2. Monsters and Meanings

2.1 Terminology and Definitions

This study deals with several terms evoking concepts subsumed under the title of *Monsters and the Mind*. The *mind* is conceived as "the part of a person that feels, thinks, perceives, wills, and especially reasons"[4] – the center of individual and social cognition and reasoning. First and foremost, it is not to be understood as a synonym to the brain as an organ. Rather, the brain, together with the nervous system, is understood as its physical basis with the capacity, among others, of developing a mind.[5] This paper does not aim to overcome the mind-body (or coined in this sense the 'mind-brain') problem,[6] but for the purpose of this study the brain will be understood as the processor of neuro-cognition whereas the mind as the center of social cognition, reasoning and human agency.

Focusing on the term *monster,* it is necessary to review existing definitions in order to delineate the understanding of the expression in the context of this study. The Latin base of the word, *monstrum,* has different connotations. Derived from the verb *monere,* it transports several shades of meaning, *to remind* or *put in mind* to *advise, admonish* and *warn* over to *instruct* and *teach*.[7] In this sense, it implies rather neutral notions such as the reminder, negative connotations such as admonishment, and positive ones such as the capacity of teaching. This urges some caution in understanding monsters solely as bearers of evil and misfortune as it has become customary in modern times. Asma has traced the term in the realms of cultural history and psychoanalysis concluding that it "has now slipped wholly into the derogatory,"[8] which is why he uses it only in ironic terms. The author understands monsters as a "kind of *cultural category*, employed in domains as diverse as religion, biology, literature, and politics."[9]

Asma has studied the *discourse* of monsters, a subject that cannot be traced in the written sources of Minoan times – in contrast to neighboring cultures that produced literature on the topic.[10] The only remnants of such a presumable Minoan discourse are iconographic remains. In most cases, these are creatures of composite nature, joining two or more species or elements to a new being that cannot be encountered in the

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4   Merriam Webster Online Thesaurus: https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ mind (last accessed 23/08/2018).
5   Griffiths – Stotz 2000, 31.
6   Malafouris 2013, 3–4. For a more detailed account see Young, R. 1996. "The mind-body problem." In *Companion to the History of Modern Science,* edited by R. C. Olby et al. London: Routledge.
7   Lewis-Short Latin Dictionary s.v *moneo.*
8   Asma 2009, 15.
9   Asma 2009, 13.
10 Such as the Book of Babylonia.

natural world. It is along these lines of observation that the term 'monster' is understood and applied – not as a moral category, but signifying beings of a somatic and conceptual otherness due to a counter-intuitive[11] structure. The notion of counter-intuitive representations derives from the studies of Sperber[12] and has since been further developed. It is used to describe the phenomenon of "beliefs and discourses [that are] puzzling from an evolutionary point of view, as they cannot be based on acquired experience of the empirical world [...]."[13] Transferred to the present study, counter-intuitive representations are observed in the iconographical output that underlies beliefs and discourses entertained by the social group that has produced them. David Wengrow has proposed a definition of the term 'monster' that will be followed in the course of these deliberations:

> *My use of the term 'monster' in what follows is therefore limited to a technical description of images that depict composite beings, comprising incongruous elements of human and/or animal anatomy. As taxonomic anomalies, blending elements from two or more species, monsters – following this limited definition – are good exemplars of 'counter-intuitive' representations.*[14]

The expressions 'creature' and 'composite creature' also call for some clarifying remarks. A creature is understood as any theoretically viable being of anthropomorphic or zoomorphic features in command of an array of senses, such as sight, smell and touch and therefore in need of a head, limbs and body structured in an anatomically coherent way.[15] Composite creatures are comprised of at least two heterogeneous entities, thus adding up to a fantastic creature (*i.e.* one that does not exist in the natural world). Hybrids also fall into this category. The designation 'hybrid' as used here does not denote cross-bred animals but iconographically fabricated fantastic combinations (*Mischwesen*). Following Maria Anastasiadou's study of the Zakros sealings,[16] composite creatures will be further subdivided into two types: first, there are *occasional hybrids* – creatures with no traceable fixed semantic meaning; *i.e.* they do not occur throughout different locales and time-spans nor do they create a recognizable iconographic 'canon'. The second type are the *fixed hybrids*[17] with a presumed standard semantic meaning – which is in most cases quite elusive to modern viewers but can

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[11] E.g. by Wengrow 2011; 2014.
[12] Sperber 1975; 1985; 1996.
[13] Wengrow 2011, 133.
[14] Wengrow 2011, 134.
[15] *Cf.* Wengrow 2014, 27.
[16] Anastasiadou 2016, 80–83.
[17] Anastasiadou 2016, 83 calls these *standard hybrids* with "certain qualities, a specific character and [an] own name." Focusing on iconography, this study attempts to evade ambiguous terms, as the term 'standard' might be understood to describe not only the cognizance, but also the iconography of the 'monsters'. Therefore, I here use the term *fixed hybrids* to describe creatures whose defining elements were fixed but could be varied on an iconographic level, resulting in variants of one creature that nevertheless all adhere to the fixed basic elements.

