9 [1979]). Through these choices people are excluded and included in social groups, with outcomes implicit in the politics of identity. Aspects of these debates have been reframed through understanding value as a system of action, in the larger whole of society (Graeber 2001, 254). Graeber's thesis is based in the material world of cloaks, beads, coins, wampum and the actions of potlatch, gift giving and peace payments. It is the importance of action, however, that renders the value of objects difficult to identify in the archaeology of past societies. Reflecting on those things considered to be valuable (jewellery, abilities, devotion) Graeber (2013, 219) surmises that 'it's genuinely hard to say what all these have in common, other than that some people wish they had them more than they already do.' If value, then, is desirability, it is for the archaeologist to understand what is desirable, and what that desire engenders.

I argue here that value is a judgment people make about things based on desire; this desire is for the thing itself and, importantly, for the effects those things engender. From this perspective, value is a relative concept based in a discerning relationship between people and things. To interrogate this relationship, I propose that there are five principle ways that people desire objects: (1) through their material properties – those inherent qualities of surface and matter that exist in reference to a person and situation; (2) in expense and exclusivity because objects are desirable due to their relative rarity, quality and quantity, and as a consequence their limited accessibility; (3)

Table 1. The five principles by which objects are desirable and the effects they engender.

Principle	Desirability	Effect
1. Material properties	Objects are desirable for their material properties, those inherent qualities of surface and matter. Properties are relational; it may be that a property is perceived to be more desirable in one context, less so in another.	The value of the material properties of an object is that they enhance a person's capacity to be or act in a given situation.
2. Expense & exclusivity	Objects can be expensive due to their rarity, relative quality or quantity, whether in materials, skills of the creator, or other factors. Expense makes objects exclusive, and exclusive objects are desirable due to limited accessibility.	The value of expensive, exclusive objects is that they provide a means of comparison and serve to enhance and justify the dynamics of power, legitimacy and order as they demonstrate connections, networks and acquisition ability.
3. Conspicuous, sensory appeal	Objects are desirable when they appeal to the senses in an agreeable way.	The value of objects with conspicuous, sensory appeal is in their ability to influence the perception and behaviour of others.
4. Object Biography	Biography enhances object desirability when is creates connections to people, places, ideas or other things that are themselves desirable.	The value of object biography is that it attaches other people to the object, a factor which extends networks and relationships.
5. Fungibility	Objects are desirable when they are part of an established system of exchange, aspects of which may be standardized.	The value of fungible objects is that they can be readily exchanged for goods and services, because they systemize the transfer of payment, debts and obligations.

owing to their conspicuous sensory appeal, when objects appeal to the senses in an agreeable way; (4) in object biography; when through their life history objects are connected to people, places, ideas or other things; and (5) where things can be substituted one for another, an attribute known as fungibility, as these established systems of exchange enable the transfer of obligations, reciprocal payments and debts (Table 1).

These principles are not mutually exclusive; materials and things may be valued in several ways. For archaeologists, these five principles provide a framework to interrogate desirability and hence value from multiple perspectives. By addressing desirability, rather than fixed concepts of luxury, wealth or prestige, this opens up questions as to how materials and objects were valued across social matrices and according to changing ambitions during the ages and events of a person's life.

2. Iron Age textiles

These ideas are explored through a case study of textiles during the emergence of Etruscan urbanization and early urban centres in central and northern Italy from the ninth to sixth century BC. Why did people of these early urban centres desire textiles? What was the allure of textiles? For textiles of this period, a comparatively rich body of evidence includes examples of preserved textile fragments, rare textile garments found in burials, and representational artefacts including the situla art (figural scenes engraved on bronze mirrors, buckets and belt buckles) of northeastern Italy and the polychrome tomb paintings of central Italy dating to the sixth century BC; there are further representational artefacts of ceramic and stone. Many of these artefacts were locally produced, and are often recovered from well-furnished tombs and are dated by relative means. Such representational artefacts are likely to be highly selective in their content, being made for the elite and no doubt reflecting subjects that appealed to their tastes and suitability for funerary contexts. While there is ongoing debate as to whether representational artefacts are a reliable source of textile evidence (e.g. Lee [2015, 89–90]; Bonfante [2003, 1–2]) for good reasons, representational artefacts are a mainstay for understanding Etruscan and Venetic textiles and

clothing (e.g. Bonfante [2003]; Zaghetto [2003]). Their content is reinforced by corresponding features in preserved textiles (Gleba 2008, 45–57) and the extant semi-circular mantles and tunic-like textile garments from Tomb 89, Lippi necropolis, Verucchio, 725–675 BC (Stauffer 2012) that closely match those clothing shapes found in contemporary representational artefacts. The abundance of tools for producing textiles, such as spindle whorls and loom weights found in settlements, sanctuaries and burials (e.g. Vida Navarro [1993]; Gleba [2008, 91–159]; Meyers [2013]) indicates the scale and significance of textile production at this time. Artefacts were studied at 20 [1] museum collections and archaeological sites. My aim with this case study is to reassess this category of material culture, textiles, through the five principles of value and to consider why textiles were valuable to the people of these early urban centres.

