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LIFE AMONG THE ANIMALIAN IN BRONZE AGE CRETE AND THE SOUTHERN AEGEAN

INTRODUCTION

The sociocultural spaces of the “Minoan” Aegean were teeming with animal bodies. These bodies – the tiny and the massive, the watchful and the hunted, the engaging and the aloof, the human and the nonhuman – invigorated Aegean contexts in complex and particular ways. Many of these animals were alive, but many were not – and never had been. It is the latter that are our focus here. These fabricated Aegean animals have traditionally been described as “representations” and have long been celebrated in this capacity, but their relationship to living beings was not limited to a role as imitative depictions. Through remarkably dynamic renderings, realized across a range of media, such as zoomorphic vessels, wall paintings, engraved seal stones and amulets, animals’ bodies took on a rich diversity of material and spatial qualities that could afford distinctive interactive experiences; worn objects prominently fashioned of animals’ teeth and skins further blurred the distinction between the biological and the artificial, and the human and nonhuman. By recognizing both biological and fabricated entities as *real* embodiments of animals, which could coexist and interact in Aegean spaces, the nature of our discussion changes. We see that the dynamics of representation were caught up in a much wider field of relationships that involved these bodies and characterized their engagements with people. Doing so moves us beyond questions of signification and intentional design, and toward a fuller recognition of people’s actual experiences of animalian bodies. Looking closely at a variety of venues,

ranging from palatial courts to a modest bench in the corner of a house, our focus thus can turn to how the world of *animalian things* was a crucial part of social life in Bronze Age Cretan and Aegean spaces, and how direct interactions with these other animal bodies were a central, yet often overlooked and minimized, component of human relations with nonhuman beasts. These fabricated creatures brought a wealth of new character to the identities of species in Crete and the southern Aegean – and to the active place of animals in Aegean social experience.

Beyond a “Brilliant Naturalism”

Vibrant renderings of animals have long been hailed as a defining element of Minoan creative culture, distinguishing its identity amid its contemporaries within the eastern Mediterranean. The handling of animals’ bodies, and especially the conveyance of movement and feeling, have been considered integral to the broader “brilliant naturalism”¹ of Minoan visual and material cultures, which also involves striking engagements with other elements of the natural world, from plants and water to stone. Each of these entities of the natural environment – animalian, floral and geological alike – can be rendered in vivid detail, texture and color, both as subjects of individual studies and as elements of complex compositions and scenes; this is especially apparent in the extant evidence of the Middle and Late Bronze Ages. Animals and the natural world are also extensively represented in the traditions of other Bronze Age societies within the greater eastern Mediterranean and the Near East, and the evidence of exchange and cultural sharing is strong. Contemplations of this sharing played an important part in the modern establishment of Minoan archaeology, when the identity of the ancient Aegean culture was, in some senses, first construed.² Arthur Evans made extensive arguments for seeing substantive relations with the art of these neighboring societies, while also specifically asserting that naturalism and certain types of technical prowess distinguished Minoan works. Regarding Egypt, for example, despite detailing many aspects of Crete’s “indebtedness” to the grand culture to its south,³ Evans posed its influence as ultimately running counter to and potentially stifling Crete’s unique artistic sophistication, writing that “too direct reproduction of Egyptian models had a deadening effect on Minoan Art. It may, indeed, be truly said that the epochs in which that Art showed its purest naturalism and freedom were coincident with periods when the connexions with Egyptian civilization were at their weakest.”⁴ Hence, we can see that the notion of a Minoan naturalism is coeval with the modern discipline of Minoan archaeology itself in the early twentieth century CE. And because its visual and material cultures have been a principal means through which scholars have differentiated Minoan culture from its contemporaries in the Near East and Egypt, representations of animals, as frequent foci of its celebrated naturalism, have been central

elements – even icons – of the identity articulated for Minoan Crete as a distinct (and by some arguments, distinctly European) ancient cultural entity.⁵

Such characterizations of Minoan naturalism, including the appropriateness of the terms “Minoan” and “naturalism” themselves, have been variably challenged, embraced, plainly rejected, further developed and reconceived over the years.⁶ Likewise, Evans’ ambivalence toward cultural connections with societies beyond Crete, especially those to its east and south (an ambivalence surely steeped, in part, in the sociopolitical context of Evans’ day, as he explicitly posed Minoan Crete as the “cradle of European civilization”),⁷ have continued to charge scholarship of the Bronze Age Aegean, both on the surface and below. While we have for the most part moved away from ascribing “genius” to a sociocultural formation, or discussing differences in style as matters of “ability,”⁸ we remain fascinated with the strikingly animate renderings of nature, including animals, that were crafted and experienced in Crete and the southern Aegean during the centuries of the late third through mid-second millennia BCE. Further discoveries have both enhanced our interest in Aegean renderings of the natural world and forced us to rethink its identity. From the beginning, objects diverse in both scale and medium have been drawn on to demonstrate the distinctiveness of Minoan handling of natural forms, but of particular early importance were discoveries of wall paintings from Knossos and other “palatial” sites on Crete that embody animals and plants in lively color and seemingly in the midst of movement, their forms relating a keen sense of animation and dynamism.⁹ In the 1960s to 1970s, excavations at the site of Akrotiri on the island of Santorini (Thera), some 100 km north of Crete, revealed a host of wall frescoes preserved by ash from a major volcanic eruption in Late Bronze I, which included numerous remarkable renderings of animals.¹⁰ Deposits at Akrotiri also contained a wealth of other animalian objects, such as zoomorphic rhyta and seals. This material, as well as rich finds from other Cycladic sites, made clear that the vibrancy of Minoan renderings of the natural world did not originate in Crete alone; indeed, they have forced us to fluidly expand the contours of the modern notion of “Minoan” to include a plurality of sociocultural spaces.¹¹ Meanwhile, strong affinities between the animal imagery of objects from the early Mycenaean mainland and ones from Crete and the islands brought further complexity to the picture. With this, consideration of Aegean engagements with representational traditions across the eastern Mediterranean during the first half of the second millennium BCE has coexisted with scrutiny of the Aegean itself as a dynamic field of sharing and innovation.

Decades of further discovery and investigation in the Aegean, including important developments in the methods of scholarly analysis, have brought more depth and scope to our characterization of the representation of the

animalian world during the Bronze Age. Certain trends can be seen as running through studies that have dealt with material from a range of sites. One has considered the symbolic roles of renderings of animals in Aegean visual and material cultures. In this light, animals have often been discussed as religious icons or conventional means of metaphoric illustration. Species both “real” and “fantastic” have been approached in this way – ranging from bulls, to birds, to griffins and so on – and interpreted as signifying a host of cultural and religious content. Scholarship has varied both in the formality with which it posits codified roles for animals and in the theoretical approaches employed. On one end are studies that treat animal imagery as something of an iconographic subsystem in itself, such as Marinatos’ argument that there existed in Minoan symbolic culture a formal hierarchy of beasts, each occupying a distinct level of relation toward the divine.¹² Meanwhile, other scholars have investigated the significations of representations of particular animals embedded within contexts of ritual activities, such as Rehak’s valuable examination of frescoes depicting monkeys at Akrotiri.¹³ In yet more cases, the treatment of animals as symbolic entities does not constitute the principal focus of the study but explicitly or implicitly forms a crucial part of the analysis.¹⁴

A related approach, also frequent in analyses of Minoan animal representation, can be described as taxonomic. I include here both efforts to associate depicted animals with regional biological species evidenced through faunal data, as well as discussions tracing the origins and distribution of particular iconographic types. Concerning the former, much attention has been paid to the abilities or desires of Cretan artists to depict the idiosyncratic attributes of specific animals, a matter scholars often relate to the sophistication of the Minoan naturalistic style. In terms of iconographic taxonomy, generations of scholars have been concerned with the speciation of distinct formal attributes in the repertoire of animal representations throughout the broader Bronze Age eastern Mediterranean, seeking to chart geneses, trajectories, mutations and amalgamations in the particular renderings of a beast over time and space. Often these efforts are part of larger projects that assess systems of sociocultural interaction and networking. Discussions of the griffin, for example, have closely parsed the characterization of wings, beaks and pose in an effort to establish the origins of the beast within the broad eastern Mediterranean and the specific trajectory of its evolution between cultures therein; these considerations of the creature’s iconography and bodily composition are laced with implications of sociocultural sway between social formations.¹⁵

Each of these lines of analysis has borne important fruit for the field and contributed to our consideration of how renderings of animals were part of sociocultural life in the Aegean. At the same time, each can involve a necessary abstraction from the specific example of an animal representation for the sake of the appraisal of a broad cultural phenomenon, with the risk that the individual

instance ultimately becomes but an iteration of a type or phase. The present project tackles this loss directly by fundamentally realigning the means and focus of inquiry. Drawing together recent work in the areas of material culture and animal studies, I problematize first and foremost the actual object-manifestations of animals. I recognize each as being a true physical embodiment of an animal and, with this, as tangibly contributing to the species' identity within its lived sociocultural context. I also consider a group of unique Aegean objects that are distinctly animalian in aspects of their substance and character, although they do not take the overall form of a creature's body.

My analysis works through a series of case studies that draw out distinctive dynamics at work in Aegean fabricated embodiments of animals from the late third to mid-second millennium BCE, with a primary emphasis on the socio-cultural spaces of Crete and their interconnections on and beyond the islands; evidence from Akrotiri on Thera provides another principal focus of my discussion of the later Middle Bronze Age (MBA) to Late Bronze I (LB I). These case studies follow chronological waves through and across the chapters, beginning with clay vessels of the Cretan Prepalatial era and ending with wall paintings of the Neopalatial and early Third Palatial periods. The subjects of the case studies have been selected in order to explore a variety of species,¹⁶ media, materials and settings. With this, my focus encompasses the particular relations and spatialities that these things contributed to as parts of different lived contexts and, through this, how they may also show, on certain levels, areas of overlap or persistence in the dynamics of Aegean animalian things, both within and over time. Thus, the aim of my study is not to be exhaustive – the sheer plethora of animals within the material and visual cultures of these periods would make that an overwhelming and unwise task. Instead, my intention is to draw out specific indications of how fabricated animals could bring novel dynamisms to the identities of nonhuman creatures and to people's experiences of them. As such, these object-embodiments invested distinctive animal presences in the thick of Aegean sociocultural life.

