

Queering the Minoans: Gender Performativity and the Aegean Color Convention in Fresco Painting at Knossos

Alana N. Newman

Department of History, Classics and Archaeology, University of Edinburgh, Old Medical School, 4 Teviot Pl, Edinburgh EH8 9AG, UK

E-mail: alana.n.newman@gmail.com

Abstract

This study evaluates wall paintings at the palace of Knossos, specifically the gender of figures that were previously considered ambiguous due to perceived inconsistencies in the representation of their skin color, costume, and physicality. Special attention is paid to the dark-skinned individual in the Captain of the Blacks Fresco, the red hand holding a necklace in the Jewel Fresco, and the white-skinned bull-leapers of the famous Taureador Frescoes. Methodologically, this study employs Butler's theory of gender performativity, wherein repeated stylizations on the body's surface, such as dress and adornment, are seen to produce gender identity. Since the frescoes are not the product of a modern Western society with dualistic gender categories, using presentist preconceptions to interpret the representation of gender identities in ancient art is unhelpful. Gender is conceptualized here outside binary confines, and I apply instead a queer approach utilizing a perspective of gender fluidity. Moreover, this study refers to Chapin's (2012) analysis of the naturalistic portrayal of human development in Bronze Age murals, especially with respect to the depiction of primary and secondary sex characteristics, and considers these characteristics, together with skin tone, costume, and gesture as performatives that materialize gender. After analyzing the frescoes, it becomes clear that the gendered components layered upon those 'ambiguous' figures are not contradictory, but rather meaningful elements working together to create alternative gender identities.

Keywords: *color convention, gender performativity, Minoan frescoes, queer theory*

Introduction

When Sir Arthur Evans uncovered fragments of Minoan frescoes at the palace at Knossos on Crete, he established the Aegean color convention, using Egyptian art as a basis. In this system, the gender of human figures on Late Bronze Age (LBA) wall paintings is distinguished as follows: red skin represents men and white skin denotes women (Evans 1900–1901: 16). In the late twentieth century, scholars began questioning this artistic code and demonstrated instances of perceived inconsistency (e.g. Hitchcock and Nikolaidou 2013: 515). Many of the so-called

ambiguities in the color convention identified by scholars appear in Knossian wall paintings. The most famous are the white-skinned figures on the Taureador Fresco panels, who in addition to their contradictory skin tone lack breasts (with one often-neglected exception) and wear male costumes. To take another example, the Jewel Fresco fragment shows a red hand touching a beaded necklace, a gesture typically associated with women. Moreover, red and white are not the only skin colors in wall painting at Knossos: black-skinned figures occur in the Captain of the Blacks Fresco. There is thus the issue of

alternative skin pigment and its implication for gender representation. Other examples of perceived ambiguities exist in Aegean frescoes, such as the white-skinned archer from Pylos and the white-skinned hunters from Tiryns, but they are beyond the scope of the present discussion. The focus here is to examine those 'ambiguous' figures in wall paintings from Knossos as case studies to establish, where appropriate, the presence of gender fluidity in the artistic depiction of the human form on Minoan Crete. This study adapts Butler's (1999) work on gender and sexuality to explain the identity of these 'ambiguous' figures in the Knossos frescoes.

Gender Performativity

Butler's theory of gender performativity challenges the dualism of the sex/gender system, which describes sex as biological (e.g. male and female) and gender as cultural (e.g. man, woman, masculine, feminine). Because summarizing the entirety of Butler's complex and multifaceted performance theory is not feasible here, what follows is the crux of her argument. According to Butler (1999: 1-106), gender and sexual identities are created through a discursive and unstable heterosexual matrix. The appearance of stability in this matrix is maintained when sex and gender cohere within a framework regulated by heterosexuality (Butler 1999: 22-25). An individual does not have an inherently sexed or gendered core; the body is rather 'a politically neutral surface on which culture acts' to produce both sex and gender (Butler 1993: 4-16; 1999: 8-10). Contrary to the sex/gender system, Butler draws attention to the materialization of sex and disputes interpreting sex as natural. Instead, sex is produced through the culturally discursive practices of gender: our modern view of sex as a straightforward anatomical difference results from the effect of gender on our understanding of sex. It is the social, cultural, economic, and political process of gender that makes sex appear to be intelligi-

ble and fixed on the body (Butler 1993: 5-12; 1999: 7-12, 22-34).

Butler also describes both gender and sexual identities as the result of performativity. *Performativity* is not *performance*, as the former is ongoing and produces an effect, such as gender/sex, while the latter is an enactment within a prefigured text (Butler 1993: 95). The term *performance*, however, is used here, but within the context of referring to those performative acts that create the gendered/sexed body. Rather than a question of having or being, sex and gender are both a question of *doing*. Butler (1993: x-xi, 12-16; 1999: 189-93) draws attention to the materiality of gender and sex, and explains that culturally sanctioned social performances—such as those associated with dress, gesture, and movement—occur on the surface of the body to produce gender and sex. These performative acts are neither static nor singular, yet they give the impression of a natural and stable core to identity through a continuous sequence of mimetic repetitions. Although these repeated performances transpire within the rigid regulatory framework of the heterosexual matrix, gaps nevertheless separate each repetition (Butler 1999: 40-44). Butler (1993: 121-40; 1999: 173-77) recognizes the possibility for agency within the gaps between mimetic repetitions, where the subject can transform performativity into materializing non-normative practices and identities, such as mimicry, drag, parody, and exaggeration.

These gaps and their potential for agency in the performativity framework described by Butler lend her theory to a queer perspective. Although by its nature 'queer' is difficult to define, it is used here as a counter-hegemonic perspective that explores gender and sexual identities as fluid and dynamic (Voss 2000; 2009; Dowson 2006; 2009). This study interprets those gaps in the repetitions of gender performativity appearing in the visual representation of human figures in wall painting at Knossos as instances wherein non-normative gender identities take shape.

Other scholars have applied gender performativity as a methodology for understanding

Minoan archaeology. Alberti (2001; 2002; 2005) is perhaps the best-known scholar to have used Butler's theory to interpret gender identity in Knossian art. Given the prevalence of the hour-glass body type—broad shoulders, narrow waist, broad hips—in figurative art at Knossos, he concludes that 'the Knossian idea of a natural body is an unsexed body' (Alberti 2001: 19; 2005: 117). Gender assignment occurs when physical sex characteristics are attached to this body type, which Alberti labels the 'Knossian template' (Alberti 2002: 109-115; 2005: 112-18). Moreover, he emphasizes that the lack of a male penis or female breasts does not relegate a figure to the opposite gender (Alberti 2002: 114-15). Indeed, Alberti draws attention to two of the major challenges of identifying gender at Knossos: (1) the representation of sex characteristics, such as breasts and genitalia, is often absent; and (2) cultural signifiers of gender—clothing, hairstyle, jewelry—crosscut the color convention traditionally used to identify men and women. The queer perspective used in the present paper resolves these challenges because it encourages interpreting those figures with perceived ambiguities at Knossos not as unsexed bodies (as Alberti claims), but rather as representing fluid, and perhaps alternative, gender identities.

Chapin (1997–2000; 2007; 2009; 2012) employs a developmental biological approach to determine age grades in Minoan wall painting and adapts this perspective to ascertain gender identity. She considers the representation of primary (e.g. genitalia) and secondary (e.g. breast development in females and pronounced musculature in males) sex characteristics—as they correspond to the stages of human maturation—to be performative elements materializing gender in Bronze Age art. Consequently, Chapin (2012: 299-301; pers. comm., 2017) views the white-skinned bull-leapers as females because (1) their skin is white, (2) they lack musculature, and (3) one taureador has a curving chest with a bright red nipple. However, closer inspection of the Knossian white taureadors reveals that

some of the figures have pronounced musculature, a male secondary sex characteristic, which contradicts identifying all of them as female. Nevertheless, Chapin's incorporation of human sexual development into Butler's theory of performativity is useful, and this paper utilizes this attention to the body's transformation during maturity as a way to interpret the production of gender. The application of a queer slant to this approach helps to clarify the presumed inconsistency of the white taureadors (feminine skin pigment with a masculine sex characteristic) by considering Knossian gender performativity as more dynamic than binary.