2.1. *Material properties*

The first principle is that materials are desirable due to their properties. In Gibson's concept of affordances and later adaptations of it, the material properties of an object are not fixed but relational; they depend on the environment and individual. The 'affordance of anything is a specific combination of the properties of its substance and its surfaces taken with reference to an animal' (Gibson 1977, 67) – taken here to refer to the person. Material affordances are sociable, as the perception of materials varies between people, even within the same social event (Knappett 2004, 48). Textile properties can be summarized as 'large, thin sheets of material made from fibre, which are soft and floppy enough to be used as coverings for people and things' (Barber 1991, 5). Made of fibre, textiles inherit properties of the plant and animal fibres they originate from (Harris 2010, 105–7). As materials they wrap, shape and fold, and can be used to cover, clothe and contain (Harris 2008, 225–6).

As various artefacts of the first millennium BC Mediterranean show, textile clothing was worn by people across social matrices. Men, women, servants, children and divine beings all wear textiles, although the type and extent of clothing varies (Bondini 2006; Bonfante 2003; Lee 2015, 89–126). Clothing the body was (and is) desirable as it simultaneously forms a portable environment, social persona and a personal aesthetic (Eicher and Lee Evenson 2015; Watkins 1984, xv–xviii), a means of non-verbal communication (Wobst 1977), and can be changed according to intentions and situations (Woodward 2005). The desirability for textile clothing is therefore transmitted in these representational artefacts, as are preferences for cloth showing the patterns, shapes, borders and colours of textile clothing.

From the early Iron Age (*ca*. 900–720 BC), through Orientalizing (*ca*. 720–575 BC) to Archaic period (*ca*. 575–480 BC), the number of representations of textile clothing increases with the development of early urban centres and the urban growth of the seventh to sixth century BC. Preserved textile fragments from burials throughout Italy (Gleba 2017) and the garments from the Lippi necropolis, Verucchio, referred to earlier (Stauffer 2012, 244–5) confirm the textile and clothing shown in the depictions. In the early Iron Age, representations of people in vase painting, and bronze and ceramic statuettes, are defined by body shape with simple clothing or no clothing at all (see chronological overviews e. g. Haynes 2000; Richardson 1983). By the Archaic period and the rise of Etruscan cities, across the media of stone sculpture, ceramics, bronze figurines, and vase and wall painting, artists, by contrast, paid particular attention to the textiles that covered and clothed human bodies. That textile details were included even on very small figures attests to the importance of representing textiles in these contexts. Men, women, servants and children are shown wearing contrasting combinations of textile clothing (Bondini 2006; Zaghetto 2003,

123–30). Here, textile clothing actively creates roles and relationships, engendering the tips and balances we refer to as social differentiation. This increased presence of textiles suggests that in these early urban societies, influence was gained through the material presence, colour, texture and drape of textile clothing. While textile clothing is obviously much older than urban societies, for some reason it became more important in representational artefacts in Italy with the process of urbanization; the material properties of textile clothing were clearly a desirable part of urban life (Figure 1).

If the ubiquity of clothing in the modern world makes us blinkered to its material effects, it may be easier to consider what happens in its absence. By the sixth century BC in situla art, occasionally

Figure 1. Textiles are desirable for their material properties. In representation, the desirability of clothing is shown in the care taken to represent it in detail. The figures engraved on the back of this bronze mirror from Galassina di Castelvetro, Modena, 500–450 BC are only a few centimetres high, yet their garments have lower borders characteristic of preserved textile materials of Iron Age central and northern Italy. The men wear tunics and calf-length cloaks. Cloaks are the most consistent are the most consist length garments represented in situla art, and may represent a standardized garment. The scene is interpreted as women and men negotiating horses before a marriage. Mirror diameter 17 cm. (Drawing adapted by Jasmine Parker after Monaco in Pizzirani (2009, tav. 3). Original © Museo Civico Archeologico Etnologico di Modena).