Embodiments of Relation

Fundamental to my approach to Aegean fabricated animals is an appreciation that their status as objects is not extraneous to their identity as embodiments of animals: both the animalian and the thingly are essential and coterminous aspects of these entities. This brings an integrative character to the core of their statuses, which can be further developed in a wealth of specific ways. The case studies indicate that these Aegean animalian things could be especially extraordinary in their realization of relations between species and between bodies. With this I have in mind the cosenses of “realize,” both to apprehend and to actualize; that is to say, these things were, at the same time, responsive

and generative in their embodiment of relations. I draw out how, in one aspect of this, the objects could cultivate similarity between the forms of different animals, or between those of an animal and a nonanimalian entity. I refer to this as *formal assonance*. We see such, for example, in vessels that bring together the swelling bodily contours characteristic of an upright bird, a woman and a jug; or in a painting that juxtaposes an animal and a plant in a frieze and describes each with the same outlines and textural details, both rendered in the same manner. Such formal assonance lays the ground for comparisons that could wed a host of associations surrounding each of the related entities, thus imbuing the animalian body with dynamic cultural and formal novelty. In some cases, it was not form, but position and role that asserted comparability. This occurs, for example, between lions and humans. Over centuries in the Aegean, lions were consistently experienced as bodies set side by side with persons, as seal stones engraved with the feline beasts were worn strapped against the skin of human seal owners; in much of the Bronze Age Aegean, especially Crete and the islands, this was essentially the only way in which lions were met in physical embodiments. Through close examination of such relations, interspecific and intercorporeal dynamics emerge as distinguishing facets of the Aegean animalian objects, realized in potently particular manners.

Connected to the relational complexity of these Aegean animalian things was their distinctive affordance of space. Space was created in a variety of ways by these object bodies and arose from their involvement with other entities and contextual circumstances, including the sociocultural and environmental. We will see how such matters as their size relative to human bodies, dimensionality, texture, layering, stance and implication of depth made for powerful and often tense spatialities. This also carried temporal weight. Such is at play, for example, in an anthropomorphic vessel's ability to sit and hold liquid on its own while gazing into the room of a house, creating an indefinitely ongoing aura of pregnant bodily presence, as part of the place.

In the chapters ahead, we will radically rethink, from the objects up, a range of entrenched categorizations that often structure discussion of renderings of animals in the Bronze Age Aegean. These include classifications that pertain to the traditional partitioning of the human from the nonhuman, the real from the fantastical and the animate from the inanimate; as well as those concerning the nature of composite or hybrid creatures, and the otherness of exotic beasts. Much of this rethinking arises from consistently bringing new focus to people's experiences of animalian things as opposed to concentrating on matters of intention and signification, which tend to consume analyses of "representations." It is not that intentional design is not relevant in our consideration of these objects, but it is but a strand of how they were actually engaged with by people in the social spaces of the early Aegean. By ultimately stepping away from aspects of conventional classification, we will freshly recognize a host of

other dimensions that were at work in people's interactions with these embodiments of animals. This permits us to newly recognize the unique ways in which these animals were present and active in the practical and emotional fiber of sociocultural life – from the daily movements of hand-to-hand exchanges to the creative weaving of oral culture, from the vigor of overseas travel to the pains of battle and in both heightened moments of public ceremony and the intimate motions of familial death.

Drawing these aspects of my approach together, I propose that our examination proceed on the basis of four fundamental and interrelated reconceptions concerning how to approach the Aegean animalian things:

1. They are real embodiments of the animal and, as such, their qualities and capacities would have been part of what the animal or species was within a lived Aegean context, contributing along with biological embodiments.
2. We need to approach the work of these bodily things beyond the confines of representation, to take in the far greater diversity of affordances, contributions and relations that they brought to the table and through which they enriched the identity of animals in Aegean culture.
3. These embodiments of animals were creative in their essence. This creativity concerns not only their design and manufacture, but also how each of the objects stood as a distinct realization of physical coincidence between the characters of animals and of things and, furthermore, how they engendered suggestive relations between different species and bodies.
4. In diverse ways, the animalian things had dynamic potentials that enhanced and complicated their spatial and temporal presences. With this, they sometimes challenged the boundaries of their media and uniquely contributed to the unfolding of broader sociocultural contexts and moments.

THE CASE STUDIES

My analysis works through five case studies, each of which focuses on a particular type of animalian object from the early Aegean and examines its distinguishing character, relations and involvement in people's experiences as part of Cretan and other Aegean social spaces. The case studies arise from different time periods between the late third and mid-second millennia BCE and consider a diversity of species, media and contexts. In each instance, the objects are my starting point. These embodiments of animals reveal themselves to be highly dynamic and engaging, each in very specific ways that would emerge through their distinctive qualities and interactions. Because of the engaging characters of these things, my discussion necessarily integrates close consideration of recent research concerning the social and cultural ecologies of Bronze Age Crete and the southern Aegean – including the nature of interactions

occurring both within and between Aegean communities, over land and sea, and farther afield, through involvement with people and material across the broader eastern Mediterranean.¹⁷ By approaching such contexts of interaction primarily through people's experiences involving the animalian objects, we are able to move beyond traditional assumptions concerning influence and motivations, to think innovatively about how engagements with these creative embodiments of nonhuman creatures provide new perspectives on the actual, lived nature of sociocultural interconnections, extending near and far, during the Bronze Age.

In Chapter 2, I begin with a group of extraordinary body-form vessels from Prepalatial Crete (ca. 2300–1900 BCE). While these have typically been described as anthropomorphic, I argue that we do better to appreciate their unique identities as surpassing this category. These corporeal vessels are distinctly animalian, yet they decidedly do not conform to a particular species, and their affordances as objects that can hold and pour liquid are equally integral to what they are and how they were experienced. By taking these aspects together, focus can turn to how these peculiar vessel bodies are distinguished by a marked autonomy: not only do they defy the grip of simple classification, each can sit attentively on its own, with liquid held in its clay belly, and, even as each can itself be described as a vase, the role of living humans in producing liquid by manipulating the objects is concealed through particular physical qualities. Instead of highlighting the agency of the biological person, the bringing forth of liquid seems to occur in the hands of the small clay bodies themselves, in some cases through their pierced breasts, and in others through a miniature jug held by the figure, which communicated with the main vessel's hollow body through a hidden opening in its interior. With this, I argue that the clay figures could have been experienced as possessing their own productive agency.

The autonomous disposition of these unique animalian objects made them remarkable fabricated bodies. They could engage and perform – in their own right – as elements of early Cretan social contexts that also involved other bodies. Careful consideration of the clay figures' depositional circumstances allows us to investigate how their distinct bodily presences would have contributed to situations of social experience in Prepalatial Crete. I examine the complex spatialities of the clay bodies, which may have participated in creating community social space as they were moved between tomb and settlement. In this dynamic position, the body vessels could have been part of a range of collective actions involving living and dead humans who were in their company. I consider the evidence in light of recent problematizations of Prepalatial social structure, including arguments that early Crete was characterized by “house societies.”¹⁸ Recognizing the clay figures as members in-corporate of

their communities, experienced as productive bodies, allows us to freshly interrogate their involvement in microcontexts of Prepalatial social life.

The second half of the chapter looks forward, through the subsequent Protopalatial and Neopalatial periods, to consider how animalian vessels continued to be part of social venues in the island, while subtle changes to *how* they embodied animals implied shifts in their community presence. We will see that across these periods, vessels embodying cows had notable prominence, but that from the late Protopalatial period, a novel relation developed between the vessel bodies and living humans' bodies. At this time, we begin to see rhyta rendered in the form of a bodiless animal head; the majority are bovine. Typically, the secondary opening of these rhyta was positioned in the mouth. Unlike the earlier vessels, the head rhyta could not hold fluids over time on their own – without active human intervention, the liquid would simply run out of the lower mouth hole. Indeed these animalian things would have seemed remarkably dependent on humans. Resting on their own, they would have appeared keenly lifeless and inanimate, as if decapitated heads; yet raised and filled by visible human hands, the heads would have momentarily been dramatically reanimated, as fluid was held in by carefully placed fingers and then permitted to flow out through the animalian mouth. Given the mechanics of the rhyta, these performances would have required considerable skill on behalf of the dexterous humans handling the heads; it was their impressive agency that would have been experienced as causing the liquid's emergence, even though it issued from the bovine's mouth. By shifting to a diachronic view on zoomorphic vessels, it thus becomes possible to appreciate a profound divergence in bodily emphasis in how these animalian things would have been experienced – from the remarkable impression of independent agentive production embodied in the Prepalatial vessels to the dramatic manipulation of a body fragment in human hands in the later head rhyta.

A primary interest of Chapter 2 concerns how movable renderings of animals contributed to developments in sociopolitical experience in Crete during certain moments of the Bronze Age. At the close of the chapter, discussion turns to how apparent changes in interregional dynamics during the Neopalatial period, likely spurred by specific social and climatic matters, may have involved novel claims on contexts of engagement with nonhuman animals, notably cattle, as elements of power grabs on the island. While economic and ritual interactions with cows have typically been separated in scholarly discussions, working in line with Shapland's consideration of "animal practices," I explore how activities involved in the raising and processing of cattle would have naturally crossed such categories and sketch out what a more holistic experience of "cattle culture" on the island may have involved. This approach entails examination of both the distinctive behavioral and environmental aspects of herd maintenance, as well as Cretan renderings of bovine

bodies. Across these phenomena, I focus on aspects of bodily engagement between persons and cows and argue that we may see a distinguishing cultural emphasis on craftiness and quickness surrounding a host of activities and material, including in the unique affordances of certain bovine things. Prepalatial-era renderings of humans grappling cattle indicate that displays of crafty skill around the beasts were a long-standing component of rural agricultural life. During the Neopalatial period, palatial interest in cattle seems to have peaked, given the wealth of elite representations of the beasts, especially at Knossos. Increased environmental pressure on raising cows may have been part of this, with Knossos flexing control over a prominent and valuable crop. But we can also consider that if cattle culture had a somewhat-transgressive characterization in Crete, attempts by the palace to absorb and recontextualize the culture may have been part of a more dynamic sociopolitical interest in the beast during a turbulent moment.

The next chapter (Chapter 3) takes us to the tiny bodies of lions engraved in Aegean seals. Here, I again work from the Cretan Prepalatial period forward, tracing developments in the objects and their Aegean contexts, from their earliest instances in the late third millennium BCE through the LB II. Although the Cretan embodiments of lions were themselves tiny, the emergence of the beast within the material and visual cultures of the island necessitates a partial recalibration in the scale of our analysis, to also consider interactions extending overseas, because biological lions were not a species that lived on Crete – hence, experiences with the living beast were not the basis of its recurrent rendering in the seals. I examine how this situation also has profound implications for the fundamental characterization of the lion in Crete. For centuries, the beast's embodiments in seals and clay impressions were the primary means through which people actually engaged with lions as a physical reality on the island. This fact puts tremendous emphasis on these small, stony and clay-ey Cretan lions, and what they uniquely afforded. The objects' scale, material and formal nature, as well as their spatial dynamics, practical capacities, involvements within sociocultural processes and distinct relationships with other entities, all directly informed what the lion was in Crete, by characterizing how it was experienced. In this context, the bodily juxtaposition of lion and human becomes a crucial matter to consider. Seals engraved with lions were worn strapped against the bodies of their human owners, and the impressions stamped with the seals, which also embodied the lion, worked as distinct, moving objects that nevertheless had a powerful relationship of shared identity with the human seal owner. This meant that from their earliest known appearance in Crete, and for hundreds of years thereafter, lions were known by and large as bodies that physically – and figuratively – paralleled humans.

