The Materiality of Divine Agency

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Volume 8

The Materiality of Divine Agency

Edited by
Beate Pongratz-Leisten and Karen Sonik

With contributions from
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Beate Pongratz-Leisten, Anne-Caroline Rendu-Loisel,
and Karen Sonik

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Beate Pongratz-Leisten
In the name of the contributors I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my co-editor Karen Sonik who took on most of the work in editing our volume. Her rigorous editing was greatly appreciated especially by the younger contributors. Beyond that, collaboration with her has been always an inspiring and enriching experience.

Karen Sonik
Thanks are due to my co-editor, Beate Pongratz-Leisten, for many years of friendship, for numerous challenging, productive, and ever-inspiring conversations on a striking array of subjects, and for suggesting that we collaborate on this fascinating and very stimulating project.

Thanks are due also to the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World at New York University, where I spent a productive year (2010–2011) as a Visiting Research Scholar; to a New Faculty Fellows award (2011–2013) from the American Council of Learned Societies, funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and held in the Department of Art History at the University of California, Los Angeles, which enabled me both to further develop my research and to dedicate time to the editing of this volume; and to a Postdoctoral Fellowship from the Department of Egyptology & Ancient Western Asian Studies at Brown University (2013–2014), which permitted the continuation of both editorial work on this volume and the research published in my own contribution here. I am very grateful for the kindness and collegiality of Jonathan Ben-Dov, Mathieu Ossendrijver, and Joan Westenholz while I was in New York; Jacco Dieleman, Sharon Gerstel, and Sarah Morris during my time at UCLA; Matthew Rutz, Felipe Rojas, and John Steele at Brown; Holly Pittman, Steve Tinney, and the other wonderful denizens of the Tablet Room at the University of Pennsylvania; and my new colleagues in the Department of Art & Art History at Auburn University. For putting up with me while I was engrossed in writing and various editorial tasks, I am also, as ever, grateful to family and dear friends, Chander, Sikander, Neena, and Gary Sonik; Sandra Matsuyama, Sasha Renninger, Ariel Smith, Jefferson Wen, Kellie Zimmerman; and, in memory of halcyon days in Philadelphia and London, Stephen Gardner and Donald Grant.

Preface

Divine agency, anthropomorphism, and materiality have been the subjects of renewed scholarly interest over the past two decades as new theoretical approaches from the cognitive sciences, anthropology, art history, and material culture studies have entered the respective and intersecting discourses on religion, objects, and images.

The contributions in the present volume, which emphasize but are not limited to case studies on the ancient Near East, are intended to address key issues raised by these approaches from a range of different perspectives and within an array of different contexts. Among the persistent and compelling themes and questions considered here are: What is the relationship between the divine and the matter – and form – within which it is *presenced*? How might the production of divine presence be achieved? How and when or under what conditions do sacral or divine "things" act, and what is the source and nature of their agency? How might we productively define and think about anthropomorphism in relation to the divine? What is the relationship between the mental and the material image? To what extent might the categories of object, image, likeness, and representation overlap – or diverge?

Part I of this volume explores the material divine from a cross-cultural perspective. An introduction by Beate Pongratz-Leisten and Karen Sonik (Chapter 1) provides an overview and definition of some of the central terms and concepts of the volume, among these materiality and agency, as well as anthropomorphic, divine, sacral or sacred, and *presence*. Case studies from a range of cultural and spatiotemporal contexts are explored to elucidate such issues as the various means whereby the divine might be *presenced* in matter; the multiple modes and multifaceted nature of divine engagement and interaction with individuals; and the manner and contexts in which objects or entities might exercise – or be perceived as exercising – some measure of divine agency. This introductory chapter is paired with a contribution from Caroline Walker Bynum (Chapter 2) that offers a critical assessment of generalized cognitive models of and explanations for the anthropomorphizing and animation of holy things. Taking as a case study the Christian Eucharist during the later Middle Ages in Europe, Bynum explores the material divine through the specific phenomenon according to which the bread and wine of the mass *visibly* transformed into blood and freshly bleeding flesh. Her work underscores the necessity of carefully situating and understanding specific examples or cases within their individual cultural and historical contexts in addition to pursuing cross-cultural examinations of larger themes or questions pertaining to divine materiality, materialization, anthropomorphism, and agency.