men, and more rarely women, are shown naked. In the Benvenuti Situla, Este, Italy, 550–500 BC, two unclothed men fight a duel, a cloak and hat laid beside them (Lucke and Frey 1962, 62–6, fig. 8–11, table 65). Here, the absence of clothing is associated with their male athleticism. This appreciation of the athletic male nude blossoms in engravings on Bronze mirrors of the Late Archaic and Classical period in Etruria, reflecting the influence of Greek myth and religion on Etruscan art (Izzet 2007, 80). The athletic nudity of the duellers in situla art is altogether different from the three male prisoners shown without clothing on the same situla, their hands bound, led by armed, armoured men (Figure 2). Here, as in similar motifs in the Near East, the absence of clothing highlights the prisoners' humiliation and loss of autonomy (Bahrani 2008, 112; Cifarelli 1998, 220). On the Bronze Mirror of Galassina di Castelvetro, Modena, 500–450 BC (Pizzirani 2009, 137–8) a couple are engaged in sexual intercourse; the only clothing which remains is the

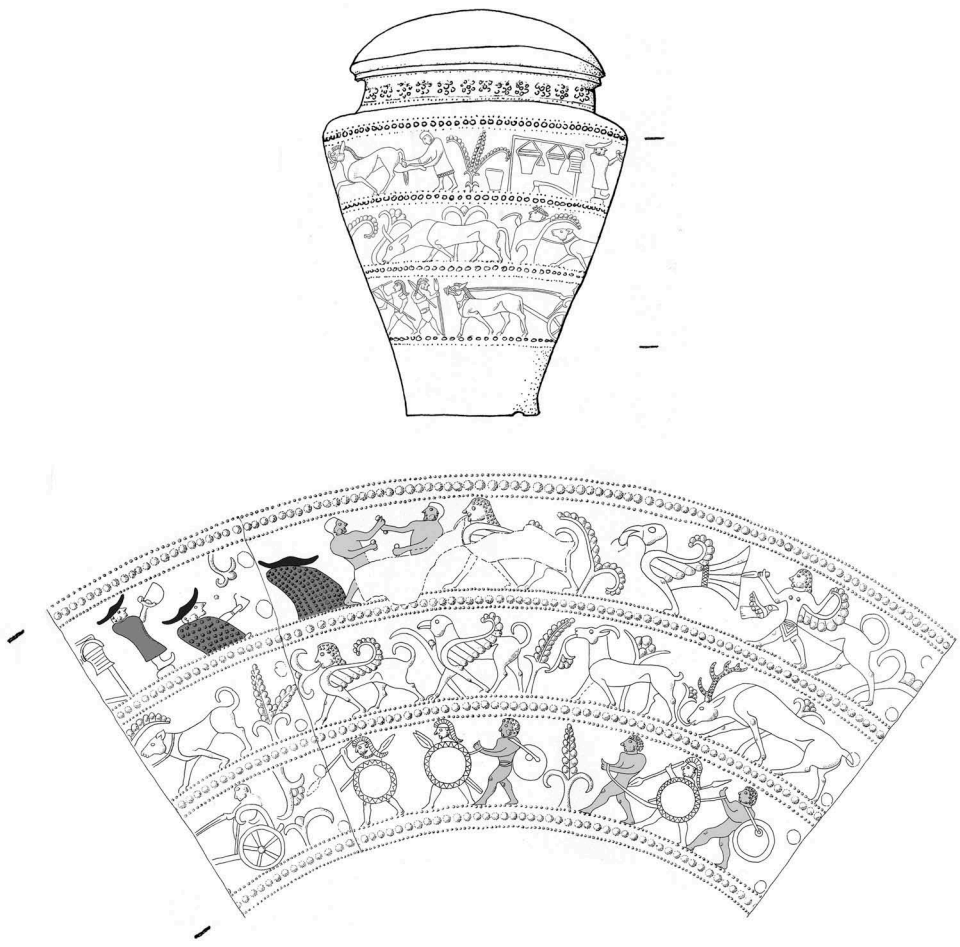

Figure 2. The desirability of textile materials can also be evident in their absence. In the lower frieze of the Benvenuti Situla, Este, Italy, 550–500 BC, three male prisoners are shown without clothing, their hands bound, led by armed and armoured men. Their lack of clothing highlights their lowly status. This is altogether different from the two men fighting a duel, where nudity is associated with athleticism. Situla height 31 cm (Drawing Jasmine Parker after Lucke and Frey (1962, taf. 65).

woman's headscarf (Figure 2). The same state of undress occurs in the painting in the Tomb of the Bulls, Tarquinia, 530 BC (Steingräber 1986, 350, 388–9). We may wonder what befell the woman who did not have textile to cover her head. The only fully unclothed woman is in the Pieve d'Alpago birthing scene from Belluno, Veneto, 525–500 BC (Gangemi 2013, 283). In this way, the very presence of textile clothing, with its material properties to wrap, cover, shape and contain the body stabilizes and morphs social relationships, as presented in representational artefacts.

