In 1966 the Duke University Museum of Art (now the Nasher Museum) acquired several works in marble as part of a large lot of medieval sculpture purchased from the estate of Ernest and Joseph Brummer. An acanthus capital (1966.13, Pl. 2) of the pulvino type and two sets of archivolts (1966.10, a-i) from the Cathedral of Alife in Campania (partially illustrated in Plates 1 and 3) are associated with South Italian workshops. The arch has been published on several occasions, and was in particular the object of the in-depth study by Dorothy F. Glass in 1991.

In 2001 the marble pieces from Alife underwent an isotope ratio analysis at the University of Georgia, and were identified as coming (with a varied range of probability) from the following quarries:

- 1966.10.a: Carrara 87%, Paros/Chorodaki 82%
- 1966.10.b: Aphrodisias 99.6%, Afyon 75%
- 1966.10.c: Iznik 92%, Sardis 77%, Pentelikon 72%
- 1966.10.d: Carrara 93%, Paros/Chorodaki 79%
- 1966.10.e: Paros/Chorodaki 86%, Carrara 78%
- 1966.10.f: Carrara 96%, Paros Chorodaki 84%
- 1966.10.g: Paros/Chorodaki 77%, Marmara 77%, Carrara 74%
- 1966.10.h: Usak 80%, Mylasa 62%, Marmara 59%
- 1966.10.i: Carrara 99%, Paros/Chorodaki 72%, Marmara 71%

The marble analysis indicates that pieces a, d, f, and i were probably quarried in Carrara (ancient Luna). The others probably originated in Anatolia, specifically the quarries in Aphrodisias/Afyon (Dokimeion), Mount Pentelikon, Paros (Chorodaki) or Iznik, all of which were heavily mined in Greek and Roman times.

On the reverse of several of the pieces of the Alife arch there are the remains of a Late Antique architrave (Plates 1 and 3, recto and verso of 1966.10a), and a sculpted female figure, identified by Marianne Wardle as a female figure of the Munich Clio type. The impost capital, on the other hand, has not undergone stable isotope analysis, but it is probable that this piece was also carved from ancient marble slabs.

The marble analysis of the Alife arch presents a documented example of re-used marbles in the medieval Kingdom of Sicily. Since there are no known marble quarries in South Italy, all marble used in the Middle Ages was imported and recycled from ancient statues, monuments, or buildings, and of course the process of re-use often occurred more than once. In the south, pulpits, statues, candelabras, chancel screens and other elements of liturgical furnishing therefore represented the “second life” – or possibly even the third or fourth life – of a piece of marble. We are so accustomed to the use of marble in liturgical furnishings and church decoration that we often forget how rare and precious this material was.

As Brian Ward-Perkins observed, marble quarrying in

Marbles of the South: the Alife Arch and an Acanthus Capital from Southern Italy in the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University

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antiquity was increasingly systematized during the imperial period\(^7\). Is it possible to imagine that given the relative "standardization" of ancient marbles, medieval sculptors developed a number of similarly standardized formulae for their re-use? If this hypothesis is correct, certain types of standardized ancient shapes, such as the single-shaft column, could have been the raison d'être for new types of tall and vertical medieval forms, such as candelabras, while narrow rectangular slabs 14-20 cm wide, perhaps intended originally for exterior facings (cladding), might be sliced into the medieval invention of the pulvino capital, a type of capital frequently found in Southern Italy (for example, the cloister of Sta. Sofia at Benevento). The thin and refined slabs of marble used for the internal facings of ancient monuments, on the other had, would have been ideal for inlaid pavements. In other words, the ancient marbles available for re-use conditioned the types and shapes of the subsequent medieval forms, such as the ostentatious elements of liturgical furnishings in cathedrals and abbey churches.

An important supply of ancient marble was derived from carved figures, especially statues produced in Greek workshops or (more probably) carved in Italy by Greek or Greek-trained sculptors. In these cases, the production of the new piece in the Middle Ages was deeply constrained by the dimensions of the existing statue. At Alife, one medieval piece was carved from an identifiable standing figure on the reverse of block 1966.10b. Other elements were carved from pieces of micro architecture, as in Pl. 3. In both of these instances from Alife, elements that were intended to be vertical (the statue) or horizontal (the architrave) determined the varied dimensions of the individual pieces of the arch by being transformed into curved voussoirs, a process which required considerable ingenuity on the part of the sculptor. The size of each segment of the Alife arch was thus conditioned by what was available to the sculptor, and as a result the pieces vary in length from 1.26 meters (1966.10b) to 41 cm (1966.10e). The artist had to ‘make do’ with the marbles available, and these came from many diverse sources, as both the elements of surviving architectural decoration and the carved figure attest.