Parts II and III of this volume elucidate a diverse array of themes and case studies pertaining to the materiality and materialization of the divine and of divine agency in the context of the ancient Near East specifically. The contribution by Benzel (Chapter 3) explores both the inherent properties and the attributed qualities of materials such as gold and silver, which were regarded in Mesopotamia as possessed not merely of economic value but also of magical, sacred, or even divine traits or characteristics. In considering the nature of human perception of and interaction with these materials both in their raw states and following their incorporation into finished things, particularly divine or holy things, Benzel demonstrates the capacity of materials in Mesopotamia to actively produce or create – rather than merely reflect or reproduce – the divine. Pongratz-Leisten's contribution (Chapter 4) explores the intersection between thing and thought, elucidating the relationship between the material and the mental conceptualization and representation of the divine. Her work emphasizes that it is not just the material divine, in the form of specific objects or images, that is capable of eliciting specific affective responses: mental images are also possessed of cognitive elements and may be emotionally charged or colored. Mental and material conceptualizations, here specifically of the divine, are simultaneously and equally associated with the construction and transmission of knowledge and of memory. Taking as her case study a select but striking array of first millennium BCE texts that describe divine bodies and body parts, Pongratz-Leisten explores the attribution of composite anthropomorphic forms to deities as a means of articulating the power of unified divine agency. She establishes that divine control – as it is achieved, maintained, and protected through cosmic combat – is both inherent and fundamental to the *presencing* of the divine in the context of these specific compositions. Also focusing on the divine body, but drawing especially on pictorial sources, Sonik (Chapter 5) examines in her contribution the construction of the anthropomorphic divine body in Mesopotamia and the implications and associations of physical and behavioral anthropomorphism. In a case study on Sun God Tablet from Sippar, a ninth century BCE artifact, she further assesses some of the multiple means by which the authoritative and (divinely) authorized status of a cult statue – and its fitness to *presence* the deity – could be established. In particular, Sonik focuses on the locating of objects, including cult statues, within a pictorial "stream of tradition" as a strategy for signaling their authoritative status and, specifically with respect to objects or images associated with the gods, perhaps also divine authorization for their crafting.

In Part III of the volume, the contributions by Fleming and Rendu-Loisel respectively explore visual engagement with the divine and auditory engagement with a supernatural agent. Fleming (Chapter 6), taking the *zukru* festival

at the city of Emar as his case study, examines the reciprocal gaze – a meeting of the eyes and, arguably, the minds, between deity and worshipper – as a powerful if non-verbal mode of communicating with the god Dagan. The actions of unveiling and veiling of the face of Dagan's cult statue during the festival respectively signal the accessibility and inaccessibility of the deity, rendering the reciprocal gaze either physically possible or impossible. Rendu-Loisel (Chapter 7), analyzing exorcistic rituals from the first millennium BCE, focuses on the element of noise incorporated into three *Utukkū Lemnūtu* incantations. Her study illuminates the diversity of modes through which divine or supernatural *presence* may be produced or rendered tangible or material – in this case specifically through the sounding off of Mighty Copper, likely represented within the limited framework of the relevant ritual by a pealing copper bell.