Textiles are not desirable for clothing alone. In the Tomb of Hunting and Fishing, Tarquinia, 510 BC, painted textiles cover the banquet beds and cushions, hang from trees and create the festive canopy (Steingräber 1986, 293, 388–9). As sails, textile material captures the wind's energy to create motion. This is seen in the billowing sails on an oinochoe attributed to the Tarquinian 'Pittore delle Palme', 700–675 BC (Bruni 2013, 770). Trade relations of the first millennium BC were founded in sea transport and textile sails propelled ships, people and cargo from port to port. The desirability of textile sails is that these vast sheets of material harnessed energy and so enabled fast, large-scale communications and trade, so foundational to the early urban centres of Italy and the Mediterranean.

Textiles are desirable when their material properties and presence enhance a person's capacity to be, or act in, a given situation. This is as true for the simple textiles used to make ordinary clothing or sails, as it is for the elaborate textiles which are desirable for other reasons. As clothing materials, textiles enhance a person's ability to form relationships, and their persuasiveness to others (Joyce 2000, 69). This persuasiveness is dependent on perception; a garment that is impressive to one individual may be oppressive to another. Materials form a relative scale; worn textiles, unfashionable or poor-quality clothing, damaged sails or bags with holes may prove ineffective in achieving the intended outcome, and hence prove less desirable.

2.2. *Expense and exclusivity*

Value is found where there is expense and exclusivity. This is typically thought of as those objects that are rare, exotic in appearance or of highly sophisticated craftsmanship or difficult to acquire (Riva 2005, 203). Expense and exclusivity are closely related, although not exactly the same thing. Expensive items may at times be necessary for all members of society, for example a marriage dowry, but exclusive objects are those that only an elite can access and are therefore likely to become symbols of authority and legitimacy (Joyce 2000, 70–1). For this reason, it is the expense that makes objects desirable and exclusive. Foxhall (2005) presents a concept of staples versus luxuries and semi-luxuries, whereby many people can have a small amount of a valuable thing, but few can have a lot of it. This balance of value through desirability and accessibility has been explored in the trade of Mycenaean ceramics in Ugarit, Syria (Wijngaarden 1999). Similarly, differences in quantity and quality can provide relative scales, enabling a desire for more or better. Experimental and historical research demonstrates that hand-produced textiles are laborious and resource-intensive to make, especially so those fine, patterned or especially large textiles (e.g. Andersson and Nosch [2003]; Bender Jørgensen [2012]; Costin [2013]; Jarva and Lipkin [2014]). The level of fineness, the rarity of the dyes, the level of skill required to make textiles provide a tangible, relative scale of expense, at once limiting accessibility and creating exclusivity. Set within local fluctuations of economy and fashion[2] it is the exclusivity created through expense that sets those materials and things apart as desirable.

Across the Mediterranean, textiles with very fine threads which were woven closely together were more expensive and exclusive than those of coarser thread. They required more time and

skill to produce (Jarva and Lipkin 2014, 25). In preserved textiles, fineness is measured by the thinness of the yarns and density of threads, establishing a relative scale of quality. Such graded textiles are attested throughout Italy in the early Iron Age (Gleba 2008, 84–5). For example the finest textiles in the ninth century BC burial at Sasso di Furbara, Caolino, Lazio, were woven in threads 0.1–0.2mm in diameter with 30–45 threads per centimetre of weaving; the coarsest was woven in threads 0.8–1.5 mm in diameter and 3–18 threads per centimetre (Mamez and Masurel 1992). This attests to the comparative nature of value, as textiles can be ordered both technically and by eye. Terminology from the Egyptian Ramesside Period (1186–1069 BC) and Old Assyrian texts includes four qualities of textile, from the finest, 'royal linen' to ordinary 'smooth cloth' (Veenhof 1972, 144–213; Janssen 1975, 256, 436); the exclusivity of fine textiles is therefore underscored by the hierarchy in terminology.

In Etruscan tomb paintings textiles are patterned and colourful. Purple bands edge the mantle of the tomb owner in the Tomb of the Augurs, Tarquinia, 550 BC (Steingräber 1986, pl. 19); a colour identified with the expense and exclusivity of shellfish purple. The very large, decorated textiles used to make cloth tents required a huge amount of work, especially as patterning, such as the animal scene in the tent band of the Tomb of the Hunter, Tarquinia, 550 BC (Figure 3), is the most costly form of textile (Cleland, Davies, and Llewellyn-Jones 2007). The accumulation of objects of low expense, such as simple or coarse textiles, can also be exclusive. It is the enormous quantities of textiles required for a ship's sail, for instance, that renders them expensive and exclusive, not their fine quality. For this reason, sail textiles were valuable for their sheer size, material and labour investment (Gabrielsen 1994, 146–8).