This intimate juxtaposition, perpetuated over many generations, inevitably would have impacted the lion's dynamic identity in Crete; it also would have coincided with the other creative form through which the beast was surely known by people of the island – oral culture. My examination of how the lion reached Crete from abroad takes in both of these types of creative culture, the material and the spoken. I consider the human dimensions through which such sharing with cultures of southwest Asia and Egypt would have occurred, and how the beast seems to have rapidly taken on a distinct identity in the Aegean. Through close analysis of changes to the rendering of the lion evident in Cretan glyptic of the MBA, I explore how the particular characterization of the beast fluidly developed even as its overarching juxtaposition with humans strongly persisted.

My discussion culminates in another consideration of sociocultural engagement overseas, in this case concerning Crete's extensive interaction with other areas of the Aegean during the early LBA, including with Thera and the early Mycenaean mainland. Material evidence clearly indicates that seals engraved with lions were part of this significant period of intra-Aegean interaction, during which objects, people, technical knowledge and the practice of writing were shared and developed. After the lion's absence from earlier phases of visual culture in the mainland, during this moment, when connections to Crete intensified, the lion becomes one of the most popular subjects of early Mycenaean seal imagery. This moment also saw a blossoming of other material media in which the lion is embodied (e.g., wall painting, metal weapons, cups), and scenes involving the beast more often pair it with a human. My discussion looks at this material culture in tandem with evidence for the contemporaneous development of the Aegean epic tradition, which includes a wealth of similes that parallel lions and heroes – as do the seals. This multimedia approach allows me to freshly consider how the poetic juxtaposition of lion and human may have continued to develop between material and oral cultures at this time, drawing in new dimensions in the context of Aegean interactions. With this, animalian objects are newly recognized as productive contributors to cultural interconnections during this crucial moment in Aegean prehistory. This perspective moves us away from discussions of sociocultural dominance and aggression that vex consideration of intra-Aegean relations in the LBA, instead drawing attention to the things, stories and people that gave daily body to cultural sharing – the likes of sailors and seal stones, singers and scribes, fabricated heroes and lions.

The third case study, in Chapter 4, fundamentally rethinks the identity of “composite” or “hybrid” creatures as they were embodied and experienced in Crete and the southern Cyclades from the late third to mid-second millennium BCE. I begin with an iconic creature of the Aegean Bronze Age, the griffin. Through close consideration of its early embodiments in Cretan objects,

I question whether, as is commonly presumed, the griffin was actually experienced in Crete as a set coupling of corporeal features stemming from other particular species. By letting go of assumptions, and focusing on the objects and their contexts, we can appreciate that people may have encountered the early Cretan griffins quite differently – not as additive derivatives, but as exotic creatures with wide similarities across species. The deposit of hundreds of stamped-clay seal motifs at Phaistos from which our earliest Cretan griffins stem provides a contemporaneous view upon renderings of other animals, in the same medium, that were active within the same social space as the griffins. Set in this context, we see that the bodily features characterizing the griffins occur across a range of other animals as well. With this, there is little ground for asserting that their presence in the bodies we identify as griffins would have been thought of as a matter of borrowing and reassembling parts from a fixed combination of two species. Instead, the evidence suggests that the griffins had a bodily nature and capacities (e.g., winged flight; but also sphragistic signification, as the engraved marks of a seal) that would have been experienced as comparable to a variety of other creatures. Looking from the objects up, it thus appears more likely that the griffins were experienced not as “counterintuitive” agglutinative combinations, but as distinctive wholes that could be likened, in various respects, to other beasts known in the flesh and through objects. In this light, embodiments of griffins may have been approached in a manner broadly comparable to renderings of occurrent foreign species (such as lions or hippopotami) that the vast majority of Cretans never encountered in biological form, as well as those of other beasts that we today define as fantastical.

Discussion in this chapter proceeds in two sections. In each, close examination of the griffin becomes a starting point for reconsidering other “composite” creatures rendered in the early Aegean, and, in this fresh light, for rethinking a range of animals that have not traditionally been included in this category. Each section is based on an investigation of one of two notable bodily features shared by the earliest extant Cretan renderings of the griffin: head appendages and chest embellishments. Consideration of these two attributes opens into recognition of a wider clutch of distinctive corporeal features embodied by a host of extraordinary animalian entities encountered in Cretan and southern Aegean material culture from this period. With this, I argue that griffins were among a group of creatures that initially would have been met in imported small-scale objects and then became dynamically incorporated into Cretan ecologies of animals that involved both biological and fabricated embodiments. This perspective requires casting the net more broadly, both in terms of the foreign and the local Aegean animals we consider.

By investigating a wider array of creatures rendered in the types of material culture that were being imported to Crete during the first half of the second millennium BCE, we can appreciate with greater subtlety how certain qualities

occurring across these beasts may have become related to local animals and animalian culture on the island, as a given quality was potentially viewed as being shared with, or similar to, that of a known animal. This perspective recognizes how the generation and development of animalian forms could occur through intercultural relationships that creatively drew together likeness, versus joining dissimilar parts. It also permits us to see how these generative relationships took in creatures that are not described as composites. For example, we can see how, in Crete, sphinxes rendered *en face* in imported objects may have been experienced in light of local views on the unique potency of a direct forward gaze¹⁹ and, therewith, likened to familiar animals on the island who keenly embodied it, such as the owl. Through this likening of creatures, properties connected to imported objects imaging the sphinx, such as amuletic seals or personal items, may have become associated with renderings of the owl and its gaze – an animal that appears in Cretan-made seals. This interspecific relation seems to be evidenced in Cretan renderings of owls with peculiar curving head appendages that resemble those of sphinxes in material culture from overseas, including Syrian cylinder seals.

In such objects, we see a creative relating of animals – including species foreign and local, fabricated and living, “fantastic” and biologically attested – that was being actively realized in novel thingly embodiments. These object-bodies appear to give the lie to such strict binaries and indicate how the identities and affordances of the implicated species could grow through people’s experiences with dynamic animalian things, given the distinct qualities and associations they brought to the table. From this perspective, we can, in part, appreciate these Cretan embodiments of creatures as materialized venues of intercultural and formal relation. Hence, these crafted animalian bodies both stood primarily, in their own right, as unique and *present* bases for direct intercorporeal encounter with humans and, simultaneously, creatively manifest fertile ground for realizing associations between animals, and between animals and other phenomena.

The productive relational work manifest in these things did not happen in the hands of craftpersons alone, but also through engagements between the animalian objects and a wider group of people after their manufacture. Based on these experiences, including people’s perception of similarities between the embodiments of animals at-hand and their experiences with other creatures or entities, connections would have been recognized around the animals, contributing to the identity of the rendered creature and others deemed comparable. These connections would have arisen from a range of matters, including perceived similarities in form, disposition, affect, capacities or contexts of encounter; some of these naturally are more accessible to us than others. I trace out numerous potential lines of such relation and identify a host of Aegean creatures that seem to have been caught up in this type of creative

integration. This discussion ultimately brings us back to the griffin and its Aegean associations. Here, I reexamine the well-noted rendering of a longer vulture-like beak in Minoan embodiments of the beast, along with other distinctive bodily features, by considering characteristics of biological species of vulture indigenous to Crete with which people on the island may have been relating the griffin, especially the Bearded Vulture (*Gypaetus barbatus*). My aim is neither to assert the Aegean's cultural weight in originating a feature of the griffin's iconography, nor to assess the technical skill of Aegean artists in replicating elements of a biological type (simple imitation of a living species is not apparent). Instead, I am drawing out how creativity realized in the identity of creatures could emerge from engagements occurring within distinctive ecologies of fabricated *and* living animals. Through this examination, we see that connections made with impressive biological animals, encountered in the flesh, may have brought the griffin distinctive power in the Aegean that rivalled the drama of qualities we had deemed the stuff of fantasy.

The status of composite creatures in the early Aegean is fundamentally revised through this discussion. I argue that, when pondered closely and in their contexts, many of the creatures to which we apply this term would have been experienced not as counterintuitive mergings of parts but, instead, both through and *as* realizations of similarity. These lines of similitude could concern matters of form as well as other aspects of the creatures' natures (e.g., color, efficacies). With this, the traditional category of the "composite" being is set aside as a larger swath of interconnected creatures comes into view. These *whole* creatures share amongst them the quality of having apparent connections both beyond the Aegean, with thingly embodiments of beasts from overseas, and more locally, with other Aegean fabricated and biological animals. I argue that this dynamic of interculturalism, likely involving a certain degree of strangeness, would have been a more prominent aspect of how many of these creatures were experienced than was a status as compounds, with the latter characterization perhaps not even being appropriate to a thick description of many of the beasts typically described as composites in the Aegean cultural sphere. In order to demonstrate this point, I highlight a markedly unique case of renderings of animals, from a deposit of preserved sealings in east Crete, in which a compounding logic *does* seem to have been in play. Comparison of these clearly fused figures to other contemporaneous Minoan creatures traditionally described as "composite" makes clear how differently they would have been experienced.²⁰

Following upon our discussion, in Chapter 4, concerning the apparent discrepancy between the relational creative dynamics evident in Aegean fabricated creatures and the "counterintuitive" combining of derivative parts traditionally understood to define "composite" creatures, I turn in Chapter 5 to examining a clear alternative. Here, I somewhat provocatively suggest that we

can appreciate in three particular entities crystallizations of a distinctly Aegean manner of animalian compositeness that is highly *intuitive* in its integration of animals and objects. These three characteristically Aegean entities – the boar’s tusk helmet, oxhide shield and *ikrion* (ship cabin) – embody this dynamic in a potently arrant fashion, since, while each is distinctly animalian and bodily, they do not take the shapes of animal physiques themselves. Each very prominently incorporates recognizable fragments of animals’ bodies into their form and substance, and each holds intimate relationships with the human body that are simultaneously formal, practical and significant. Direct engagements between humans and living biological animals, what Shapland describes as “animal practices,”²¹ were prominent in the extended formation processes of these objects, as tusks and hides were procured in potentially significant events. Such interactions with biological animals and their contexts were part of the objects’ biographies and would have informed the connections that could be made between the objects and other phenomena (e.g., between a shield, a cowhide and the quick-wittedness of a bull-trapper or warrior; or between *ikria*, a herd of cows and a fleet of ships); hence, these interactions were elements of the specific animalian character these entities embodied. The helmets, shields and *ikria* also brought novel, conventional forms to animalian presences in the Aegean. By *not* standing as animals themselves, these three entities draw out with great starkness and effectiveness the deep relational dynamics that could be realized *between* creatures (e.g., humans and boars), and between creatures and things, which here come together in entirely distinct types of entity often encountered on their own. With an initial focus on the boar’s tusk helmet, I closely examine how these three entities seem to have held extraordinary places in Aegean sociocultural experience while also standing as robust condensations of many of the dynamics also seen more broadly in the ecology of fabricated Aegean animalian things.