Butler's work also influenced Hitchcock's (2000) study of the Priest-King Fresco at Knossos. This figure's gender is considered ambiguous because the individual wears a man's kilt but has a woman's white skin. Hitchcock (2000: 80-81) argues that the mixture of male and female iconographic elements in the depiction of the Priest-King potentially suggests an alternative gender identity similar to the female pharaoh Hatshepsut, who depicted herself as a male king to assert legitimacy. While her argument is persuasive, any analysis of the Priest-King's gender performativity based on skin color is problematic due to the deterioration of the surviving fragments; it is therefore not considered here. Hitchcock (2000: 76-78) also briefly mentions the Bull-leaping Fresco and views the white leapers similarly to the those of the Priest-King Fresco, placing them within the context of an alternative gender in Minoan Crete. This paper expands upon Hitchcock's ideas by scrutinizing the iconographic portrayal of 'ambiguous' figures, thereby determining how performative elements construct fluid gender identities at Knossos.

In what follows, therefore, gender identities are differentiated in the frescoes at Knossos by employing the perspective of gender performativity as outlined by Butler. The evidence for gender performativity consists of the representation of skin tone, dress, and posture (Alberti 2002: 16; 2013: 97; Chapin 2012: 298). In

tandem with Butler's theory, I adopt the developmental biological methodology developed by Chapin (2012: 298) that distinguishes between primary and secondary sex characteristics associated with human maturation to identify gender/sexuality in Minoan art. Moreover, this analysis resolves the issue of perceived inconsistencies in Knossian figurative painting by applying a queer approach that does not view gender/sex as dualistic, but rather as dynamic and multi-faceted.

Defining Male and Female

Before recognizing the gaps in mimetic performance where gender fluidity occurs, it is necessary to distinguish the representation of male and female at Knossos. From the perspective of gender performativity, the figures do not have a pre-existing gender/sex: the costume of gender materializes upon the body through repeated stylizations to make sex appear inherent (Butler 1993: 4-12; Alberti 2002; 2005; 2013: 95-97). The following discussion identifies iconography that constitutes elements of gender performativity. Primary and/or secondary sexual characteristics are prioritized here as performative elements that produce a sexed body (Alberti 2002: 114; 2005: 117-18; Chapin 2012: 298): primary sex characteristics refer to genitalia, while secondary traits include breasts in women and pronounced musculature in men. When such components are absent, as is frequent in Minoan art, culturally constructed signifiers such as clothing, adornment, and gesture are also performative: each creates the illusion of a natural sex/gender core (Butler 1999: 185; Chapin 2012: 297-98).

Female genitals are absent in Minoan painting; instead, women are represented by human figures portrayed with breasts (Alberti 2002: 106; Morris 2009; Chapin 2012: 208-209). At Knossos, painted breasts are rare, largely because of the fragmentary nature of the frescoes, and occur primarily in Neopalatial (ca. 1700–1450 BC) murals. Pendulant breasts are depicted on a seated white figure in the Grandstand Fresco, dating to Mid-

dle Minoan (MM) IIIB/Late Minoan (LM) IA (ca. 1625–1500 BC) (Cameron 1976, II: pl. 26; III: 30; Immerwahr 1990: 173, Kn. no. [Knossos number] 15, pl. 22). Two dancing figures have large breasts in the Sacred Grove and Dance Fresco, ca. MM IIIB/LM IA (Cameron 1976, II: pl. 29; III: 33; Immerwahr 1990: 173, Kn. no. 16, pl. 23). The figure on the far right of the Ladies in Blue Fresco, ca. MM IIIB or 1625–1575 BC, has a curved bodice that silhouettes the figure's chest (Evans 1928b: 545-47, fig. 397; Cameron 1976, II: pl. 19; III: 25-26; Immerwahr 1990: 172, Kn. no. 11). Rather than a contour with a painted line, the artist chose to use the fabric of the garment to denote the breast shape and perhaps the figure's sexual maturity. Proportionately, these breasts are not as full as those of the dancing ladies in the Sacred Grove Fresco or as pendulant as those of the seated woman in the Grandstand Fresco. This difference demonstrates nuance in female maturation (Chapin 1997–2000; 2012: 299). Shaping the bodice to signify the form of the breast also occurs in the Grandstand Fresco, where flat-chested figures, designated by the straightness of the fabric at the chest, and budding breasts outlined by the curving seam of the bodice, are painted together. This attention to breast development suggests artistic interest in distinguishing between female age grades in wall painting at Knossos (Chapin 2012: 298-99). Yet the naturalistic depiction of female development seems limited to breast growth, since the painters ignored the height differences associated with age.

Clothing can also play a role in materializing the sexed/gendered body (Butler 1993: 1-23; Alberti 2002: 114). In all the above-mentioned examples, the figures wear an open bodice and a tiered panel skirt. Morris (2009: 244) observes that this dress's design purposefully exposes the breasts, unlike other styles where the breast becomes bare by removing fabric; thus, the garment intentionally highlights the feminine shape. Other instances of this garment in Minoan painting either adorn female forms

consistent with those already discussed or figures with dot nipples, suggesting a pubescent stage (Chapin 2012: 299). The clothing of the figures depicted with breasts has connotations for interpreting gender: the clothes and breasts are performative elements working together to establish 'women' in the frescoes (Alberti 2002: 114).

In her analysis of the color convention, Chapin (2012: 299) includes white skin as a hallmark of female gender. Every figure with breasts in Knossian painting has white skin; red-skinned figures do not wear the open bodice garment. A relationship thus exists between white skin, breasts, and the breast-bearing bodice, which constructs a female gender identity. When these conditions are not present, the female gender identity does not materialize. Floating white heads and white-skinned figures wearing the open bodice dress without full breasts or dot nipples appear in the crowd of the Grandstand Fresco. The modern scholar cannot attribute a sex/gender to these figures, but this does not mean that they are genderless or sexless, since performative aspects are present (skin tone, dress)—rather, they represent a gap in our knowledge of gender representation in LBA Crete. For the then contemporary viewer, these individuals' sex/gender identity would be obvious because s/he would have been familiar with the nuances of the color convention and the fresco's precise subject matter.

Sex characteristics, skin tone, and clothing are also performatives that construct 'man' in Knossian imagery. Unlike female genitalia, Minoan painters depicted the male sex organ—although infrequently and only at Thera. These include the Clothbearer and Cupbearer from Xeste 3 (Doulas 1992: 146–47, figs. 109, 111), the Fisherboy from the West House (Doulas 1992: 52, fig. 19), and a drowning man from the Miniature Frieze, also from the West House (Doulas 1992: 63, fig. 29). The wall paintings from Thera show a higher level of detail than those at Knossos, especially in the realistic depiction of human development. With respect to

the frescoes from Xeste 3, Chapin (2007; 2009) has demonstrated that Thera artists understood the stages of male maturation, which is evident from the variable proportions of a figure's height, spinal curvature, level of musculature definition, and genital size. This stands in marked contrast to the homogeneity of the body known as the 'Knossian template'. Given the discrepancy in the representation of the human form between the two sites, the Thera examples are not considered here as supporting evidence for reading gender performativity at Knossos. Since male genitalia are absent in wall painting, this sexual characteristic is not used as a performative element at Knossos.