Expensive and exclusive objects operate by including and excluding people or groups of people through their ownership; such objects are valued as markers of social identity and rank. The value of expensive, exclusive objects is that they are readily used to enhance and justify the dynamics of power, legitimacy and order (Joyce 2000) as they demonstrate superior connections, networks and acquisition ability. On the downside, the value of expensive and exclusive objects can change quickly; their value may also be eroded by fluctuation in accessibility due to new trade routes, substitutes and innovations in the exploitation of resources, or swift changes in style or taste.

2.3. *Conspicuous, sensory appeal*

Conspicuous, sensory appeal describes the value and desirability of objects that are attractive to the senses in an agreeable way and, in doing so, influence the perception and behaviour of others. This touches on elusive art historical concepts such as beauty (e.g. Joyce 2000, 69), art and aesthetic (Coote and Shelton 1992, 4–8), and the value of art and aesthetic (Porter 2012). In terms of effect, the conspicuous, sensory appeal of objects is that they attract attention, are impressive and can be influential. Gell described this as the 'Technology of Enchantment' (Gell 1992). This enchantment is the agency of the object, which is enhanced through the appeal of stunning and culturally resonant materials. The visual domain is an obvious means of sensory appeal; decorated, glittery, colourful and bright surfaces capture attention in a heightened way (Wells 2008, 43–7). Approaches to 'sensible objects' have emphasized their sensory appeal beyond the visual sphere, and engendering responses through texture, touch, movement or sound (Edwards, Gosden, and Phillips 2006, 12). Textiles, with their material properties of tactile and fluid texture, ability in clothing to shape the body to conform to aesthetic norms of the period, and ample surfaces to colour, pattern and enhance, are ready contenders for conspicuous, sensory appeal.

Figure 3. Textiles are desirable for their expense and exclusivity. This colourful, patterned pavilion painted in the Tomb of the Hunter, Tarquinia, 550 BC, shows the attention of the painter to enhance the tomb with splendid textiles. With its dyed panels and animal frieze, real versions of a large textile canopy like this would have required a substantial amount of work, skill and resources. Such canopies were likely expensive to make, and so exclusive, desirable items (© MIBACT. Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia – Roma. Foto Mauro Benedetti).

Across the Mediterranean in the late second and early first millennium BC, extensively patterned, brightly coloured, translucent, fine and amply layered or draped textiles adorn images of pharaohs, divinities, royalty, priests and priestesses, and those men and women claiming social status. The Polledrara statue from the 'Isis Tomb' at Vulci (575–550 BC) shows a woman or goddess, her hand extended in offering (Verri et al. 2014). Here, a typically Etruscan cloak, tunic and belt are carved in gypsum and painted with red, green, blue and black pigments. The cloak is trimmed with borders and patterned hems in black and Egyptian blue; the tunic is finished with an intricate, colourful lotus-flower design. The effectiveness and desirability of these textiles comes not only from their expense, but in their ability to impress others through their allure, their beauty, and what I call here their conspicuous, sensory appeal. We are impressed by the bright, intricate pattern of the painted textiles on the Polledrara statue. And that still enchants us today.

The enchantment of textiles as a sensory accruement of the successful family, couple and social network in early urban Italy is evident in the contemporary portrayal of the couple reclining on the *kline* (couch), covered in textiles. A painted, terracotta sarcophagus of spouses from Cerveteri, 520–510 BC, shows a couple reclining on their banqueting bed (Briguet 1988). The mattress is covered in a large textile, and both man and woman are dressed and draped in textiles which the sculptor accentuates through folds, piles and texture. Here, textiles are the most conspicuous material (Figure 4). Conspicuous textiles reoccur in banquet scenes. In the Tomb of the Lioness, Tarquinia, 550–500 BC, four men recline with one knee bent, emphasizing the bold colour and drape of their blue or green textile kilts, and the space they occupy is enhanced by red and white checked canopy (Pallottino 1952, 48; Steingräber 1986, cat. no. 77, 316–7, pl. 101–2). The colourful canopy is painted elsewhere, with an elaborate example in the Tomb of the Hunter, Tarquinia, 550 BC (Steingräber 1986, 388–9) (Figure 3). Decorative textiles are not fanciful manifestations of the tomb painter. Preserved textiles from throughout Italy of this period have a riotous abundance of pattern, colour and texture (Gleba 2017; Ræder Knudsen 2002; Stauffer 2002; Stauffer 2012; Wouters, Vanden Berghe, and Maquoi 2002). What the Etruscan tomb painting and sculpture shows through depictions of such textiles is an idealized view of the way the men and women who entertained in these feasts used the texture, pattern and colour of textiles to mark the occasions, to enhance their own splendour, to create an impression, and to accentuate their position at the feast and beyond.