As Chapter 5 continues, my interest turns to the added dimensions of complexity brought to the statuses of boar’s tusk helmets, oxhide shields and *ikria* as they were reembodyed in movable representational media such as glyptic and painted ceramics. My discussion closely considers a characteristic way of handling these three entities that distinguishes their renderings within the surfaces of numerous seals and painted pots: articulation in series of repeated or juxtaposed elements. While, in studies of Aegean art, the occurrence of an entity in a series is often read as simplifying its status to something merely ornamental, I argue that, quite to the contrary, the frequent rendering of these three entities in series imbued them with a peculiar dynamism that throbbed with ambivalent and apparently contradictory implications. Within friezes of elements set side by side, these entities could be singled out for repetition or juxtaposed with other entities in a manner that keenly afforded comparison. The rendering of shields, helmets and *ikria* as repeated elements in a series

seems to extract them from action, leaving them without grounding in any represented context; but it could also be taken to directly relate to the manner in which they were experienced as objects in-the-round in scenarios of collective action (e.g., as repeated elements seen across a file of soldiers or adorning each ship of a fleet). In certain cases, such a series could even create the impression of a line of objects hanging upon a wall, thus flirting with emplacement. The bare-bones style of the seriated friezes gave an illusion of straightforwardness but also left matters such as these unresolved. This irresolution contributed to the potency of the three entities in their poetic, sociocultural and physical dimensions.

This chapter depends on close considerations of renderings of shields, helmets and *ikria* within the tiny surfaces of seals and seal impressions, and across the curved walls of painted ceramics. The particular circumstances and qualities of these movable media powerfully impacted the relational, spatial and poetic dimensions through which people knew the three animalian entities. We see that instances of formal assonance were cultivated in both media, in distinct ways. The scale of seals, and the nature of their engraving, contributed to a potential likening of certain forms, for example, a helmet and a bundle of “sacral cloth” rendered nearly identically.²² In ceramics, we see similar instances of assonance developed in other ways, for example, upon a rhyton where what appears to be a front-facing (dying?) swine’s head was painted alongside a squill rendered in a form highly comparable to a boar’s tusk helmet. Such situations indicate how juxtaposition and substitution could act in tandem with relationships of formal assonance to create compelling connections between phenomena. In some cases, at least, we can speculate that cultural links may have also been active between the phenomena that were rendered as assonant (e.g., squills, like helmets, may have held protective value); these relationships of cultivated assonance, substitution and parataxis possess rich poetic potential. Meanwhile, we will see that in both glyptic and painted ceramics, the handling of shields and helmets at times generated keen ambivalence in the spatial status of the entities. Focusing closely on embodiments within these two movable media allows us to appreciate both the unique impacts each would have had on how people experienced helmets, shields and *ikria*, as well as areas of overlap in their effect that indicate particular dynamisms in the entities’ cultural identities.

In Chapter 6, we turn to examining the boundary-breaking spatial and social dynamism of animalian entities embodied within polychrome wall painting of the Neopalatial and Late Minoan (LM) II periods. In these frescoes, the entities innovatively engaged with both their painted and lived contexts in ways that brought the animalian new manners of presence in certain Aegean sociocultural spaces; in some cases, the paintings generated fundamentally new aspects of creaturely identity and relation. My discussion of murals begins with

consideration of the three entities closely considered in Chapter 5: boar's tusk helmets, oxhide shields and ikria. Considering a number of frescoes from Crete and Akrotiri, we see how renderings of these animalian entities challenged long-standing parameters concerning two-dimensional representation of bodies – in some respects building upon the creativity evident in later MBA painted ceramics. The large wall paintings, however, had fresh dynamics as immovable contributors to the vital fabric of particular places. In this context, my discussion broadens beyond helmets, shields and ikria to consider how the embodiment of animals in polychrome wall paintings realized powerful new dimensions of nonhuman animalian involvement in Aegean sociocultural experience, by novelly unsettling the built spaces in which the beasts were manifest. Innovations in color and scale and the generation of taut spatial depth in the frescoes all contributed to shaping new engagements with animals that in some ways approached how bodies were experienced in life in-the-round. Yet, simultaneously, details of the frescoes kept the creatures, and the spaces they occupied, tenaciously embroiled in the fabricated order of the painted wall. We see this vividly embodied, for example, in fragments of a wall painting at Knossos involving tethered griffins, where the creatures' bodies were innovatively built up in relief with stucco. These bodies were caught in limbo between the flat wall in which they were caught and the extending space of the room, into which their rounded bodies swelled. Through a variety of qualities, a characteristic tension thus took form across animalian bodies in Neopalatial and LM II wall painting – between the engaging dimensions of as-in-life experience that they afforded and their concurrent identity as embodiments of remarkable artifice. This tension, essentially between different varieties of presence, would have peculiarly charged the social spaces of which the frescoed animals were part during distinct moments of social recalibration in both the Neopalatial and LM II periods.

Chapter 6 closes with a focused study concerning how polychrome wall paintings could foster a radical newness in the identities of animals, in essence giving rise to new species. My focus is on how simians in wall paintings from Crete and Akrotiri were consistently rendered as blue-bodied. I argue that this blueness, whether or not originally intended as an approximation of biological simian hues, would have contributed to establishing a distinct sociocultural status for the animal within the Aegean. I consider the blueness of these Aegean creatures in the context of the markedly human-like activities in which they typically engage in the paintings, activities which, in multiple instances, overlap with undertakings and contexts associated with women and young persons. These two aspects of the Aegean painted monkeys – their vivid blueness and actions that make them like (small) people – come together with new dynamism in light of the fact that blueness also distinguished the bodies of youthful humans in the wall paintings. In the frescoes preserved at Akrotiri, where we

have a unique wealth of paintings of young persons, these figures are characteristically rendered with their heads shaved, either over much of the scalp or in select parts; the shaved areas are conventionally colored a vibrant blue. The sideburn emerges as a zone of the head that consistently indicates this youthful shaving across different specific styling patterns, as a vibrant blue flash in front of the ear. People would have been able to relate the characteristic blueness shared between the bodies of simians and young humans, which were sometimes copresent in buildings or rooms. This blueness was based in a common corpus of colorants used for both animalian subjects, bringing yet further substance to their sharedness. Whatever their “origin,” the blue simians of Aegean walls existed as a species with remarkable, substantive closeness to human young.

The case studies in Chapters 2 through 6 provide a robust examination of the peculiarly dynamic involvement of animalian things in the sociocultural life of Bronze Age Crete and areas of the southern Aegean. My aim with these is not to offer an exhaustive overview of Minoan representations of animals, but, instead, through close parsing and contextualization, to newly recognize the profound and highly distinctive ways in which fabricated animals actively contributed to social space and experience, through keenly dynamic potentials. The subjects of the case studies have been selected to take in a range of key topics that can productively overlap, including the unique animacies and spatiotemporal dynamics of objects; the cultivation of similarity and relation between species, including humans and nonhumans; the distinct experiential factors surrounding exotic species; and the ways in which people’s experiences with animalian things could extend a species’ character and identity into unprecedented and unexpected ground. These matters involve close consideration of the total ecology of animals in Crete and the Aegean, including people’s engagements with both biological and crafted embodiments and the involvement of representational and nonrepresentational animalian things, as well as experiences with contemporaneous nonmaterial renderings of beasts, within oral culture. These issues force us to reckon anew with certain traditional binaries that have structured earlier analyses. Yet more fundamentally, they ask us to take seriously how the existence of creatures as fabricated things enriched the identity of species in the early Aegean, by creatively realizing novel dynamics of reality and relation in animalian presence.

THINGS AS ANIMALS: A GROUNDWORK

Representations and (Re)embodiments

While much of the material culture I consider in this study can be described as *representational*, reliance on this notion, while comfortable, can obscure some of the very dynamics at work in the objects that are my main interest. The issue is

in large part a matter of emphasis. Basically put, working through the notion of representation focuses us on the degree of formal closeness that an embodiment has with, or can effect in relation to, a model.²³ In studies of material culture, the term representation generally refers to an object created with the (presumed) intent of sharing a primary aspect of its identity with another entity or model, based either on elements of formal similarity with the model or what can be conventionally taken as a conveyance of its formal nature.²⁴ The model entity need not be a specific concrete thing but is taken as a guide in leading the formation of the representation. Hence, a figurine embodying a bull could share its general species identification with a biological bull because their bodily forms would be recognized as comparable in prominent respects. If a bull is embodied in a wall painting, its flatter body does not share the three-dimensional aspects of form with that of a biological bull in the round as would a sculptural bull, but it can, through a variety of possible means, be experienced as conveying the form of the three-dimensional body. However, working in another light, we can of course see that a crucial part of the generative dynamism of representational things – or what we can alternatively describe as things that *newly embody* an entity – is that, even as they share key aspects of identity with other embodiments of a common subject (potentially with both nonrepresentational and representational embodiments, including what traditionally would be described as a model), they simultaneously differ from them, whether subtly or tremendously. Consequently, I do not limit the notion of “zoomorphism” to objects that render an animalian body in the round. Each rendering of an animalian form is a new embodiment of it – distance and closeness to another embodiment (including a hypothetical model) can be realized through a rich diversity of relationships, not limited to shared physical contours alone. This distance between embodiments is, in many senses, the space within which my analysis of Aegean animalian things works. With this, the degree of formal closeness recedes in importance, as does the relationship of deference to a model or models, since, instead, we are recognizing *a plurality of embodiments in the field together*.

By recognizing both biological and fabricated embodiments as *real* and coexistent animalian presences within the lived physical and sociocultural world, I am able to foreground problematization of people’s direct experiences with the diverse embodiments over matters of verisimilitude. This shift in focus also allows our consideration to substantively extend to a wider range of human engagements with the animalian objects, without implicitly privileging the maker’s intentions in their design. With this, representational embodiments can be approached not as secondary and reflective manifestations, but as true bodies, in the mix of lived experience along with other bodies – some fabricated, some not. Accordingly, since use of the term representation can carry such implications of secondary or mediated status in relation to biological

embodiments of animals, I limit my use of it. However, even if not my focus, in most cases I assume a basic premise of intent to reproduce elements of an animal's form as underlying the manufacture of the animalian things that take a corporeal shape, and, in this basic respect, the term representation is not inappropriate and can indeed be efficient. But this is but one aspect of my interest in the animalian things and their relationship to other bodies and entities. Yet more crucial to my analysis are a host of other matters: the distinctive contributions that fabricated animals have within lived contexts of sociocultural action, their qualities beyond form that impact humans' experience, and their dynamics of similarity with other entities that can involve form but also arise from further dimensions of comparability and nearness.