In contrast to primary sex characteristics, secondary characteristics associated with male growth occur in wall paintings on Crete and provide sex-based differences to distinguish gender (Chapin 2009; 2012: 299–300). While human development in figurative art from Knossos is not entirely naturalistic, as is apparent from the infrequent portrayal of height differentiation related to age, as noted above, the male secondary sex characteristic—pronounced musculature—is present. The depiction of defined muscles in wall paintings from Knossos suggests that, to some degree, there was interest in the realistic representation of sex-based differences associated with male development. Significantly, this sexual trait appears in conjunction with red skin. Excavations in a Neopalatial deposit from the East Hall at Knossos uncovered fragments of human subjects with reddish surfaces and swelling musculature, dating to MM IIB/LM IA (ca. 1625–1500 BC) (Evans 1930: 497–508; Cameron 1976, II: pl. 16a–d, pl. 17b; III: 21–24). The remains of a bicep, shoulder, and portion of the pectorals portray bulging muscles (Evans 1930: 499, fig. 342A), while another fragment shows an upper arm and shoulder in what Evans (1930: 501, fig. 345) describes as 'tense muscular action'. In the same deposit were fragments of a red flexed forearm and a red forearm with a clenched hand holding a tapered drinking vessel; both pieces

display well-defined muscles (Evans 1930: 503, fig. 348A, 504, fig. 350A; cf. Kaiser 1976: 280, figs. 443, 447; Chapin 2012: 300). Originally, Evans (1930: 216, fig. 147) interpreted this latter fragment as belonging to a bull-grappler, but this is unlikely. The arm faces the wrong direction; if it belonged to a grappler, the elbow should point away from the horn, rather than toward it as it does in this image (cf. Younger 1995: 526-27, nos. 29, 31-32, pl. LX 3-f). Two more relevant fragments were unearthed from the East Hall: one depicts the back of a lower leg with heavily contracted musculature and the other the profile of a sinewy calf (Evans 1930: 507, fig. 352, suppl. pl. xl). The physiological detail in these fragments demonstrates artistic attention in illustrating the physical strength that results from male sexual development (Chapin 2012: 302). Thus, this study considers reddish skin and pronounced muscles to be performative components signifying a masculine gender identity in Knossian painting.

Additionally, the role of clothing in the materialization of the male body requires consideration. There are two garments frequently worn by red-skinned figures in Knossian painting: the breechcloth with codpiece and the kilt. The former is the most frequent costume worn by red-skinned individuals, such as the standing figures in the Sacred Grove and Dance Fresco. There is also a connection between the breechcloth with codpiece, red skin, and pronounced musculature: a fragment discovered north of the North Portico at Knossos depicts a well-muscled red thigh with a section of breechcloth remaining (Kaiser 1976: 274, fig. 427, pl. 32). Alberti (2002: 106, 114; 2005: 113-16; 2013: 97) suggests that reading this costume as a male garment amounts to a circular argument, as it links the costume with male anatomy defined by the absence of breasts. Indeed, the white-skinned taureador with bright red nipple (W2) wears the breechcloth with codpiece; this suggests it is a unisex outfit, because it is associated with male and female sexual traits (Younger 1995: 515;

Rehak 1996: 41; Chapin 2012: 303). Thus, the breechcloth with codpiece is not an element distinguishing gender performativity.

The second costume to consider in relation to masculinity is the kilt, which is constructed by wrapping a short piece of fabric around the waist (Rehak 1996: 40, fig. 2 e-f, 42-46). In wall paintings, this garment is predominantly worn by red-skinned figures (with the exception of the black figure discussed below). Moreover, the individual in the Cupbearer fresco, a work dating to LM II (ca. 1450–1400 BC) within the Final Palatial (ca. 1450–1320 BC) period at Knossos, suggests reading a link between this outfit and a male secondary sex characteristic: the titular figure has red skin, a kilt, and a curving bicep that indicates developed musculature (Cameron 1976, II: pl. 7a; III: 9-10). The relationship between the muscular body, red skin, and the kilt is significant for the construction of male sex/gender identity at Knossos.

All three performative elements—red skin, pronounced musculature, kilt/breechcloth with codpiece—do not need to be present on a figure in order to convey masculinity. Above I suggested that the Knossian artist presented a nuanced depiction of female breasts, which were portrayed in various sizes to indicate maturity; this perspective should be applied to the representation of pronounced musculature. Since the Knossian artist rarely used height differences to signpost age grades, the depiction of secondary sex characteristics—breasts in females and pronounced muscles in males—in wall paintings is therefore indicative of human development. Thus, those red-skinned figures wearing either the kilt or the breechcloth with codpiece who lack defined muscles, such as the standing red figures in the Sacred Grove and Dance Fresco, can be understood as prepubescent males. Conversely, the gender identity of the floating red heads that appear in the same fresco, as well as in the Grandstand Fresco, is unclear to the modern scholar, due to the same difficulties encountered when identifying the white heads.

This study's investigation of murals from two palatial phases, the Neopalatial Jewel Fresco and the Final Palatial Captain of the Blacks Fresco and Taureador Frescoes, encourages using three main features—skin color, costume, and a secondary sex characteristic (breasts or defined muscles)—as performative elements. Chapin (2014) argues that wall paintings from these two periods differ stylistically: the Neopalatial painter illustrated a naturalistic depiction of the human body, while the Final Palatial artist tended toward abstraction. Yet the Final Palatial frescoes analyzed here show an interest, to varying degrees, in naturalism. The artist of the Taureador Frescoes was attuned to anatomical details (Chapin 2014: 34-35) and size variation in figurative representation, while the artist of the Captain of the Blacks also demonstrated an interest in the height differentiation associated with age (see below). Although the two later paintings do not convey the same amount of naturalism as earlier frescoes, they nevertheless display notable nuances in their depiction of the human body, enabling these three works to be examined together.

Thus far, this study has outlined the variables for gender performativity in Neopalatial and Final Palatial wall painting at Knossos as they relate to binary categories of male/female. The interaction between elements of performativity creates a gendered body. Thus, white skin, breasts, and the open-bodice dress act as markers of sexual difference to indicate femininity, while red skin, pronounced musculature, and kilt function together to signify masculinity. Below I argue that when these variables coincide, it is not ambiguity that materializes on the body, but rather that such overlapping reveals a gender beyond dualistic identities.

The Captain of the Blacks Fresco

Wall-painting fragments from the House of the Frescoes depict a running red-skinned figure wearing a kilt and holding the remains of two staffs (?), a black-skinned thigh with traces of

a kilt, and the back of a black head in profile (Figure 1). Whether the two black fragments belonged to the same individual is uncertain. These pieces are referred to as the Captain of the Blacks Fresco, dating to LM IIIA1 (ca. 1400–1375 BC) (Cameron 1976, II: pl. 12A; III: 13-14). Evans's (1928b: 755-56, pl. XIII) reconstruction illustrates the red figure holding two spears and followed by two black figures similarly armed. He interprets the fresco as a military commander leading his troops, and reads the black skin as distinguishing the figure's Nubian ancestry. Yet linking the black color to ethnicity depends too heavily on early twentieth-century notions that prioritize skin tone for the illustration of race.

Contrary to Evans, Blakolmer (2002: 84-91; 2012: 58-59) viewed the black and red skin tones as an aesthetic device providing contrast between overlapping figures rather than as an indication of ethnicity. Evidence exists for such a technique in wall paintings at Tiryns and at Orchomenos (Blakolmer 2002: 91, figs. 20 and 21, respectively). While I agree with Blakolmer that black skin should not be used as an ethnic marker, I am hesitant to accept that an artistic device creating contrast in the scene necessarily nullifies extracting meaning from skin pigment. A figure's color was a deliberate choice by the painter and should be taken as significant. Before determining the implications of the black color in this fresco—whether it is a performative element producing gender identity or something else—it is first necessary to contextualize this scene.