be assumed for Minoan social cognition due to the fact that these hybrids feature syn- and diachronically at several different places and are composed of standard elements that could be understood as 'canonical' of that creature.[18]

One last differentiation needs to be made regarding the creature representations. Not all composites fulfill the requirement of anatomical coherence claimed by the definition for creatures. This applies especially to an array of motifs from the impressions found in House A of Zakros. Fifty-four entries in the relational database created for this study have been classified as *non-viable composites* as they show no adherence to fundamental anatomical rules. This can be due to unconnected extremities or missing linking body parts,[19] the absence of a head – and consequentially the non-exist potential of sensory engagement[20] – or due to an overall inconclusive adding-up of different elements.[21] In these cases, a viability of the composite is not imaginable, as necessary parts are missing. Some composites still give "the impression of a unit,"[22] such as cases where the head is substituted by a helmet that could be interpreted as a *pars-pro-toto* representation of a head. These composites may still be accepted as 'creatures' in the above definition, whereas entirely unit-less composites do not fulfill the requirements. On the other hand, a complete set of head, torso, and limbs in the correct order is necessary for imagined viability, and the potential of autonomous movement needs to be given for *viable composites,* the category which also encloses all standard hybrids.

Before turning to the theoretical concepts that will be detailed in this work, it needs to be pointed out that the definitions above are, by all means, a modern posit and etic view on the material culture. They do not represent an emic view by Bronze Age social groups. Instead, they frame the analytical approach followed here. Accordingly, these definitions should be regarded as "crutches for understanding," and "not as static and historically existing structures."[23] The same attention needs to be paid regarding the terms applied to archaeological cultures, *i.e.* the *Minoans* or *Mycenaeans*: These terms do not imply exclusive cultural entities, rather, they are "mental templates only created for analytical purposes"[24] and as such etic attributions that might or not have been perceived as distinct cultural groups. Therefore, the designation *social group/s* is employed regularly in this work so as not to imply (exclusive) cultural attributes where none can be traced securely. However, the terms *Minoan* and *Mycenaean* are established in the archaeological literature and are feasible categories when it comes to

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[18] Anastasiadou 2016, 82.
[19] As witnessed exemplarily on *CMS* II7 nos. 75, 119–20.
[20] Such as on *CMS* II7 nos. 131, 134; XII no. 174b, *i.a.*
[21] Such as on *CMS* II7 nos. 147, 153–60, 169–71, *i.a.*
[22] Anastasiadou 2016, 81.
[23] Stockhammer 2012, 47.
[24] Stockhammer 2012, 47–48.

differentiating archaeological material that has a recognizable origin. Therefore, it needs to be kept in mind that the social groups attributed as either *Minoan* or *Mycenaean* were in fact relationally entangled groups and not 'pure' and easily divisible 'cultures'.[25]

2.2 THEORETICAL SCAFFOLD

Firstly, the aim of this work is to define units of composite creatures to create an overview of the types of hybrids and other re-assembled bodies. Secondly, the question of their role in Bronze Age social groups arises. In order to bridge the gap in time between the 21st century and the long past Aegean Bronze Age, theoretical models are employed as heuristic tools that have the potential to both answer questions about the minds behind the creation of composite creatures and those who perceived, used and developed these motifs. The most important of these concepts, in terms of this study, will be presented briefly in the following. They are considered as pillars of *cognitive archaeology*, a discipline that seeks to link "the science of the mind and the science of material culture [...] by showing that understanding material culture leads to an understanding of the human mind and vice versa."[26]

Affordance Theory, instantiated by the psychologist James Gibson,[27] is one heuristic device this study resorts to. It postulates the invariant intrinsic potential of any given object, space or living thing that predefines possibilities and limits of its use. While affordances do not change, the perception of and selection from an array of affordances of a single entity depends on the proprioception of the observer and its interplay with the exteroception of the given entity. Some, but not all, of these affordances can be inferred from perception. A well-known example is a chair that entails the affordance of *sitting on*.[28] Other affordant properties might not be perceived from each spectator, such as the potential to function as a clothes stack, to prop open or obstruct a door or to be used as a stepladder. However, the recognition of certain affordances does not rely solely on perception, but to a large extent on cultural knowledge.[29] In the context of this study's material, affordance observations are a heuristic means to grasp a Minoan observer's relation to and understanding of certain hybrids. For example, a hybrid lion-man and a hybrid bull-man can be differentiated on the level of social cognition due to the affordances of the respective animal parts. While lions constantly afford danger to humans and animals, bulls merely have the *potential* to afford danger (as in the