Figure 4. Textiles are desirable for their conspicuous sensory appeal. The painted terracotta Sarcophagus of the Spouses, Cerveteri, 520–510 BC, shows a couple reclining on their banqueting bed (*kline*) covered in textiles. The textiles are the most conspicuous material on the monument, their appeal is in the sensory colour, soft folds and drape. Sarcophagus height 111 cm, length 194 cm, width 69 cm (© Musée du Louvre).

The value of conspicuous, sensory appeal of textiles is that they attract attention, appreciation and awe. As with adornment (Bokern and Rowan 2014, 5; Graeber 2001, 92–4), in clothing the proximity of textiles to the body enhances their effectiveness. By doing so, this can be used to influence the perception and behaviour of others. However, sensory appeal is a shifting scale. Textiles fade, wear and become ragged. Though competently woven, the wool leggings and inner shoes of Vedretta di Ries/Riesenferner, Bolzano, northern Italy (795–466 BC) are visibly worn, mended and patched (Bazzanella et al. 2005). The appreciation of colours, decoration or textures is localized and changes over time. In turn, what is effective may be copied by those who aspire to more influential social positions. This leads to the constant need for 'new material symbols of distinction' which is fulfilled by new objects and can be seen as a competitive strategy to maintain distinctiveness (Steel 2013, 126). For this reason, the value of conspicuous, sensory textiles is set within the ever-shifting effect of changing tastes, which we may call fashion.

2.4. *Object biographies*

The biography of an object enhances value and desirability when it connects the material or object to people, places or other things that are themselves desirable. Such connections may change during the life history of the object. Object biography refers to the social relationships that an object is caught up in, which may change the object's meaning without changing its physical form (Gosden and Marshall 1999, 170). Originating in social anthropology, object biography was developed to recognize value created through economic exchange (Appadurai 1986, 3). Weiner (1989) drew attention to the inalienable properties of cloth wealth, identifying how individual and group status are attached to cloth through knowledge of its production, circulation and accumulation, creating social obligations. For archaeologists biography is a means to assemble the sum of social relationships connected to an object (Joy 2009). Archaeologists working with texts have used biography to identify heirlooms, antiques and the glory of the weaver or the danger of the gift (Crielaard 2003; Lyons 2003; Mueller 2010; Whitley 2013). For the value of textiles, with their laborious *chaîne opératoire* of production and complex use life, biography draws attention to how connections to people of status, politics and power can enhance the desirability of textiles.

That textile production was a woman's domain in Venetic and Etruscan Italy is suggested by scenes of women working and inspecting textiles. The bronze rattle (*tintinnabulum*) from the Tomb of the Gold Jewellery, Bologna, *ca*. 630–600 BC (Morigi Govi 1971), explicitly connects textile production to adult women. Women prepare fibres, dress distaffs, spin and weave. In another scene carved on a wooden throne from the male Tomb of the Throne, Lippi necropolis, Verucchio *ca*. 725–675 BC, it appears women weave on giant looms while men guard and tend the sheep (Von Eles 2002). If textiles are the product of women (for an overview see Gleba 2011), the scenes on situlae and tomb paintings show that it was women producing the finished textiles which were used as textile clothing by men and women, adults and children, elites and servants. In situla art, the women wear a greater percentage of textiles than men, and a higher number of textiles. In turn, the elite, adult man in knee-length tunic and mantle is represented with more textile clothing than boys with their thigh-length tunic, men engaged in games, or people waiting at banquets (e.g. Tomb of the Augurs, Steingräber 1986). This suggests that as well as being the main producers of the household textiles, women are also the main consumers. As well as clothing, textiles were required at weddings and funerals. The scene of women inspecting textiles on a stone *cippus* base from Chiusi, *ca*. 490–480 BC, is interpreted as a wedding (Jannot 1984, 90–2, pl.

Figure 5. Textiles are desirable because of the people and ideas connected to them through their biography, and for their desirability as items of exchange. Textile evidence indicates women produced textiles and were involved in textile transactions, as well as being major consumers of textiles. This scene carved on a stone *cippus* base from Chiusi, *ca*. 490–480 BC shows of women inspecting textiles (highlighted in grey) surrounding a finely dressed, seated couple. It is interpreted as a wedding and suggests women's textile products were a substantial, desirable contribution to these major life events. *Cippus* height 49 cm (Drawing Jasmine Parker).