The military context of the Captain of the Blacks Fresco is debatable. The two parallel black lines Evans considers to be spears are missing their spearheads. Another possibility is that they are implements like those carried by the celebrants on the Harvester Vase (Figure 2), dating to the latter part of LM IA (ca. 1500 BC), which is generally accepted as showing an agricultural ceremony (Forsdyke 1954: 5; Marinatos 2005: 153). Given the number of lines

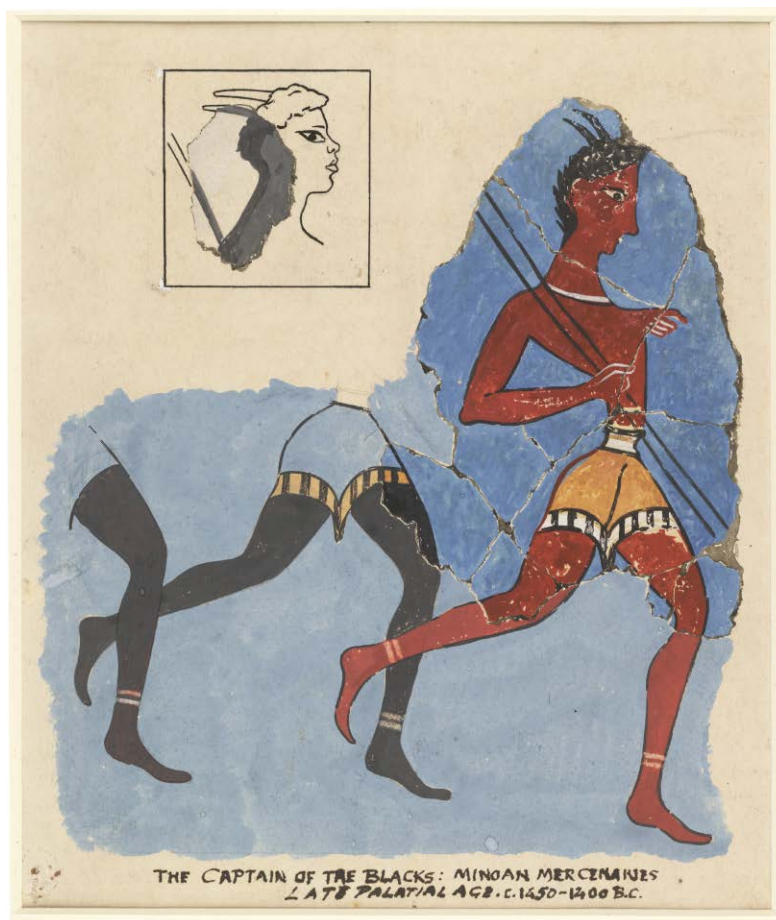


Figure 1. Evans's Captain of the Blacks. © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford.

illustrated in the arm of the painted figure (two instead of one), this seems to be a reasonable interpretation, since individuals typically hold a single staff or spear, while the figures on the Harvester Vase carry an object—the identification is contentious—that consists of multiple rods bundled together (Forsdyke 1954: 2-5). The vase is carved in black steatite, giving the participants—who are bare-chested like the figures in the Knossian fresco—a dark-skinned appearance. The choice of stone for this vessel is meaningful and suggests that there may be a connection between black skin and agricultural ritual, one perhaps symbolizing the fertility associated with mineral-rich black earth similar to the Egyptian concept of 'kemet' or 'black land'

(Pinch 2002: 2). Given the parallels between the Harvester Vase and the Captain of the Blacks Fresco (running black-skinned figures with rod-like objects), it is possible that this wall painting portrays an event akin to that on the vase. Wall painting at Knossos is predominantly ritualistic in theme, which has encouraged interpreting the palace as a cult center (Marinatos 1993: 50-75); thus a fresco illustrating an agricultural ceremony would be coherent within the wider decorative scheme of the palace.

The absence or presence of secondary sex characteristics in the figures of the Captain of the Blacks Fresco provides further information about the significance of skin color. There is no musculature definition on the red-skinned figure,

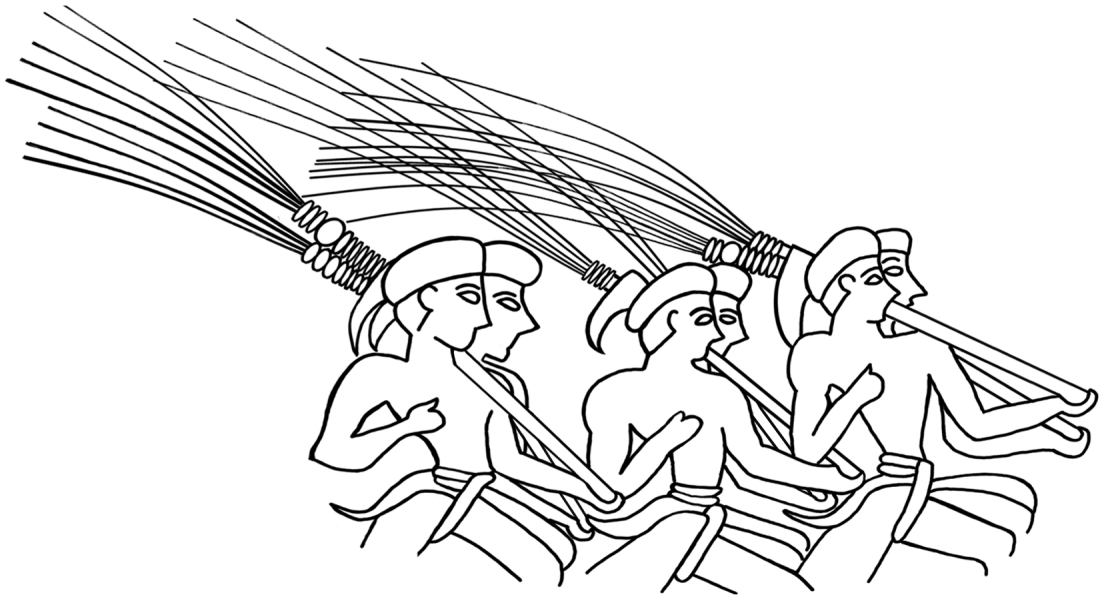


Figure 2. Detail of running figures from the Harvester Vase (after Heraklion Museum 184). Author's illustration.

and the fragmentary state of the black-skinned figure(s) renders ascertaining musculature definition inconclusive. The thigh of the black figure, however, is situated above that of the red figure, implying that this figure is taller. Although this fresco is typically reconstructed with the figures standing on a diagonal, there is no indication that this was the case. Given the horizontal alignment of standing figures in fresco scenes at Knossos, such as in the Procession Fresco (Evans 1930: 723, fig. 450A-C) and the Grandstand Fresco, it is possible that the figures in the Captain of the Blacks Fresco also stood on equal footing (see Figure 3 for reconstruction).

Close in date to the Knossian mural are wall paintings from Pylos, dating to LM IIIB (ca. 1300–1200 BC), that show figures holding rod-like objects with their arms bent in a position parallel to those individuals in the Captain of the Blacks. The Pylos figures are either situated on a ground line, such as the warrior in the Chariot Scene from Hall 64, or on an equal footing with other figures, such as the hunter in front of a pair of dogs from the Hunting Frieze (Immerwahr 1990: Pylos no. 10, pl. 67, and

Pylos no. 11, pl. 74, respectively). In the Flo-tilla Fresco from Thera, dating to LM IA of the Neopalatial period (ca. 1550–1500 BC), a pair of runners are depicted with their feet touching the same invisible plane (Doulas 1992: 79, fig. 38). Moreover, not only do the legs of the runners overlap in a way similar to that of the figures in the Captain of the Blacks Fresco, but also the front runner is shorter than the other one. There is thus precedent for the LBA artist to depict on a base line both running figures and individuals with staff-like objects, as well as to indicate size difference in overlapping running figures. As discussed earlier with respect to male and female sex characteristics, height is a factor connected to maturity. Since I suggest that the black-skinned figure is taller than the red-skinned figure, it is reasonable to interpret the former as older than the latter. Within the context of a potential ceremonial scene, the younger figure could be an initiate and the older figure an established celebrant. If the scenario of the fresco represents a harvest ritual similar to that on the Harvester Vase, then the black pigment might indicate the individual's cult status.