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25 *Cf*. Stockhammer 2012, *passim*, esp. 48–51; Simandiraki-Grimshaw 2010, 98.
26 Malafouris 2013, 13.
27 Gibson 1986, 127–35.
28 Knappett 2005, 47.
29 Knappett 2005, 47–50.

context of bull grappling) but this is not a perpetual danger. This has different impacts on the understanding of lion-men on the one hand, and bull-men on the other.[30]

An important fact pointed out by Carl Knappett is, "[…] that in certain circumstances the chair's affordance for sitting will not be recognized by the human actors present. Yet this does not mean that the chair stops affording sitting – its affordant properties are in a sense independent of the actors' perceptions"[31] (naturally, this applies to all affordances). Applied to this study, the affordant properties of lions and bulls do not cease to exist today, although people of modern Western societies rarely encounter wild lions and bulls and thus will not always be aware of their affordances[32] as regards danger.[33]

Materiality is another concept this study reflects upon. Objects and artefacts produced by a social group amass to a material culture. Nevertheless, this does not imply a division of material culture vs. immaterial culture – rather, as the ethnologist Peter Hahn has pointed out, the objects produced and used by a social group can only be understood in context of their actions. Only a combined observation of a group's immaterial and material culture can help us understand their everyday world.[34]

The concept of *appropriation* is directly connected to questions of materiality and extraneous objects. Two kinds of appropriation can occur in the context of material culture: (1) an object can be re-shaped on a material basis. For example, the lapis lazuli cylinder seal *CMS* II2 no. 27, was originally cut in a EBA Syrian context, then re-cut in MBA Anatolia, and finally re-cut and fitted with gold caps in Crete during the early Neopalatial period;[35] (2) an object can be appropriated without changing its material form by ascribing new meanings to it. At the end of this process, an item of material culture can be imbued with a very different meaning than at the time when it was first introduced to a new social group.[36]

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[30] These aspects will be followed in chapter 3.1.

[31] Knappett 2005, 47.

[32] This is partially due to modern pop culture notions about animals that have led to the ascription of properties that, in the Minoan mind, presumably did not include connotations such as 'cute' for a lion or a 'funny' for a boar, as they do in the minds of people who have grown up with Disney's *The Lion King*.

[33] On the other hand, the invariability of affordances, as posited by Gibson, needs to be evaluated critically. If no agency exists that is capable of 'using' an object's potential, the respective affordance ceases to exist.

[33] While Gibson's work forms the basis for affordance theory as applied later, it needs to be noted that some points were rather radical and have been revised by later theorists, such as Palmer, Clark and Heft, who have placed more focus on cultural circumstances (Knappett 2005, 54). A conclusive overview is given, and amendments made by Knappett 2005, 45–58. While an extensive recapitulation of the critique and revision are beyond the scope of this work, Knappett's line of thought is followed here.

[34] Hahn 2005, 9.

[35] For a detailed account, see Aruz 2008, 96–98, 273 cat no. 113. For further examples of material appropriation in Bronze Age Crete, see Panagiotopoulos 2013.

[36] Hahn 2005, 101. In chapter 4.1, *Minoan Genius*, we will see that this happened in the case of *Taweret*, an Egyptian demi-god that came to Crete and was subdued to drastic changes.

Hahn defines four simultaneous processes that lead to the complete appropriation, and ultimately 'traditionalization'[37] of an object: *materielle Umgestaltung* (material modification); *Benennung* (designation); *kulturelle Umwandlung* (cultural transformation); and *Inkorporierung* (incorporation).[38] The material modification is not a necessary step of appropriation, but one that can also be traced in Aegean Bronze Age material records. The designation of the object, however, cannot be reconstructed due to the undeciphered scripts (Cretan Hieroglyphs, Linear A) and the high possibility that such designations were not recorded in written form (as deduced from Linear B).

Cultural transformation is again a subject that can be inferred from the study of material records and is especially interesting in the case of fantastic creatures that came to the Aegean from Near Eastern contexts, such as *Taweret*/Minoan Genius, the griffin or the sphinx. Transformation leads to the understanding of an object in a local context including people's use of and access to it. Finally, incorporation implies the 'right use' of an object in its new context – individuals who handle it now recognize it as a familiar item rather than an exotic one.[39] These processes reflect ideal types of appropriation on a theoretical level and are not always encountered in the archaeological record.

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[37] 'Traditionalization' is understood by Hahn as a result of appropriation over a span of time from which emerges a social consensus about the local understanding of the imported object, which is, ultimately, not perceived as foreign anymore. *Cf.* Hahn 2005, 103–04.

[38] Hahn 2005, 102.

[39] Hahn 2005, 103.