There are other reasons why a primary focus on the representational dynamics of these animalian objects would be problematic. We cannot claim to grasp specific metaphysical concepts of representation and mimesis active in the Aegean Bronze Age, nor can we assume that overarching conceptions on these matters, as such, were in circulation. Questions such as whether, or how, phenomena that we would describe as representational were, in their essence, thought to hold distinct ontological status or moral weight must be left open-ended. Likewise, a diversity of phenomena that we classify together unproblematically as being representational may not have been experienced as having a common nature. These are matters that can vary profoundly between and within cultures and moments and are exceedingly difficult to get ahold of concerning the distant past, even with the aid of textual sources, which we lack for these periods. Examinations of Plato's writings concerning *mimesis*, for example, suggest that notions of imitative representation that we attach to the term likely were not its primary associations in his day or before, when the term instead, at least in the works of some thinkers, involved more "dynamic" meaning, arising around drama, with a sense more like "enactment," which Plato extended to characterize the visual arts, potentially as a metaphoric means of critiquing another creative form, poetry.²⁵ I am surely not proposing that Plato's ideas concerning *mimesis*, or the particular enactment-oriented notions with which Plato was creatively engaging, would have been active in the Aegean Bronze Age sociocultural formations that are our focus here – or even that, if such conceptions were in circulation, they would have been considered relevant to the range of material culture we will be discussing. My point is instead that, even for situations in which we are in a far better position to consider the characterization of concepts of representation, reproduction and *mimesis* that were in play, it is deeply challenging to appreciate how these were part of lived experience, not least because their connection to things engaged with in the world could have been fluid and variable.²⁶ I instead aim to stay close to the particularities of the objects and their contexts of engagement, and to avoid treating them through a generic or presumptuous

lens of representation. This means, fundamentally, taking seriously the distinctive capacities and relations that could be realized through their involvement in action, and examining how such qualities of the things would have been taken together with their animalian identities – as unified aspects of their presences in lived experience.

Hence, it was not simply imitative representation, but generative new embodiment of the animalian that distinguished these fabricated creatures. The power of the bees in the Protopalatial pendant from Malia,²⁷ for example, arises not merely from their brilliant imitation of a living bee's golden hue, but from their embodiment *as gold*. They are distinguished by the bold symmetry of bodies that answer each other with eternally poised precision, and by artful formal echoing that resonates across their corporeal union: in the central orb of granulated honeycomb, the two round eyes, the three pendant circular charms, the perfectly suspended drop of metallic honey, and the engaged ball that tops the insects' heads. These bees' bodies shimmered with their own vigor – not the vital hum and flutter of living bees, but one that shone with both nearness to the alive and a distinctly thingly artifice.²⁸ As a pendant worn in life and ultimately deposited in a tomb, these bees could rest upon human skin without inspiring fear of a sting and would not disappear when summer ended.

Such things stand out because *their thingliness was realized as beastliness, and vice versa*. We will see that Aegean zoomorphic objects could be highly dynamic, in a diversity of particular ways. This was realized through peculiar material properties, temporalities, physical involvements in lived social actions, and distinguishing affordances. Moreover, in many of the cases we consider, the objects were renderings of corporeal forms, meaning that their unique dynamism was incorporated into a creature's bodily copresence with a human, as two animalian bodies in a space together. In this light, we can appreciate that these objects were far from simply imitational; they were, in their essence, creative. Fully recognizing the animalian and corporeal nature of these things brings us much deeper in our consideration of their distinctive involvements in sociocultural experiences, simply by dealing with their unique capacities to participate in the contexts of action and relation in which they were immersed.

Beastly Things

My particular aim, to problematize Aegean animalian things beyond their traditional treatment as representational objects, can be placed in the context of a broader and diverse field of scholarship that rethinks how material culture is part of human experience. Alfred Gell's work has become a bastion and signpost in efforts to breach the divide between artifact and artwork, by drawing together anthropological and art historical thinking about objects. Many of his ideas have become standard parlance in examinations of ancient

material culture, subtending a host of studies that have developed since *Art and Agency* was published in 1998.²⁹ I engage with some of Gell's ideas in this book, especially concerning an object's potential to confound a person engaging with it (see Chapter 2). Working from a different disciplinary perspective, Brown's 2001 "thing theory" has likewise done much to stimulate studies across a range of fields toward freshly recognizing the realities of people's engagements with entities in the lived world. As Brown notes, the term "things" possesses an "audacious ambiguity," as it "denotes a massive generality as well as particularities."³⁰ Brown considers the persistent intellectual fascination with the idea of the thing, through the works of Heidegger, Mauss, Lacan and others, and how approaching something as a thing has been taken as a means of challenging and getting below or beyond classifications that can bind our considerations. In archaeological work, the term has been favored by persons working in a range of theoretical directions.³¹ Recently, advocates of a symmetrical archaeology have argued for a focus on things as a means of working beyond the privileging of only particular aspects of an entity – for example, to escape bias in analyses that implicitly favor a certain contextualization over others and can lead to artificially partitioning or disregarding moments in the thing's existence. While attracted by some of the same potential qualities of the term, my usage does not follow any particular theorization of it. I am drawn by how the nonspecificity of the term thing leaves our initial classification of something open-ended and, I believe, brings the matter of its immediate at-hand presence into a stronger and less prestrained light. With the initial open-endedness the term affords, greater emphasis in the particularization of a thing can come to considering how it would actually be experienced, given its specific character. In this way, the nonspecificity of the term can help us to appreciate the specificity with which people engage with things in everyday life; Heidegger's notion of a thing's *Jediesheit*, or quality of "being-this-one," is relevant here, as is his discussion of how time and place are elements of the particularity inherent in a thing.³² This refocus also provides for simultaneously recognizing different aspects of a thing's nature, arising from its various particular qualities, instead of one categorization taking precedent over the other from the get-go. Moreover, the open-endedness of the term facilitates a wider potential for comparison between things, instead of only within a particular category of objects. For the sake of structure and coherence in my discussion, I have not, however, followed this to the extreme. For example, I do discuss types of thing (e.g., vessels or seals) as one way of organizing consideration of relations that could have been realized between pieces of material culture embodying animals, based on people's engagements with them and the comparisons that would involve. Moreover, while one approach could have been to use the term thing to pertain widely to all material phenomena, whether crafted, biological, inanimate or animate, that is not the

path I took.³³ This is mainly because I feel that acknowledging my primary focus on fabricated animals is important, and further because – while I treat both fabricated and biological animals as real and in the experiential field together – appreciating their differences is also crucial to my discussion. Hence, I use the phrase “animalian thing” to refer to material culture for which a principal aspect of its identity is connected to animals. In many cases, this animalian identity arises from the thing’s embodiment of an animal’s corporeal form, but in the case of boar’s tusk helmets, oxhide shields and ikria, it is the prominent incorporation of a part of an animal’s body that I have in mind (an incorporation that is also emphasized in renderings of these entities). From a slightly different perspective, I am also attracted by how “thing” nudges the object down off its lofty perch (at least to begin with) and immerses it in the stream where other subjects hold sway along with it, while also reorienting us toward the rich if messy engagements in which its specific character is realized in its relational complexity. A thing is decidedly in the mix. It is this potency of the term thing – which essentially demands looking around itself while also being resolute in its own grounded presence – that I am interested in, and which underlies my discussion of *animalian things*.

It is worth noting that Shapland’s use of the term “animal thing” in his excellent recent study of human–animal relations in Bronze Age Crete (2022) differs conceptually from my understanding of “animalian thing.” The basis of my consideration of embodiments of animals in material culture is distinct from Shapland’s, which fundamentally poses them as “traces” that signify back to instances of direct engagement with biological nonhuman animals (i.e., “animal practices”). While I do share Shapland’s identification of some material as “traces,” including elements of biological animals’ bodies that have been recontextualized by people (e.g., a large animal tooth that was saved after a hunt or cut to be used as an engraved seal stone), I believe that viewing renderings of animals primarily as referents to past encounters with biological animals is not enough by itself; we also must fully recognize the authentic immediacy such renderings possess as embodiments of animals. Hence, while Shapland’s analyses of the objects ultimately return to a fundamental focus on human engagements with biological animals, my primary emphasis is on human engagements with the fabricated embodiments of animals themselves. I believe these two emphases – which coincide in some areas – complement each other in many ways; set in dialogue with one another, they draw out key dynamisms in the material.

The Engaging Lives of Things

A range of recent studies across various disciplines have focused on problematizing the dynamic existences of things within lived environments and the

nature of their engagements with people. The impact on archaeology has been substantive and valuable. The work of Shanks, Küchler, Gosden, Miller, Tilley, Ingold and Knappett, among others, have helped to establish a new region of inquiry in archaeological theory, concerned primarily with the ways in which objects and materials actively contribute to human experience and how this often supersedes, or is indifferent to, matters of human intention or prediction.³⁴ This work has assumed various theoretical points of departure and reached into divergent areas of interpretative practice. Phenomenological and ecological approaches have been prominent, arising from foundational works by authors such as Merleau-Ponty, Husserl, Heidegger and Gibson; in some cases, these studies have focused specifically on the lenses of sensual bodily experience and materiality.³⁵ The topics of object and material agency, and object biography, have reoriented attention on material culture by thinking of things through notions often reserved for humans, sometimes with provocative effects.³⁶ Some of these discussions have engaged with actor-network theory, which has become a significant force in shaping archaeological approaches to material culture, in part because its ideas provide a productive means of recognizing nonhuman animals and things, along with humans, as each potentially contributing within contexts of action and meaning.³⁷ Meanwhile Shanks, Witmore, Olsen, Webmoor and others have advocated for archaeological work informed by the principles of “symmetry” in order to get beyond some of the dualisms that have structured and inhibited interrogation of material culture.³⁸ Over the past three decades, cognitive and mind-body approaches have become an established element in studies of ancient objects, with many important contributions.³⁹ Malafouris’ work is notable here, including his radical rethinking of objects’ relationships with humans’ bodies, especially through theories of extended self.⁴⁰ With a more specific focus, Wengrow’s analysis of the cognitive, material and social aspects of the development of “modular” phenomena in contexts of emergent urbanism in the Bronze Age Near East and eastern Mediterranean, including “composite” creatures represented in the material culture, is impressive; his study forms a crucial interlocutor in my discussion of fantastical beasts identified as composites in the Bronze Age Aegean material record (Chapter 4). In his analyses of Aegean objects, Knappett’s work engages with various of these approaches, including especially “pragmatological” and “praxeological” ideas, as developed in the work of Witmore, Holbraad, Hutchins, Lemonnier and Warnier.⁴¹