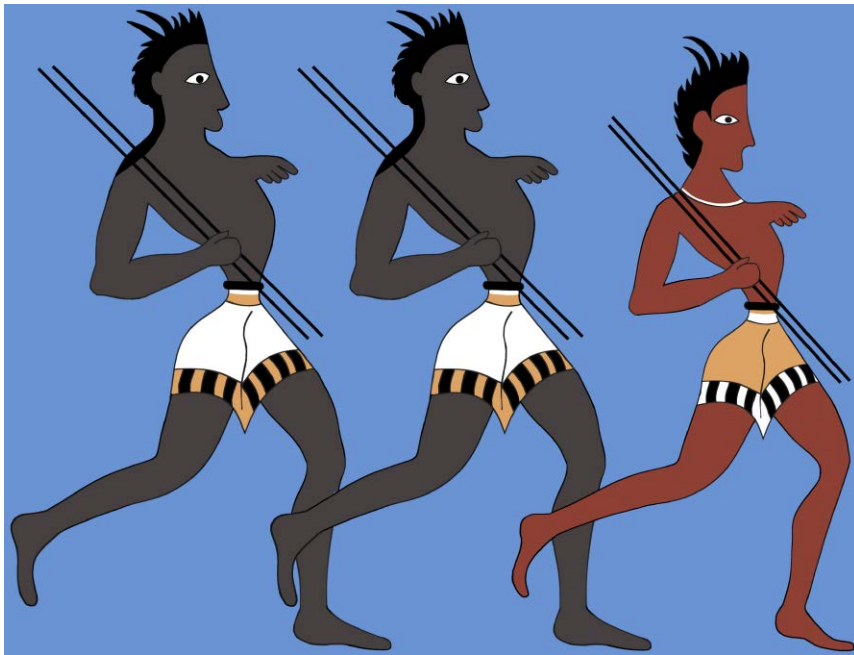


Figure 3. Drawing of the Captain of the Blacks figures on equal footing. Author's illustration.

Regarding the gender of the figures, the combination of masculine performative elements on the red figure—skin color and kilt—suggests that he is male, but the figure's lack of pronounced musculature and smaller stature identifies him as an adolescent. The only perceptible performative marker (to the modern scholar at least) on the black figure is the kilt, which carries masculine associations, because the state of the figure's muscular definition remains unclear. However, if the Captain of the Blacks depicts a harvest ceremony, and given the underlying associations between agriculture, fertility, and sexuality, one can hypothetically read the black pigment as signifying an alternative gender identity associated with the figure's role as an initiated cult member. Gender fluidity during ritual performance was not uncommon in the Bronze Age, as contemporary cultures in the Near East had religious roles that encompassed an alternative gender identity. The Sumerian *KUR-GAR-RA*, Akkadian *kalû*, and the Assyrian and Babylonian *assinu* were priests who ceremonially impersonated the goddess Ishtar (Roscoe 1996: 215).

Thus, there is the potential for dynamic genders to have participated in a ritualistic context on Crete, and it is possible that the black-skinned figure in the Captain of the Blacks Fresco represents an alternate gender identity that may have accompanied a specific religious practice.

The Jewel Fresco

From a lower level of the Magazine of the Vase Tablets in the palace's west wing comes a painted relief fragment known as the Jewel Fresco (Evans 1900–1901: 26; 1921: 312, fig. 231, 525–27, fig. 383; Immerwahr 1990: 172, Kn. no. 9). This fragment (Figure 4) dates to MM IIIB/LM IA (ca. 1625–1500 BC), and depicts a red thumb and forefingers holding a necklace of globular and head-shaped beads against a white background (Cameron 1976, II: pl. 44A; III: 49). Initially, Evans (1921: 526) reconstructed the scene as a man's red hand un/fastening the necklace of a seated white-skinned woman, which he interpreted as a wedding ceremony. Evans's interpretation was widely accepted (Cameron



Figure 4. The Jewel Fresco (after Younger 2008: 77, fig.1). Author's illustration.

1987: 322-23; Marinatos 1989; 1993: 56-58) until Younger (2008) offered a new perspective highlighting the combination of flat and raised relief on the fragment. Younger argued that the white pigment considered to be a woman's neck cannot be connected to a human figure because it is rendered in flat relief, which is in contrast to the raised relief portraying the red hand. Consequently, Younger (2008: 76-78, 84, fig. 15) reconstructs the fragment as a red-skinned male against a white background wearing a breechcloth and swinging a necklace in his left hand.

While Younger's interpretation of the scene as a red-skinned necklace-swinger is convincing, I disagree that the individual is male. Attributing male identity to the swinger figure based on skin tone ignores the other performative present in the fragment: gesture. Although males often wear jewelry in Minoan art, it is the active use of swinging/touching the object rather than the passive action of wearing the item that is significant here. Besides the Jewel Fresco, all other

necklace-touchers/swingers have white skin and well-defined breasts, and wear the open bodice dress. This includes the contemporary Ladies in Blue and the Lady in Red frescoes from Knossos (Immerwahr 1990: 172, Kn. nos. 11 and 12, respectively) and the necklace-swinger from Xeste 3, Thera (Immerwahr 1990: 186, Akrotiri no. 6). These figures can be understood as women, based on the parameters described above for ascertaining gender. Thus there is a link between touching/swinging a necklace and femininity. Indeed, the depiction of females interacting with necklaces is commonly seen as a *topos* in Aegean art (Younger 1992: 266-68; 2008: 87). The figure in the Jewel Fresco presents an interesting dichotomy. Since this fresco is fragmentary, we cannot determine the figure's gender identity definitively, because the body does not survive and any aspects of gender performance, such as costume and secondary sex characteristics, are lost. Nevertheless, the layering of performative elements—red skin and necklace touching—is

noteworthy and perhaps points to an alternative gender category, especially considering the connection between this gesture and a significant female secondary sex characteristic.

White-skinned Taureadors

Excavations at Knossos uncovered several Final Palatial fresco fragments depicting bull sports with white- and red-skinned taureadors (Evans 1930: 208-17, figs. 143-48). Table 1 catalogues these taureador fragments. The most famous of the bull-leaping scenes is the Bull-leaping Fresco, dated to LM II/LM IIIA (ca. 1450-1375 BC); this is a panel reconstructed from fragments found in the Court of the Stone Spout (Evans 1930: 210; Cameron 1976, II: pl. 71; III: 71-72). Additional contemporary fragments of representations of bull games were uncovered in and around this location (Cameron 1976, I: 443-44; II: pl. 38-40; III: 39-43; Immerwahr 1990: 175, Kn. no. 23a-i). Including the Bull-leaping Fresco, these fragments were originally reconstructed into the four-panel Taureador Frescoes (Cameron 1976: I 340; 1987: 321-27, fig. 12). Later, Cameron (1987: 320-28) revised the arrangement into five panels; recently, these scenes were reorganized by Marinatos and Palyvou (2007).