319) (Figure 5). In the Tomb of the Dead Man, Calvario necropolis, Tarquinia 600–550 BC, the corpse is wrapped in a red shroud and laid on a bier dressed with bright, patterned textiles and pillows (Steingräber 2006, 101). If women are the source of textiles, their products represent a substantial, organized contribution to the major life events of weddings and funerals, highlighting also the intense desirability of textiles throughout the events of a person's life. While the form of textile remains the same, the status and direction of their distribution networks brings into question the value and desirability of textiles sourced from women.

Although the form of personal relationships in contemporary Greek texts cannot be taken for granted in first millennium BC Italy, they provide a striking example of how transaction increases desirability. Here weaving is the productive activity of women, and women are involved in the transaction of textiles; in the *Odyssey* women and goddesses frequently give textile clothing to Odysseus and his son Telemachus (Lyons 2003, 105). For instance Helen gives Telemachus a robe (*peplos*) she has woven for his future bride, and Penelope publicly weaves the shroud of her father-in-law, Laertes. In this way through weaving, women gain glory and renown (Mueller 2010). This in turn enhances their textiles. In use and reuse, textile biographies evolve. Textiles gifted several times create genealogies of owners and honour (Mueller 2010, 4–13). The Homeric epics describe

how textiles, like other items, circulate within traditions of gift-giving, familial obligations, inheritance as heirlooms, and dowry, and are offered as prizes and in dedications (overview in Gleba 2014). These transactions show that in some Mediterranean areas in the first millennium BC the desirability of textiles was connected to relationships of production and consumption – as one is rarely alienable from the other – and how those connections change throughout the life history of the textile.

Textiles with connections to people through production, distribution and consumption can be desirable because they generate networks and relationships. The value of object biography is that it attaches other people and ideas to the object, a factor which originates from connections and relationships, at times in an overt and public manner, at other times familial. These connections are subject to the rise and fall of opinion and memory, and may change through the life history of a textile.

2.5. *Fungibility*

Fungibility describes how readily one thing (or things) can be substituted for another; it implies a system of exchange and is closely related to a means of quantifying equivalence based in measurement (Papadopoulos and Urton 2012, 3–5; Renfrew 2012, 253). Fungibility is assisted by prices and standardized products; in antiquity it is frequently associated with metals. Weighed metals of the second millennium BC formed the basis for the subsequent monetary systems of the first millennium BC in western Asia and Europe (Renfrew 2012). In central Italy from 800–400 BC an early indication of fungible metals may be provided by the *Aes rude*, rough unshaped ingots of bronze (Cantilena 1995), although their purpose remains unclear. It was not only metals that could be priced and standardized: wool weights and prices suggests the fungibility of textile fibres (Wilkinson 2014, 230) in the same period and earlier across the Mediterranean. In nineteenth and twentieth Dynasty Egypt (1292–1069 BC), for example, the prices of garments are listed on pottery sherds (*ostraca*). Of these the *mss*, a type of 'smooth' textile bag-tunic worn by men and women, held a fixed price of five *deben* (Janssen 1975, 260–2). 'Smooth' refers to a coarse textile, and the *mss* was a common garment worn in the evenings to protect from the cold. Although with a specific purpose, this was not the only reason it was a standard product. For Janssen, the value of the *mss* is that it held a fixed price in barter transactions: 'Not much haggling was possible over such an object; its price was fixed' (Janssen 1975, 261). Can we identify standardized garments represented on Iron Age artefacts in central and northern Italy?

Central and northern Italy lay within the Mediterranean world of premonetary barter, gifts and exchange, yet in the absence of price lists, it is difficult to identify standardized textiles. In my analysis of the relative size of garments worn by men and women represented in situla art, I classified the length of garments in relation to the body. The results showed that one item of clothing was more consistently the same size and shape than all others. This is the man's cloak which was worn by men at leisure in processions or performing drinking ceremonies, and in 85% of 183 figures hangs from the shoulder and extends to the calf; 9% reach only to the thigh, and the rest are variable or unidentifiable. In representation then, cloaks were a consistent size. Occasionally the cloaks are plaid patterned, but mostly they are represented plain with a simple band along the lower edge (Figure 1). The three preserved cloaks (mantles) from Lippi necropolis have similar dimensions to one another. Two from the man's Tomb 89 measure *ca*. 260 cm in length and 88 cm in height, while an unpublished cloak from 15 Bis B/1971 has a height of 88 cm (Stauffer 2002, 196, 200). While these mantles were likely shorter than the calf length cloaks on the