The use of marble in Roman buildings was a signal of luxurious display, and was largely reserved for columns, wall facings, and architraves. The expense of quarrying and transporting heavy materials meant that marble was mostly used in the most prestigious and highly visible (usually imperial) monuments. By and large the major building materials of Roman Antiquity in Italy were brick, limestone and tufa, as is conspicuously visible in the ruins of Pompeii, for example\(^6\). The most ubiquitous use of marble was in the cladding or facing that covered brick and mixed-material surfaces, slabs too slender to be used for sculpture, and therefore reserved for either pulvino capitals or pavements\(^7\).

The second-hand market in marbles, which dismantled ancient ruins to produce new supplies for ambitious and ostentatious medieval builders (such as Abbot Desiderius) has been considered by many scholars\(^8\). In the Middle Ages, even after the re-opening of the quarries near Pisa (Monte Pisan and San Giuliano, both starting in the 11th century), and, later in the late 12th century, the re-opening of the quarry at Carrara, ancient marbles continued to be used because of the expense of quarrying and above all of transportation. In the fourteenth century, for example, the re-use of ancient marbles for the tombs of the Angevin royal family was lamented by Petrarch, and the exquisite materials used in the portals of the mendicant churches of Naples (San Lorenzo, Sta. Chiara, San Domenico), are one of the most distinguished features of the otherwise austere facades of these buildings\(^9\).

The Alife arch reflects the inventiveness of the medieval sculptor in transforming ancient marble for medieval purposes, modifying forms that were intended to be vertical or horizontal into the arched and curved shapes of the Romanesque. The challenge to the sculptor was to use as much of the ancient object as possible and to adjust his entire conception of the arch to the materials available, concealing the surfaces carved in antiquity in the thickness of the wall into which it would be embedded.

The acanthus capital (Pl. 2), however, suggests two types of relationship to the past. First, as noted above, some Romanesque forms or architectonic shapes may have been generated precisely by the type of ancient marble available for re-use. The dimensions of the acanthus capital (61x29x14 centimeters) indicate that this type of 'rectangular' pulvino capital may have been invented in the Early Middle Ages to make use of flat Roman marble slabs or other types of narrow blocks available from ancient buildings. The flatness of the decoration – the pressed quality of the acanthus leaves against the body of the capital, may thus have not only been an aesthetic choice, but also imposed by the narrow dimensions of the block. More im-
importantly, the capital attests to the continued vitality of ancient decorative models. The flat and stylized pattern of leaves that decorate the long sides of the capital and the volutes on the corners are a creative re-invention of the classical acanthus capital, delightfully abstracted and simplified into an entirely new type of form, the “flat” capital.

Medieval marble sculptors worked intimately with the materials of the past. This was not only and simply a matter of “imitation,” as the term Romanesque itself implies, but sometimes also a “conditioning” of the medieval form by the shapes of the materials created in antiquity. In their search for luxury marbles for liturgical furnishings and architectural ornament, both patrons and sculptors engaged with what they could create from the stones available for reconfiguration. Romanesque is thus more than a yearning for the aura of the Roman past – it was also a practical conditioning of the medieval object by the material remains, as well as a reinvention, of that past. Pulpits, ciboria, candelabras, chancel screens, altars and other furnishings of the Regno are objects that can tell a long story about how ancient marbles conditioned the creativity of the present in the work of the medieval sculptor.

3 - The fragments from Alife were seen by Émile Ber- taux in the early 20th century (L’Art dans l’Italie méridionale, Paris, 1903, vol. 1, p. 473 and figure 203). Beraux drew a sketch of them before their acquisition by the dealer who sold the pieces to the Brumers: see A. prandi, L’Art dans l’Italie méridionale, Aggiornamento dell’opera di Émile Bertaux, Rome 1978, vol. 5, p. 652 plate XVIII.
4 - See the forthcoming publication by Dr. Marianne Wardle.
6 - J.-P. Adam, La construction romaine, Paris, 2nd Ed., 1989, pp. 23-110. At Pompeii, for example, most of the colonnades are constructed of limestone from the Sarno or from volcanic tufa.
7 - See Adam, La construction romaine cit., pp. 247-248. Such elements could instead be used for opus sectile pavements or inlaid patterns on pulpits.
8 - See, for example, P. C. Clausen, Magistri doctissimi Romani: die römischen Marmorkünstler des Mittelalters, Stuttgart 1987.