Panel 1, the Bull-leaping Fresco (Figure 5), shows a white bull grappler (catalogue number W1) clutching the horns of a galloping bull; over the animal's back is a leaping red-skinned figure (cat. no. R1). Behind the bull is a jumping white-skinned taureador with both arms raised (W2) (Marinatos and Palyvou 2007: 118-19, fig. 104). The second panel (Figure 6) depicts a white figure facing a bull (W3-5; Marinatos 2007b: 130, nos. 17-19), whom Marinatos and Palyvou interpret as a bull grappler about to grab the beast's horns, and a red leaper behind the bull (R2, Marinatos 2007b: 140, no. 30). In Marinatos and Palyvou's (2007: 120, fig. 107) reconstruction, the red taureador has completed the jump, which is made clear by the figure's

outstretched arms and their position facing away from the bull. There are two white-skinned taureadors in Panel 3 (Figure 7). The first figure (W6-7, Marinatos 2007b: 137, no. 15, 139, no. 27) stands in front of a galloping bull, and has been reconstructed as a grappler ready to grip the bull's horns; under the animal's hind hooves is a fallen leaper (W8) (Marinatos and Palyvou 2007: 120-21, fig. 108). The scene in Panel 4 (Figure 8) shows a charging bull with a red leaper (R3, Marinatos 2007b: 140, no. 29), whose arms are on either side of the beast's back, suspended above it. Behind the animal is a white-skinned leaper (W9-10, Marinatos 2007b: 137, no. 15, 139, no. 25) with arms extended diagonally and facing away from the action, presumably landing from a jump (Marinatos and Palyvou 2007: 122, fig. 109). The final fresco, Panel 5 (Figure 9), shows a white bull grappler clutching a bull's horns (W11, Marinatos 2007b: 137, no. 16), a fallen white leaper under the beast's belly (W12, Marinatos 2007b: 139, no. 26), and a red leaper landing from a jump behind the animal (R4, Marinatos 2007b: 135, no. 14; Marinatos and Palyvou 2007: 123-24, fig. 112). From the surviving material then, the total number of reconstructed figures from the Taureador Frescoes is 12 (although it is possible there were originally more). Interestingly, in these panels the white-skinned figures outnumber red-skinned leapers by a ratio of 2:1.

In addition to the larger wall paintings, there are a series of miniature frescoes featuring bull-sports. Fragments dating to LM II/IIIA1 were found in the Queen's Megaron and depict a white figure (W13) with outstretched arms leaping towards the neck of a bull (Cameron 1976, II: pl. 39C; III: 40-41; Younger 1995: 533, E.106). There is also a second leaper, but the figure's skin color is uncertain, since only fragments of wavy black hair remain. Red-skinned individuals also appear in the bull games, illustrated in the miniature frescoes: fragments of three different red-skinned leapers were found in the Area of the Cowboy Fresco in

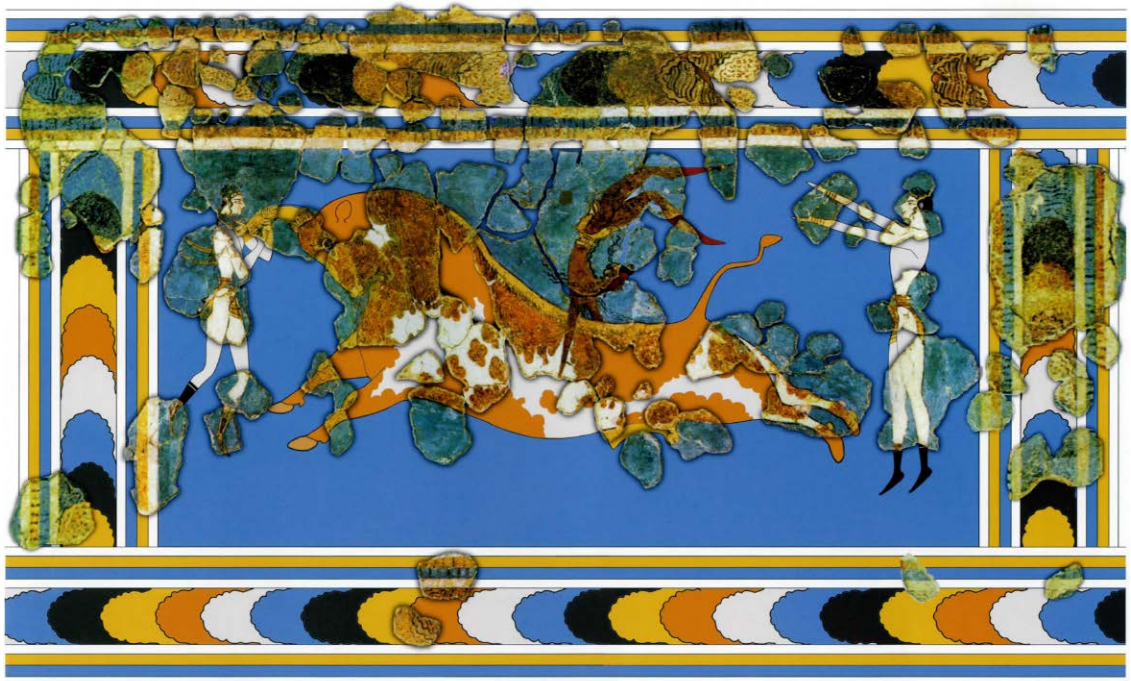


Figure 5. The Bull-leaping Fresco, Taureador Panel 1 (from left: W2, R1, W1) (Marinatos and Palyvou 2007: 119, fig. 104).



Figure 6. Taureador Panel 2 (W3, R2) (Marinatos and Palyvou 2007: 120, fig. 107).

Table 1. Catalogue of White (W) and Red (R) Bull-leaper Fragments at Knossos.

<i>Catalogue Number</i>	<i>Provenience</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Musculature</i>	<i>Location</i>
W1 (Panel 1)	Court of the Stone Spout	Right-facing white taureador from the Taureador Fresco. The head, torso, thighs, left forearm, left lower leg, and feet survive.	Striations on the left forearm.	Herakleion Museum Room K, south wall.
W2 (Panel 1)	Court of the Stone Spout	Left-facing white taureador from the Taureador Fresco. Fragments depict the head, upper chest (including a curving bust with a red nipple), shoulder, elbows, hands, and lower body.		Herakleion Museum Room K, south wall.
W3 (Panel 2)	Court of the Stone Spout	Face of a white taureador in profile against a yellow background.	Inconclusive since only the face survives.	Herakleion Museum below tray 193.
W4 (Panel 2)	Court of the Stone Spout	The waist and upper thighs of a white taureador against a yellow background.		Herakleion Museum 33.
W5 (Panel 2)	Court of the Stone Spout	Arms of a white taureador against a yellow background.		Herakleion Museum 33.
W6 (Panel 3)	Court of the Stone Spout	The lower part of the breechcloth and the thighs of a white taureador against a yellow background.	Striations along the length of the thighs.	British Museum K 144982.
W7 (Panel 3)	Court of the Stone Spout	White calves and booted feet of a figure against a yellow background.	Striations of sinews on the calves.	Ashmolean Museum 1708.
W8 (Panel 3)	Court of the Stone Spout	Hoof of a bull and an unidentified limb (lower leg?) of a white leaper.	Inconclusive since only a small portion of the limb remains.	Ashmolean Museum 1818.
W9 (Panel 4)	Court of the Stone Spout	White taureador's head, torso, left arm, and upper thighs against yellow background.	Muscles on the stomach, ribs, and upper thighs.	Ashmolean Museum 1708.
W10 (Panel 4)	Court of the Stone Spout	Boots and shins of a white taureador against a yellow background.	Sinewy shins.	Herakleion Museum below tray 193.
W11 (Panel 5)	Court of the Stone Spout	The shoulder and bent arm of a white bull-grappler against a blue background.	Bulging bicep and lower arm muscles.	Herakleion Museum 34.
W12 (Panel 5)	Area of the Cowboy Fresco, Court of the Stone Spout	The shoulder and part of the upper torso of a fallen taureador against a blue background.	Thickly rendered shoulder and upper arm.	Herakleion Museum tray 56.