Creativity in the Mix

Knappett’s scholarship has done much to infuse the field of Aegean prehistory with innovative, substantive theoretical perspectives. In his 2020 study of Aegean Bronze Age art, he describes one of his aims as being to “prompt

a creative outlook on the real.”⁴² His discussion is keenly effective in its problematization of what Aegean objects could do as active, generative elements of sociocultural experience, and, in the present study of animalian objects, I very deeply share the view that objects can be fundamentally creative in their nature. Knappett opens objects, including those deemed representational, as nodes of interaction. Recognizing the pioneering work of Poursat in Aegean art history,⁴³ Knappett looks through a diversity of objects in his discussion, stressing the need to work above traditional classificatory divides. In this, he draws out a host of relational potentials that distinguish the complexity of Aegean objects, including combining, imprinting and containing, which are also key matters in our discussion of animalian things. Elements of Knappett’s analysis of Aegean art build on his important earlier work drawing Gibson’s notion of “affordances” into archaeological discussions.⁴⁴ Affordances are capacities of entities that arise when their particular qualities are interacted with by another entity or multiple entities, including humans, within specific contexts. Affordances can vary dramatically in their nature and contexts. They can involve both manufactured and naturally occurring phenomena, and both human and nonhuman beings. We can see this across examples such as a large, smooth, slanted stone at a river’s edge that affords gleeful sliding to a troupe of children on a hot day, or in a basin that usefully collects rainwater under a downspout while also affording a robin a cool bath. Affordances clearly have physical and mechanical dimensions, but also sensorial and emotional ones, from warm relief, to rigid surprise, to comfortable reassurance.⁴⁵ Meanwhile the disposition of entities relative to one another can afford experientially and socioculturally rich dynamics, such as comparison, familiarity, similarity, difference and nearness. Discussion of affordances turns attention to the instance of interaction and hence can support reaching beyond matters of intention alone – a move which is central to my analysis.⁴⁶ In the case of an artifact, while it is not denied that the intentions of the craftsperson in forming an object can be understood to persist and inform how it is subsequently interacted with by others, such matters of design are recognized as being but part of what potentially contributes to the experiences of the thing that take form, and hence to its identity. Moreover, for our discussion, concentrating on what comes of moments of active engagement and perception provides us with footing for considering how interactions with other phenomena – such as substances, forces and other nonhuman entities – were also part of the situated existences of the Aegean animalian things. Hence, while my focus is ultimately on engagements between the things and people, the discussion of affordances can fruitfully lead into consideration of posthumanist matters that enrich our recognition of fuller relational contexts. In this, a range of other works, including Bennett’s *Vibrant Matter* and Harman’s development of “object-oriented ontologies,” are relevant for their focuses beyond human

determination of material and sociocultural worlds. Across these matters, the notion of affordances can aid us in recognizing how relations realize the fundamental character of the thing within a context.

Other recent work has also characterized relation within environments as being fundamentally creative, but is based in distinct thinking and has a different emphasis on the action of a perceiver. Noë argues that perceptual experience is “enactive,” taking form over time and space through an animal’s (including a human’s) back-and-forth interaction with the environment, and that it entails both the perceiver and the environment: “Experience isn’t something that happens in us. It is something we do; it is temporally extended process of skillful probing. The world makes itself available to our reach. The experiences comprise mind and world. Experience has content only thanks to the established dynamics of interaction between perceiver and world.”⁴⁷ Noë’s emphasis on skillful action is important. He describes that we bring “sensori-motor” “knowledge” or “skills” “to bear” when engaging with entities in our environment, and with this, we work to find out “how things are from an exploration of how they appear.”⁴⁸ It is this skillful process that enables us to move from “innocent”⁴⁹ retinal images to a comprehension of something’s complex formal nature – for example, to figure out that a plate viewed sitting on a nearby table, which creates an elliptical retinal image, instead has a perfectly circular circumference as a three-dimensional thing, or that what our eye encounters as a group of meeting line segments and angles of different degrees, sizes and colors, all set within a larger rectangle, is “in fact” a cluster of rooftops, glimpsed through a window, as they recede in space before us. As some occurrent qualities or “details” of a thing are encountered as present by a perceiving person, others are sensed as potentialities and, as the relation between the person and the thing develops, for example, through changes in vantage point or altered conditions, further details come into view as others recede.⁵⁰

Noë likens the process of perceptual experience to the act of painting, an analogy which highlights its creative nature:

Seeing, on the enactive view, is like painting . . . When a painter works from life he or she makes continuous and ongoing reference to the world. The painter looks to the world, then back to the canvas, then back to the world, then back to the canvas. Eye, hand, canvas, paint, world are brought into play in the process of constructing the picture. Seeing, like painting, involves the temporally extended process of reaching out and probing the scene. Seeing, on this approach, would depend on brain, body, and world.⁵¹

With this, perception is appreciated as a matter of generative skillful activity, through which variable outcomes or impressions can arise. In other words, as

we engage with a thing, our perception of it arises as a matter of variable interaction with and access to its qualities, which contribute to shaping that thing's very status in our experience and understanding. According to Noë, this process of forming an impression of a thing should not be divorced from the life of concepts; perceptual experience and conceptualization can act together as someone dynamically forms an understanding of what they see and encounter:

To have a perceptual experience is precisely to direct one's powers of thought to what one experiences; the experience, and the conceptualizing, are *one and the same* activity. Neither is logically or conceptually prior. As Kant held, concepts without intuitions are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind. . . . Mere sensory stimulation does not add up to experience. We don't *apply* sensorimotor skill *to* experience. . . . Perceptual experience *just is* a mode of skillful exploration of the world. The necessary skills are sensorimotor and conceptual.⁵²

Noë's work powerfully argues for approaching human perceptual experiences of entities in the world as, in essence, processes of engagement and formation. In this, he is broadly considering engagements with entities that constitute the environment, but part of his discussion also involves some provocative rethinking of representations specifically. In consideration of pictorial representations, he steps away from approaching likeness between a representation and a "real" represented entity as arising primarily from the former's ability to successfully recreate the retinal image projected by the latter in the human mind.⁵³ He instead shifts emphasis to the active engagement a person has with both entities, and the shared means of discovery and understanding that each calls into use, wherewith relatable experiences of the entities take form: "What a picture and the depicted scene have in common is that they prompt us to draw on a common class of sensorimotor skills."⁵⁴ This view thus recognizes an autonomy to the representation, while also problematizing its correspondence to the represented entity (with which it can be taken to "depict" it) as being a matter of sharedness between how a perceiver actively engages with each. This move away from a basic characterization of representation as replicative formal depiction, and toward one of "commonality" realized between two entities, is crucial, as is seeing active engagement with the qualities of both as being the source of their perceived likeness. There is clearly also difference between the qualities of the representational entity and the represented entity, and between how one engages with each. Since Noë's enactive view considers perceptual experience as a matter of accessing an entity's qualities through ongoing skillful action, his approach provides for experiencing particularity and difference as being copresent with likeness, as a person accesses and senses various qualities of a thing.

In what follows, I examine the dynamics of likeness and difference that Aegean animalian things could realize. Most fundamentally, this tension took form across their beastly and thingly statuses. These things were themselves embodiments of relation and coalescence between animals and objects; moreover, they were, at once, relatable to biological and fabricated things, to animate and inanimate elements of the lived world. The connections they afforded extended into a diversity of entities and contexts. In order to appreciate the dynamic presences these things could have in Aegean sociocultural spaces, we must first take them seriously as true embodiments of animals, with unique characters.

A Diversity of Bodies and the Peculiarity of Animals

That we should accept representational objects as legitimate, dynamic embodiments of animals might seem far-fetched, but the notion should be considered further. The underlying point is that people actually encounter and relate to nonhuman creatures in a rich multiplicity of bodily forms – in other words, people’s direct experiences of animal bodies potentially (and often) involve bodies that are not those of biological beings. Moreover, the distinctive qualities, animacies and interactions of these (other) bodies contribute in their own peculiar ways to humans’ experience of nonhuman animals and, in turn, to animals’ positions in sociocultural spaces. Recognition and examination of this fact have come from various disciplinary perspectives. In their study of human experience of nonhuman animals in late modernity, Beardsworth and Bryman articulate four primary “modes of engagement” through which people interact with wild animals; these include encounter, representation, presentation and quasification.⁵⁵ *Encounter* involves direct, unmediated copresence of the human and “the unrestrained animal in its own environment, so that it can be perceived via one or more of the senses.” *Representation* refers to the “figurative representation of wild animals,” potentially in media as diverse as painting, sculpture, drawing and, in contemporary culture, video. *Presentation* involves engagement with live captive wild animals “presented” to viewers and hence “subjected to a level of human scrutiny which it might otherwise avoid.” Venues of presentation would be menageries, circuses, zoos or staged hunts in game parks or arenas, such as the Assyrian *ambassu*.⁵⁶ *Quasification*, which hovers between presentation and representation, recreates the wild animal, often making use of materials such as skins gleaned from living creatures. Here, it is not that the beholder is fooled into believing they are encountering a living animal – the lifeless nature of the animal is also to be noted. Beardsworth and Bryman refer to natural history museums as a typical modern space where people engage with quasified wild animals. In the ancient past, pelts could act in a similar position, something that

is simultaneously experienced as being both authentically of a wild animal and certainly not a living beast.⁵⁷ How likeness and sameness were conceived is difficult to assert and may have been fluid. For example, it may be that rendered embodiments of animals in innovative Aegean Bronze Age media – ones, for example, that rose up to the scale of biological animals (e.g., in large-scale polychrome murals) or brought creatures' bodies out in relief and modelling (e.g., ceramic vessels with zoomorphic relief appliques, including ones crafted through molding of biological animals, such as sea shells) – were experienced as possessing, in their own right, some of the same attributes as biological embodiments, even while also introducing their own highly distinct character to the animal (see Chapters 5 and 6). In her consideration of humans' diverse types of interaction with the natural world, including interactions with animals, Corbett elucidates similar variabilities as those articulated by Beardsworth and Bryman.⁵⁸ What clearly arises from these studies is recognition that human engagements with other animals are complex in nature – varying in medium, venue and interactive potential – and that binary divisions between “real” and “false”/“imaginary” embodiments alone do not capture the multiplicity of ways in which humans can experience other animals as physical, material, embedded realities.