situla, they again point to consistent sizing of certain outer garments. What does this mean for the value of cloaks? To the person engraving the bronzes, the cloak is used to represent men of leisure and status; it suggests this was a standard, required garment of this position. As in the representations and preserved cloaks¸ the weave and quality may have varied, although their size and shape remain constant. That cloaks were required by men to achieve and hold status and that they were a defined size and shape suggest an element of standardization. To the person making the cloak, this may, therefore, represent a standardized product. Throughout the Iron Age, textile production in wealthy households was likely the domain of high-status women (Gleba 2008, 200). From the seventh century BC, textiles may have been produced more intensively, as seen by the large quantities of textile tools at sites such as Murlo and Acquarossa (Gleba 2008, 200–1). In either case the person making the cloak was unlikely to be the man who wore it. We may consider the cloak to be a regular transaction from female producers to male consumers.

The desirability of standardized, fungible textiles, such as the man's calf-length cloak of the north Etruscan enclave around Bologna and Este, is that they ease the exchange of textiles from one person (or institution) to another. The value of fungibility is that it enables the ready exchange of goods and services, and systemizes the transfer of payment, debts and obligations. The nature and equality of this exchange depends on the organization of production and relative rates of exchange. Recognizing the fungibility of textiles brings to light the desirability of textiles which may not be valued for their splendour, exclusivity or expense, but that were in regular, constant demand. In turn this makes them worthwhile for the producer, or those controlling their products.

3. The allure of worldly things

I have presented here a framework to investigate the value of things (materials or objects) by investigating why people found these things desirable and what that desire engendered. Through examining the literature on value, I propose there are five principle ways in which people desire objects: (1) through material properties and the potential they offer; (2) due to expense and exclusivity as a means of comparison; (3) because things with overt sensory appeal are enchanting; (4) in the relationships, meaning and networks created through object biographies; and (5) when objects are exchangeable due to equivalence, here described as fungibility. In this way, value is not fixed or static, but related to people, intentions, politics, situations and negotiations. This opens up questions of how things were valued by different members of society, according to situations and events and how value may change throughout the life history of the object.

In examining the value of textiles during the emergence of early urban centres in central and northern Italy (900–500 BC) I question why people desired textiles, and what that desire engendered. This is analysed through preserved textiles and representational artefacts. These representational artefacts are likely highly selective, and as such are useful when considering desirability. From the ninth to sixth century BC, increased attention was paid to textile in these representational artefacts. Textile clothing enabled the body to be dressed, defined and differentiated, affecting the relationships between all people in society. Through the inherent capacity of textiles to be made ever finer, more colourful, patterned and expensive, textiles provided a means of exclusivity that legitimized power relationships, while at the same time excluding those without them. That glorious textiles could be flaunted conspicuously provided the wearers with enchantment, and disenfranchised those with faded, worn attire. Through complex biographies of production, distribution and accumulation, some textiles became more desirable than others. By

considering textiles such as the man's calf-length cloak as having the potential to be standardized, raises the possibility that textiles were desirable as a means to acquire other things. In opening up the many ways by which textiles were desirable, these five principles address how the value of any one textile could fluctuate according to whom was judging it, the situation or event for which the textile was destined, and the material status of the textile, as well as the people in question.

Addressing desirability across these five principles allows us to question a wider range of explanations than those materials and objects typically counted as valuable, and hence question the significance, relevance, worth, sentiment and potential of things for people. The origin of many theories of value in social anthropology can frustrate archaeologists. The purpose of this framework is to provide a means by which materials and objects, their desirability and effects can be questioned in complex and multiple ways. Archaeologists working with all manner of things (jewellery, houses, ceramics, coins, textiles) are well placed to investigate desirability, as conversely we are only too familiar with the broken material promises that pile up in the refuse heaps of time.

Notes

1. Banditaccia Necropolis Cerveteri, Benaki Museum, British Museum, Capitoline Museum Rome, Acropolis Museum Athens, Civic Archaeological Museum of Bologna, Civic Archaeological Museum of Verucchio, Civic Museum of Belluno, Civic Museum of Modena, Civic Museum of Padova, Civic Museum of Treviso, Kerameikos Museum Athens, National Archaeological Museum Athens, National Archaeological Museum of Este, National Archaeological Museum of Florence, National Archaeological Museum of Tarquinia, Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology, Vienna Natural History Museum, Villa Giulia Museum Rome.
2. Where 'fashion' is the widespread, relatively large-scale consumption of standardized goods with rapidly changing styles (Foxhall 2005, 241).

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