<i>Catalogue Number</i>	<i>Provenience</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Musculature</i>	<i>Location</i>
W13 (Minia- ture)	Upper stratum of the Queen's Megaron	The head, arms, waist, and thighs of white leaper over the neck of a bull.	Inconclusive since leaper's body is missing.	Herakleion Museum 38.
R1 (Panel 1)	Court of the Stone Spout	The red bull-leaper from the Taureador Fresco. The left foot and right shin are missing.		Herakleion Museum Room K, south wall.
R2 (Panel 2)	Area of Man in High Relief, High Reliefs deposit	Waist and upper thighs of a red taureador against a yellow back- ground.		Herakleion Museum tray Sigma III.
R3 (Panel 4)	Area of Man in High Relief, High Reliefs deposit	Arms of a red bull-leaper over the back of a bull.		Herakleion Museum tray Sigma III.
R4 (Panel 5)	Court of the Stone Spout	The head, upper torso, left arm, right hand, and legs of a jump- ing red leaper against a blue background.	Subtly defined left bicep.	Ashmolean Museum 1707.
R5 (Minia- ture)	Area of the Cowboy Fresco, Tau- reador Fres- coes deposit, Court of the Stone Spout	Fallen red leaper's legs under the front legs of a bull against a blue background.		Herakleion Museum tray 62.
R6 (Minia- ture)	Area of the Cowboy Fresco, Tau- reador Fres- coes deposit, Court of the Stone Spout	Red leaper's head in profile and arm near the tail of a bull.		Herakleion Museum tray 55.
R7 (Minia- ture)	Court of the Stone Spout	Red taureador's kilt, thigh, and knee against a blue background.	Inconclusive due to state of preservation.	Ashmolean Museum 1862.



Figure 7. Taureador Panel 3 (from left: W6/W7, W8) (Marinatos and Palyvou 2007: 121, fig. 108).



Figure 8. Taureador Panel 4 (R3 and W9/W10) (Marinatos and Palyvou 2007: 122, fig. 109).



Figure 9. Taureador Panel 5 (from left: W11, W12, R4) (Marinatos and Palyvou 2007: 124, fig. 112).

the Court of the Stone Spout (Cameron 1976, I: 443; II: pl. 40D-E; III: 42-43). The first (R5, Marinatos 2007b: 141, no. 32) shows the legs of a fallen red leaper under the front legs of a bull (Cameron 1976, II: pl. 40E; III: 42-43). On another fragment (R6, Marinatos 2007b: 141, no. 33) are the remains of a bull's tail and a red leaper's face, left arm, and shoulder (Cameron 1976, II: pl. 40D; III: 42; Marinatos 2007b: 141, no. 33). The last fragment (R7, Marinatos 2007b: 141, no. 34) shows the lower body of a red leaper. Including the miniature frescoes, the surviving representations of taureadors in wall paintings at the Palace of Minos are 16 in number: nine white and seven red. Depictions of white-skinned figures in bull games were therefore not uncommon; in fact, the available material indicates that white taureadors outnumbered red. The white skin of these figures purposefully serves to differentiate the leapers and therefore signifies a tangible aspect of figurative representation in the art of Knos-

os. Most scholars have found the white leapers problematic. Indeed, the figures themselves provide little differentiation apart from skin pigment: red and white taureadors have similar jewelry and hairstyles and wear the breechcloth with codpiece (Alberti 2002: 111 notes the individualized designs on each garment). The analytical difficulty in identifying the gender of these white figures arises primarily from a perceived inconsistency between their skin tone, attire, and body shape.

In Evans's (1928a: 35; 1930: 208-209, 212-15) initial interpretation of the figures, the white leapers were seen as female. Other scholars advocating the view that these leapers are female explain their lack of breasts as denoting their age as either prepubescent girls or adolescents (e.g. Immerwahr 1990: 91; Younger 1995: 515; Rehak 1999: 193). Yet the remains of a bright red nipple on a curving breast appears on a white leaper in Panel 1 (W2; Figure 10), which suggests she should not be identified as an adolescent.

Moreover, the appearance of a male secondary sex characteristic—pronounced musculature—present on five of the eight white-skinned leapers in the Taureador Frescoes suggests that we cannot identify all of the white leapers as prepubertal or pubescent females. Sinewy calves and thighs (W6-7) appear on the taureador facing the bull in Panel 3. The alighting leaper in Panel 4 (W9) has well-defined abdominals, biceps, and striations of muscle on the shins, while the bull grappler in Panel 5 (W11) has bulging arm muscles. The majority of the white taureadors' bodies therefore resemble the burly red-skinned males rather than the females with whom they share their skin color.

Attempts to identify the white bull-jumpers as men are also challenging. They have been interpreted as younger, less skilled boys, with their lighter pigment giving a 'feminine' guise, emphasizing their place in a potential initiation scenario (Marinatos 1993: 220). While I agree that white has connotations of femininity, the white-skinned taureadors' musculature has more in common with the processes of human development associated with the male body than it does with the female form. After the discovery of new taureador frescoes from Tell

ed-Dab'a (Avaris) in Egypt, Marinatos (2007a: 127-32) argued that skin color in bull-sport scenes denotes 'specialization of task and status among males': white indicates that the athlete performs more dangerous tasks, such as grappling and facing the bull, and red identifies the figure as an acrobat. Yet white acrobats do appear in the frescoes: a leaper finishes the jump in Panel 4 and the fallen white taureadors in Panels 3 and 5 should also be understood as acrobats. Given the position of these fallen figures in the center foreground, it is likely that they completed a move similar to that of the red acrobats who hover over the backs of bulls in Panels 1 and 4. Rather than landing as the red leapers have, these white leapers have fallen during the jump. Bull-grapplers could indeed fall, given their location near the bull's head; however, their prone figure should land at the side of the scene near the front of the bull rather than in the middle, as occurs in Panels 3 and 5.

Color is therefore not indicative of athletic skill or role in bull games. Another perspective, from Damiani-Indelicato (1988), describes the white color as a narrative tool that differentiates the stages of the bull-jump. Since white figures are depicted participating in various activities in



Figure 10. White taureador with nipple (after unpublished photograph by Anne Chapin). Author's illustration.

bull sport, including alighting on the bull and acting as front and rear assistants, color cannot distinguish stages if white can be used for multiple, and often contradictory, points in the jump. Nor does this approach sufficiently clarify why a skin tone associated with the female body would be chosen to signify the routes of the bull-jump when other colors are available. Finally, the main issue with these interpretations, whether intentionally or not, is that they are grounded in a scholarly bias influenced by modern preconceptions of gender/sex, and show an unwillingness to accept women in activities deemed more 'suitable' for men.

A gender-neutral approach was also used by Rehak (1996: 41), who read both the red and white leapers as adolescents based on the combination of a male body shape and 'female' long hair. However, neither hair length nor hairstyle appear to be a gender-specific attribute in Knossian wall paintings (Damiani-Indelicato 1988: 40; Lee 2000: 118; Alberti 2002: 107). In the Grandstand Fresco, red and white figures are portrayed with waist-length hair and similar hairstyles. Moreover, I take issue with Rehak's methodological approach, which considers that the combination of different gendered attributes, in this case the (perceived) female hairstyle and male garment, neutralizes gender. Under the principles of gender performativity, the processes of bodily ornamentation are the building blocks constructing gender and, rather than contradicting or canceling out each other, they work together to communicate a fluid gender identity.

Alberti (2002; 2005) encouraged moving past the assumption that the primary marker of difference in the figurative imagery at Knossos was sex/gender as understood by modern Western society. The absence of breasts or sex organs on the white- and red-skinned bull-jumpers leads Alberti (2002: 112-15; 2005: 114-18; 2013: 97) to identify the leapers as representations of ungendered core bodies. The female white leaper (W2) in Taureador Panel 1, whose curved breast with large nipple clearly reveals her gen-

der, negates this interpretation. Alberti (2002: 107) also argues that the figures from Knossos do not display male physical characteristics, but this is not the case, since pronounced musculature, a male secondary sex characteristic, appears on the bull-leapers. Alberti (2002: 107), though, claims that 'if definite musculature is used as a variable for determining male gender in the images, then the red figures in the frescoes that do not show clear musculature cannot be securely assigned a male gender'. There is a variable, however, that should not be neglected when discussing physical sex traits: age.