Different ways of engaging with nonhuman animals are of course just that – different – and we would be wrong to equate or inadvertently elide them. Each should be appreciated for its particular attributes and context-specific dimensions. Hence, to state the obvious, a human's direct interaction with a living beast in its natural environment⁵⁹ would be remarkably distinct from an engagement with an object embodying an animal in a built social locale. Fundamentally, the object does not share the status of living, thinking, sentient being, nor the ineffable unpredictability with which such a being throbs. But at the same time, we should also recognize that there would be a dramatic distinction between a person's unexpected encounter with a lion upon a mountainside and the same person's interaction with a living lion in an orchestrated ritual context such as a staged sport or “hunt”; Berger's discussion of sharing a wild animal's gaze in the wild versus (not being able to) in a zoo aptly gets at the profundity of the experiential difference that comes with such recontextualizations.⁶⁰ Shapland engages with Berger's views and probes how “sameness and difference” between animals and representations of them would have been felt by persons in the Bronze Age, taking into account differences in cultural worldview (see pp. 62–63).⁶¹ Without question, there are intensely meaningful distinctions between people's interactions with other living beings versus those they have with nonliving entities. But the boggling diversity of living animals, and of the character of their interactions with one another, is a reminder that engagements of humans and nonhumans can and do vary in the deepest of senses.⁶² A distinction between living and nonliving bodies is not the

only meaningful one, and indeed we stand to gain from thinking (also) about how bodies of many varieties, crossing this divide, could dynamically engage. These engagements, motley and fluid, constitute the substance of people's experience of other beasts.

Recent discussions in the fields of posthumanism and animal studies provide further means for problematizing the interaction of humans and nonhumans and the complex position of nonliving animal bodies therein. Heise has probed the presence of artificial animals in contemporary Western culture and their involvement in humans' lived experience and imagination.⁶³ Surely the historical issues and contexts at stake are distinct, but some of Heise's observations and questions are instructive for our examination of the Aegean animals, indicating more nuanced ways of interrogating nonhuman things for their embeddedness in sociocultural experience. A basis of Heise's discussion of artificial animals is the way in which "technology" "mediates" people's experience of the natural world.⁶⁴ In contemporary spaces, this technology already involves and frequently imagines yet further instances of nonliving animals that, in one way or another, perform something understood as lifelike (be that movement, self-replication, responsiveness and so on). The technology through which many of these artificial beings take form has arisen from developments of recent centuries, both realized and hypothetical (e.g., motorized circumlocution, electronic power, robotics, engineered genetic mutation, organ regrowth and manufacture, digital evolution). It would seem, then, that the role of technology in human-animal relations and the relevance of these artificial organisms is incredibly far removed from the Aegean Bronze Age. Yet "technology" is a fluid category, and its involvement in people's experience of animals, including manufactured animal bodies, extends to many sociocultural contexts beyond our present. The term pushes us to probe the fabrication of something, or its status *as fabricated*, and what this implies in its particular moment. Just as available materials and techniques would have been different in the past, so, too, would people's senses of interest, relation and wonder with things created. This could extend to how people experienced a thing to be dynamic, vibrant, even animate. With a remarkably different landscape of materials, discoveries and practices, people of the Bronze Age Aegean may have marveled at life(-likeness) in forms, places and substances quite different from where we identify such. Herva eloquently explores aspects of this in his outline of an "ecological" approach to Minoan visual culture, where he questions whether archaeological evidence indicates that even certain "inanimate" elements of the environment, including stone, in fact may have been experienced as vitalistic.⁶⁵ Meanwhile Shapland, following the work of Descola, argues specifically that human relations with nonhumans in Bronze Age Cretan culture were led by a primary "mode of identification" describable as "analogism," in which a division of "the whole collection of existent beings"

according to “a multiplicity of essences, forms and substances” is active, yet can be “resolved” through “a dense network of analogies that link together intrinsic properties of the entities that are distinguished in it.”⁶⁶ For Shapland, like Descola, representational objects, as “depictions of” animals, will shed light on the relations of humans and nonhumans generated by such an ontology. In this situation, given that from the perspective of an analogist mode of identification “all the entities in the world are distinct,” “the function of images is to help order them in some way.” Hence, images of animals are significant as they serve as *means of connection* between (what are being judged as *more real*) entities.⁶⁷

These are provocative and significant ideas, and, in some respects, they are compatible with the considerations I offer in the chapters ahead. I do feel that we need to leave open our understanding of the specific framework of ontological judgments that would have shaped people’s perspectives on animals and animal relations in Bronze Age Crete and the Aegean, and the position of crafted embodiments therein. Hand in hand with this, I advocate, instead, for stepping back to recognize a more fundamental aspect of human–animal engagement that, I believe, is often implicitly overlooked: that people would have directly encountered animals not only as fleshy corpora but also as crafted embodiments. This certainly does not assume that people identified life in fabricated animals or accorded them the same ontological status as biological things. Nor does it claim that people saw renderings of animals in certain specific signifying positions relevant to biological creatures (although surely such significations were active); these matters we cannot ascertain surely, even if considering the possibilities has real merit. In what follows, I at times explore such ideas concerning further possible dimensions of fabricated animalian entities, but these are hypothetical and are announced as such. As a basis underlying such possibilities, we can, however, appreciate that people knew animals in a range of embodiments and, in recognizing this, we can take seriously the work of following through the implications. These fabricated embodiments were met directly, as real, physical figures in engagements with people. Impressions of a species were inevitably informed through these encounters. The impressions formed through engagements with fabricated bodies, like those made when engaging with biological embodiments (if such were known and/or existed), would have contributed to one’s broader sense of the species and its similarities and associations with other animals and phenomena. In this respect, the fabricated embodiment, like the biological one, should be recognized itself in a *primary* position in human–animal relations, and not essentially as a referent or connector between other (absent) entities. That is, however else they may have varied in their status, constitution and roles from biological creatures, they were, fundamentally, real animalian presences that were met and contended with as entities in their own right, and which,

therewith, directly participated in characterizing specific animals and the animalian ecology more broadly.

For the people engaging with them, certainly these fabricated animals could indicate, or more correctly *realize*, connections with other beasts and phenomena. But we can likewise imagine how an interaction with a biological animal could give rise to such impressions of similarity. Of course, when the embodiment is fabricated, there is the potential for those links to be (perhaps consciously) created and cultivated, as in instances of *formal assonance*, when likeness in form is realized and potentially developed. Morgan has discussed the dynamic of likeness in Aegean visual/material culture from various angles. In a particularly brilliant examination of glyptic objects, she considers how the formal, spatial and relational aspects of an image can be powerfully enriched by open-endedness or “ambiguity”; renderings of animals are prominent in her discussion.⁶⁸ Recognition of this quality – of a form being in a sense open to and generative of relations and relational dynamics – underlies my identification of formal assonance and various other types of formal dynamism evident in (and between) Aegean renderings of animals in various media. Morgan’s examination is also admirable for cutting straight through the question of intended design to also consider, as equally important, the potentially variable perceptive experiences that people could have with the images. Skeuomorphism, closely considered by Knappett, stands as another crafted relationship through which connections could be dynamically materialized in Aegean material culture. Such rich potentials for realizing connections would have arisen through the primary existence of the fabricated animals as real, present embodiments. This is a basic power of the fabricated beast: to be present as an animal and to shape what the presence of an animal is.

There may be much that we cannot assert confidently about meaning associated with animals in the Bronze Age Aegean. However, there is yet much that we can carefully draw out concerning the specific dynamisms of fabricated embodiments of animals, and how such would have contributed to the particular ways in which animals were experienced as distinctive participants in sociocultural spaces. Such embodied dynamics are not trivial – they realized specific character within the animal’s perceived presence that would have been crucial to what and how the animal actually *was*.⁶⁹ Character, in this respect, draws together material, social, mechanical and potentially affective aspects of the animalian embodiments: how could they act, engage, condition and potentially excite? Did they afford containment, shelter, surprise, comparison, dependence or agitation? Did they persist in place across sociocultural moments, and how would their affordances have altered across different momentary contexts?

Working from the qualities of material culture outward, Knappett offers a nuanced consideration of the potential efficacies or agencies of objects as they

actively participate in human experience, thereby challenging the binary animate/inanimate. His discussion takes in things as varied as cyborgs and Minoan skeuomorphic ceramics, stressing how the potential agency of a thing subtly arises within its momentary relational and environmental contexts – a topic in which consideration of affordances is of course highly relevant and helpful.⁷⁰ The efficacy of a thing is experienced in the midst of contexts that are always particular, in interactions that have their own sensorial, emotional and practical character. Objects' contributions can be established or unexpected, can go unremarked upon or might instead invoke wonder and imagination. One is reminded of the lifelike inhabitants of Hephaistos' workshop in *Iliad* 18, not only the pensive golden handmaids, but also the bellows that blow forth air on command and the golden-wheeled tripods that can move of their own accord (*Iliad* 18.373–377, 416–420, 469–473).⁷¹ How might these figures indicate broader experiences of objects as having remarkable active potential, even in quieter, more familiar things? What of the rapid and exacting drive of a stone carver's bow lathe, or a leather flask that swells and contracts as liquid enters and exits its supple belly? In such things, we again see how people's engagements with their world and its diverse inhabitants may not correspond to the binaries we expect and project (animate/inanimate, organic/inorganic, real/artificial, animal/object); or, just as importantly, they can supersede and draw connections across them in fascinating ways. When dynamic things are also embodiments of animals – such as a rhyton in the form of a bull's head that issues liquid through its muzzle, or a seal engraved with a lion that sinks into clay to form impressions – its potential animacy becomes animalian.

Problematizing the dynamic experiences of both likeness and incongruity that representational entities entail becomes distinctly important in the context of renderings of animals. This complication arises, in part, from the unique human experience of engaging with a living nonhuman. Payne examines how a person's relation to other animals involves, even necessitates imagination. It is through imagination, he explains, that one does more than acknowledge and describe the living status of an animal. One instead contemplates its existence as a "life" and, through this, senses its relation to humans.⁷² In his now classic discussion, Berger also gets at the em-/sympathetic relation of humans to nonhuman animals when he describes the uncanny recognition people can feel in the presence of another beast, a recognition that is intense and potentially disquieting, emotional and physical.⁷³ While Berger sees this dynamic between humans and nonhumans as being especially active in the preindustrial world, he also offers vivid recollections of how his own experiences sharing the gaze of a beast pulsed with such jarring intensity. One is reminded here of Derrida's description of the great discomfort he experienced being naked under his cat's watchful eye.⁷⁴ There are ways in which this sensation can be compared to the uncanniness felt when a nonliving thing is experienced by a human as lifelike,

something that extends toward the alienation of the hyperreal.⁷⁵ This experience is sometimes measured and analyzed in its replicative dimensions with notions such as the Uncanny Valley and Turing Test; phenomena such as Reborn Dolls manipulate along these lines, sometimes to highly emotional ends.⁷⁶ At its core, the experience does not necessarily arise from a straightforward instance of replication. Indeed, the sense of simultaneous sameness and insoluble incongruity experienced between humans and other living animals echoes the tension inherent in representation that we discussed above – not representation in an imitational sense, but as a matter of multiple kinds of embodiment potentially holding parity with one another while also being substantively distinct. Between such multiple embodiments of an entity (whether representational or nonrepresentational), as between humans and nonhuman animals, this relation is one of identity between this and that, here and there, what is and what is non-. When the representation is also an embodiment of an animal, these echoing experiences coincide in a distinctly moving way, since the human, as an(other) animal, is always implicated. The “nonhuman” status of both objects and animals is one in these entities, in part through the ways that both can be experienced as being, also, human-like.

That a fabricated embodiment of an animal will always be inescapably different from a biological one, despite their potentially moving similarity, is not a shortcoming in representational capacity, but a distinction in character. In substance, persistence, affect and affordance, the fabricated creature differs, arising from practices and interests that lace this animalian body with human relation from the inside out. From its moment of generation onward, the fabricated animal will also have unique relations with other phenomena, beyond its engagements with humans, and these will be as crucial to its existence (e.g., relations with moisture, sediment, the sun, materials that surround and penetrate it, plants, other organisms, things and so on).⁷⁷ This universe of relations contributes to the thing’s reality over time, a reality that involves human input but also exceeds it. Artificial animals are always bodies where imagination and realization are one, where even the most straightforward rendering is inherently the offspring of a present that integrates human creativity, accident and a momentary environment replete with myriad interactors. Hence, its ongoing relational potential is unique, as a thing and as a body.

NOTES

1. Evans 1921: 28. See extensive discussion of “naturalism” in Shapland 2022: 212–220.
2. See, for example, Hitchcock and Koudounaris 2002; Papadopoulos 2005; Hamilakis and Momigliano 2006; Eller 2012; Shapland 2022.
3. For example, Evans 1928: 362, and his characterization of the iconography of the griffin as a back and forth of influence between Egypt and the Aegean (1921: 709–714; discussed in Chapter 4).

4. Evans 1928.1: 361.
5. See stimulating discussions of Minoan Crete's modern lives in Hamilakis and Momigliano 2006.
6. See valuable recent discussion in Shapland 2022.
7. Evans 1921: 24–25.
8. For example, in discussion of the presumed Cretan origin of the “flying gallop” pose, Evans asserts: “their [the Cretans] Egyptian contemporaries proved themselves wholly unable to depict any rapid form of animal movement” (1921: 714).
9. For example, as powerfully discussed by Groenewegen-Frankfort 1951.
10. See Dumas 1992 for overview of site history and presentation of the frescoes.
11. On the history and problems of the modern concept of “Minoan” society, see, for example, Hamilakis 2002, and now Shapland 2022. My use here of the term “Minoan” acknowledges that we are working under the burden and limitations of such modern classifications. I use “Minoan” to recognize strong elements of sharedness between material-cultural evidence from numerous locales in Crete and the southern Aegean between ca. 2500 and 1400 BCE, but *not* to indicate (or assume) that these areas were part of a single social formation – or that cultural life between these spaces was the selfsame. I consider indications of both similarity and difference between contexts.
12. Marinatos 1993.
13. Rehak 1999.
14. For example, Chapin 2004; Vlachopoulos 2008; Morgan 1995b.
15. For example, Kantor 1947. Kantor's pioneering study laid the groundwork for many later considerations.
16. Unless otherwise indicated, I use “species” here to refer to a distinguishable class or kind of animal; this does not necessarily align with modern zoological classificatory notions (see Shapland 2022: 40 concerning such in relation to the Bronze Age Aegean). Consequently, the parameters of a species would depend on the perspectives of the group or person encountering the animals. Our focus should be on indications of consistent features across crafted embodiments, recognizing the input of the medium. In the context of discussions of particular material, I consider how the contours of a given species may have arisen, varied and changed.
17. Within the present study, my reference to the “broad eastern Mediterranean” includes the sociocultural formations of the Aegean, Egypt and western southwest Asia. At times I will also include (as indicated) cultures focused farther inland. It is understood that sociocultural boundaries were not hard and fast, and that a broader ambit of cultures could become incorporated in the eastern Mediterranean sphere through interaction.
18. See references in Chapter 2.
19. See Morgan 1995a.
20. This concerns glyptic from Neopalatial Kato Zakros in eastern Crete. See Anastasiadou 2016a; Weingarten 1983, 1985; and discussion in Chapter 4.
21. Shapland 2022.
22. Morgan (1989) discusses such ambiguity with great astuteness and McGowan's recent (2011, 2018) writing on ambiguity in Minoan glyptic provides important problematization of these subjects (see Chapter 5 for discussion).
23. For discussion of the interpretive aspects of representation in art and archaeology, see Tilley, Hamilton, and Bender 2000.
24. The scholarly literature on the matter of representation is of course massive. Important studies include, among many others, Ruskin 1971 [1857]; Auerbach 1953; Korzybski 1958; Gombrich 1960; Noë 2004 (with which I engage below).
25. On these ideas, see esp. Keuls 1978, who also engages with further important sources.
26. Recent work on the history of the term and notion of “reproduction” demonstrates similar variability; see Hopwood 2018.
27. The insects could also be wasps. Demargne 1930, pl. 19.

28. In their superb characterization of the sensory complexity of this ornament, Simandiraki-Grimshaw and Stevens (2012: 600–601) instead stress the successful imitation of living insects it performs, writing that it “closely imitates the behavior of actual buzzing, hovering, bobbing and mating of these animals”; they suggest that its sound may have inspired a sense of danger to the wearer.
29. For recent discussion of Gell’s impact, see chapters in Küchler and Carroll 2020.
30. Brown 2001: 4.
31. For example, Miller 2008, 2010, the latter of which takes the turn to consider “stuff”; Malafouris 2013, 2020; Henare, Holbraad, and Wastell 2007; Gosden and Larson 2007; Webmoor and Witmore 2008; Wylie 2002.
32. Heidegger 1967, especially 15–16, as part of a broader consideration of things, which also examines the complexity of things as being *vorhanden* or “present-at-hand.” The rendering of the German *Jediesheit* as “being-this-one” and of *vorhanden* as “present-at-hand” or “existing” are from this 1967 translation of Heidegger’s essay by Barton and Deutsch.
33. See also, for example, Webmoor and Witmore 2008.
34. The contributions of these scholars cannot be elided. Their ideas have been pivotal in establishing approaches that are frequently in dialogue with one another and, as such, help form the basis of this region of archaeological problematization. A debate in the 2007 issue of *Archaeological Dialogues* (14.1) between Ingold, Tilley and Knappett, concerning approaches to materials and materiality, highlights such productive engagement between differing perspectives. For meaty surveys of trends in materials and material culture studies, see Tilley, Kuechler-Fogden; and Keane 2006; Knappett 2010; Hodder 2012. See also Ingold 2000; Tilley 2004; Gosden 2005; Drazin and Küchler 2015.
35. See, for example, Hamilakis 2014; Tilley 2004; Knappett 2004; Thomas 2006; Ingold 2000; Herva 2006; Ihde and Malafouris 2019.
36. Discussions of object biography and agency have been embedded in many studies and have also formed a primary focus; see, for example, works by Latour (e.g., 1990, 1993, 2013); Gell 1998; Kopytoff 1986; Knappett 2002; Gosden 2005; Knappett and Malafouris 2008; Joy 2009; and debate in *Archaeological Dialogues* issues 22–26 between Lindström, Ribeiro and Sørensen.
37. On this, see, for example, Latour 1990 (esp. 7–8), 2007.
38. For lucid discussions of what this approach advocates, including connections to Bloor’s (1976) notion of symmetry, see contributions by Witmore, Webmoor, Olsen and Shanks in *World Archaeology* 39.4.
39. For example, Renfrew and Zubrow 1994; DeMarrais, Gosden, and Renfrew 2004; Renfrew, Frith, and Malafouris 2009; Abramiuk 2012; Henley, Rossano, and Kardas 2019; Currie and Killin 2019; Barona 2021.
40. See, for example, Malafouris 2008, 2010, 2013, 2020.
41. For example, Hutchins 2005; Warnier 2006; Witmore 2012; Lemonnier 2016, also Henare, Holbraad, and Wastell 2007.
42. Knappett 2020: 98.
43. See especially Poursat 2008, 2014.
44. For example, Knappett 2004, 2020.
45. For example, Miller 2008 on the potential comfort of things.
46. Knappett’s development of Gibson’s thoughts on affordances, especially concerning “transparency” (2004: 46), could give ground for thinking fruitfully beyond intent.
47. Noë 2004: 216.
48. Noë 2004: 165.
49. Noë (2004: 175–176) refers to (and critiques) Ruskin’s characterization of painting as involving “what may be called the *innocence of the eye*; that is to say, a sort of childish perception of these flat stains of color, merely as such, without consciousness of what they signify – as a blind man would see them if suddenly gifted with sight [1856] [*sic*] 1971: 27).”
50. These ideas are developed throughout Noë 2004; chapters 2 and 5 are especially relevant.

51. Noë 2004: 222–223.
52. Noë 2004: 193–194; also 187.
53. Noë 2004: 177–178, engaging with the ideas of Pinker (1997) and Hayes and Ross (1995).
54. Noë 2004: 178.
55. Beardsworth and Bryman 2001.
56. Alden 2005: 340–342; cf. Berger 1980.
57. Beardsworth and Bryman 2001: 86–87.
58. Corbett 2006.
59. Defining an animal’s “natural environment” can be challenging, since the encounter indicates at least some level of human interference in the context.
60. Berger 1980: 4–5, 23–28.
61. Shapland 2022: 62–63.
62. Derrida, Mallet, and Wills 2008.
63. Heise 2003, 2009.
64. Heise 2003, 75.
65. Herva 2006.
66. Shapland 2022: 39, quoting Descola 2013: 201.
67. Shapland 2022: 46, 62.
68. Morgan 1989; see also, for example, Morgan 1995b on parallelism.
69. Following Noë’s characterization of perception.
70. Knappett 2002.
71. See Morris 1995.
72. Payne 2010: esp. 13–22.
73. Berger 1980.
74. Derrida and Wills 2002, and discussion in Payne 2010.
75. Baudrillard 1981.
76. Reborn Dolls are created by artists who assemble and paint premanufactured doll body parts to resemble lifelike human infants; see www.reborns.com.
77. See Harman 2018, Ingold’s work (e.g., 2000).