There are varying degrees of defined musculature and height depicted on the red and white leapers of the Taureador Frescoes. Analyzing the presence, or absence, of physical traits associated with sexual maturity in the representation of the taureadors enables us to make meaningful inferences about their ages. The first secondary sex characteristic visible on these figures is pronounced muscles, which occurs on the following leapers:

- the thighs and shins of the standing white leaper in Panel 3 (W6-7);
- the rippling abdominals, rounded bicep and sinewy upper thighs and shins of the white leaper completing the jump in Panel 4 (W9-10);
- the bulging bicep and forearm of the white grappler holding a bull's horn in Panel 5 (W5);
- the thickly rendered shoulder and upper arm of the fallen white leaper in Panel 5 (W12).

From this evidence, four of the 16 taureadors are depicted with muscular definition. Moreover, it is only the white-skinned figures that have distinctive musculature: no red leapers have this secondary sex characteristic. In contrast, both red- and white-skinned taureadors are represented without musculature. This includes white- and red-skinned taureadors in Panels 1 (R1) and 2 (W3-5, R2), the red leapers from

Panels 4 (R3) and 5 (R4), and the red (R5, R6, R7) and white (W13) figures from the miniature frescoes. The majority of the leapers, 11 in total, are not portrayed with musculature, including the female taureador (W2) of Panel 1. There is no apparent link between physical exertion and musculature. The white leaper in Panel 5 and the red leaper in Panel 4 perform the same stage of the bull-jump (landing from a summersault over a bull), and only the white figure has defined muscles, while the red figure lacks muscles and is physically smaller. This differentiation indicates that the Knossian artist was more interested in the portrayal of musculature resulting from human development rather than from physical activity. Those leapers without pronounced muscles should therefore be interpreted as being younger than those jumpers whose muscles are well defined. Thus, the figures in the Taureador Frescoes lacking muscular definition should be understood as individuals who have not reached the stage of pubertal growth associated with increased muscle strength (Marinatos 2007a: 128; cf. Chapin 2007: 232).

Artistic attention to the illustration of the leapers' ages is given not only through pronounced musculature, but also through the relative sizes of the figures. Height is another secondary sex characteristic that accompanies human maturation. Interestingly, the red leapers in the five Taureador Fresco panels are shorter than their white counterparts with and without musculature (Marinatos 2007a: 128). Rather than read the absence of musculature on some of the taureadors as inconsistent and consequently regard leapers without this trait as ungendered, it is reasonable to assume that, since these figures appear within interconnected panels, the painter(s) chose to distinguish between the taureadors' age grades through musculature and height. The Taureador Frescoes therefore demonstrate further nuance in the representation of age grades whereby they illustrate at least three stages of development associated with maturity:

(1) tall white leapers with muscles represent adults; (2) white leapers without musculature (yet still tall) are adolescents; and (3) the red leapers are prepubescent male youths.

Furthermore, given the attention to height and secondary sex characteristics, one can distinguish the female taureadors from those with an alternative gender identity. Since the female leaper (W2) of Panel 1 is the tallest figure in the panel, she should be understood as an adult. The representation of her maturity in conjunction with her lack of muscular definition affirms that pronounced muscles are not associated with females. Thus, the smaller white taureadors lacking muscular definition, W4 and W5 (W3 and W8 remain inconclusive), can be understood as adolescent females.

The perceived ambiguity that arises in the Taureador Frescoes, when white figures display male physicality and skin color typically associated with feminine sex/gender, can be explained by gender performativity. Since gender is created through the processes of materialization upon the body's surface, the stylization of the body denotes an individual's gender identity. Combining performative variables (masculine musculature and feminine fair skin) produces the gender of the bull-leapers. One gender element does not cancel out another; instead, each element creates a layer of meaning that characterizes this identity. The gender of the white-skinned bull-jumpers with muscles is only confusing from a presentist conception of gender. The parameters of this gender category are set by the ancient culture and not by modern dualistic views. Upon the body of the leapers, the artist(s) layered distinct gendered components—female skin tone and male muscles—to communicate the fluidity of gender/sex.

Describing the muscled white leapers beyond their gender fluidity is difficult, since contextualizing them within life at Knossos is problematic due to the lack of textual evidence. Consequently, I provide only a tentative description of this alternative gender category. Generally, the

bull is considered to be a sacred animal and the cultic connotations of bull-jumping therefore seem significant; perhaps the participation of alternative gender individuals in bull-leaping relates to the ritualized nature of these games (Silka 2007: 11-55). Instances of gender fluidity, which appeared in contemporary cultures in the Near East and were associated with religious roles—such as the priests of Ishtar mentioned above—encourage the identification of such identities in the Aegean also (Roscoe 1996: 215; Hitchcock 2000: 79-80). A ceremonial fluid gender category could explain why not all the leapers are painted white. Moreover, the ritualized and temporal nature of bull-leaping may have prompted gender fluidity. Alexandri (2009) discusses timelessness as a concept that often influences modern interpretations of gender ideologies in the ancient world as static and fixed. Instead, there is a transitory aspect to gender representations that scholarship typically does not take into account (Alexandri 2009: 21-23). Perhaps this notion of temporality and gender applies to the muscled white leapers. It is possible that these fair-skinned, muscled jumpers are restricted to depictions of bull-leaping, because they illustrate a temporary alternative gender identity particular to this ritual event.

Conclusion

This study supports the findings of earlier research on gender performativity in Bronze Age painting (Hitchcock 2000; Alberti 2001; 2002; 2005; 2013; Alexandri 2009; Chapin 2012) and builds upon it to identify new evidence for gender fluidity in the murals at Knossos, specifically the black figure in the Captain of the Blacks Fresco, the red necklace-swinging of the Jewel Fresco, and the white bull-leapers of the Taureador Frescoes. I have employed a methodology designating the materialization of the human body as indicative of one's gender identity. Understanding gender as performative helps unlock the layers of meaning embedded in figu-

rative painting at Knossos, especially the gender of those LBA figures perceived as contradictory.

In addition to Butler's theory of gender performativity, this study has conceptualized sex/gender beyond the presentist dichotomy of male/female by arguing for the presence of fluid gender categories in Knossian murals. Sexual differences must be distinguishable in order to comprehend alternative gender identities. As I have tried to demonstrate, feminine traits include white skin, breast development, and the open-bodice dress, while masculine attributes are red skin, pronounced musculature, and the kilt. At Knossos, artistic interest in human growth is expressed by illustrating the development of male and female secondary sexual characteristics. This attention to the naturalistic depiction of the human form helps to clarify not only the ages of figures, but also their gender.

It is unclear if these alternative gender identities were grounded in reality, since it is uncertain if Minoan figurative art was idealistic or realistic. These murals could illustrate either real activities at the palace or else mythological stories. What is clear, however, is that these representations were a conscious choice: the Knossian artists and patrons considered gender-fluid individuals to be appropriate subject matter for elite decoration. The presence of alternative gender categories in Knossian art therefore offers insight into the conceptualization of gender as dynamic in prehistoric Crete.

Queer methodologies, such as that employed here, help scholarship to form a more nuanced perception of gender identity and fluidity in figurative art in the Bronze Age Aegean. Not only can this aid our modern interpretation of artistic depictions of Minoan gender; it also furthers our appreciation of how an ancient civilization articulated gender identities to a contemporary audience. Although the aim of this study has been to determine the existence of gender multiplicity, future investigation and contextualization of these gender categories at Knossos, and elsewhere in the Aegean, could

further our awareness of gender dynamics in Minoan art.

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About the Author

Alana Newman recently received her PhD in Classics from the University of Edinburgh. Her dissertation analyzed and catalogued the Egyptian- and Greek-style portrait media of the Ptolemaic queen Arsinoë II. Although her thesis focused on early Hellenistic Egypt, she maintains a strong interest in the Bronze Age Aegean.

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