This volume had its inception in a workshop on the Materiality of Divine Agency in Cross-Cultural Perspective hosted by the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, New York University in April 2011. Organized by Beate Pongratz-Leisten, the workshop included Caroline Walker Bynum, Daniel Fleming, Milette Gaifman, Barbara Kowalzig, David Levene, Michael Puett, Karen Sonik, David Wengrow, and Joan Goodnick Westenholz among participants addressing such diverse cultural contexts as those of Bronze Age China, Archaic and Classical Greece, Mesopotamia, and the European Middle Ages. The workshop profited also from the thoughtful comments of the guests in attendance, and thanks are warmly extended to Brooke Holmes and Irene Winter. While the volume inspired by this workshop has come to focus much more closely on topics pertaining to divine materiality and agency in the context of the ancient Near East than the workshop that inspired it, something of the cross-cultural aspects of the original workshop continue to be communicated especially through the contributions contained in Part I of the volume. It is hoped that one of the original goals of both workshop and volume – to render some of the complexities and fascinating aspects of the Near Eastern material accessible to the numerous other fields currently engaged in elucidating culturally specific issues of the material divine and the materialization of divine agency, and to concurrently render something of the exciting and very stimulating scholarship being conducted in these other fields more accessible to scholars working on the ancient Near East – has been met thereby.

The editing of this volume, and the writing of its initial chapter, has been a fruitful collaboration between Beate Pongratz-Leisten, who has written and published extensively on the divine, divine agency, and religious thought and practice in the ancient Near East, and Karen Sonik, whose work has emphasized conceptions – and pictorial and literary materializations – of the super-

natural in Mesopotamia within the context of the larger Near Eastern and Mediterranean worlds. That Beate was deep in research pertaining to the cognitive science of religion and Karen in research on neuroaesthetics and anthropological approaches to the non-Western arts while this volume was being structured and edited has been a fortunate and enriching coincidence.

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Abbreviations

ABL	Harper, W. R. (ed.). *Assyrian and Babylonian Letters Belonging to the Kouyunjik Collections of the British Museum*. 14 vols. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1892–1914
AfO	*Archiv für Orientforschung*. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1923–
AHw	von Soden, Wolfram. *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1959–1981
ARET	Archivi reali di Ebla. Testi. Rome: Missione Archeologica Italiana in Siria, 1985–
ARM	*Archives royales de Mari*. Paris: Musée du Louvre. Département des Antiquités Orientales, 1941–
BBR	Zimmern, Heinrich. *Beiträge zur Kenntnis der babylonischen Religion*. Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1901
BM	Siglum for British Museum
CAD	*The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*. 21 vols. Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1956–2010
CBS	Siglum for Catalogue of the Babylonian Section at the University of Pennsylvania Museum
CT	Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum. London: Harrison and Sons, 1896–
ePSD	*Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary Project* (http://psd.museum.upenn.edu/epsd/index.html). Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology
ETCSL	Black, J. A., G. Cunningham, J. Ebeling, E. Flückiger-Hawker, E. Robson, J. Taylor, and G. Zólyomi. *Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature* (http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk). Oxford, 1998–2006
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1942–
K	Siglum for Kouyunjik (Nineveh) at British Museum
KAR	Ebeling, Erich. *Keilschrifttexte aus Assur religiösen Inhalts*. Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1919–1923
LKA	Ebeling, Erich. *Literarische Keilschrifttexte aus Assur*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1953
MIO	*Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1953–
OrNS	*Orientalia*, Nova Series. Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1932–
PBS	*Publications of the Babylonian Section*. Philadelphia, PA: The University Museum, 1911–
RlA	*Reallexikon der Assyriologie und vorderasiatischen Archäologie*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1928–
Streck Asb.	Streck, Maximilian. *Assurbanipal und die letzten assyrischen Könige bis zum Untergange Niniveh's*. Vorderasiatische Bibliothek 7. Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1916
TIM	*Texts in the Iraq Museum*. Baghdad: Wiesbaden 1964–
TM	Siglum for Tell Mardikh (Ebla)

UHF	Geller, Markham J. 1985. *Forerunners to Udug-Hul. Sumerian Exorcistic Incantations*. Freiburger Altorientalische Studien 12. Wiesbaden – Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag
Utukkū Lemnūtu	Geller, Markham J. 2007. *Evil Demons, Canonical Utukkū-Lemnūtu Incantations, Introduction, Cuneiform Text, and Transliteration with a Translation and Glossary*. State Archives of Assyria Cuneiform Texts 5. Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project
YBC	Siglum for tablets from Yale Babylonian Collection, New Haven
YOS	*Yale Oriental Series*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press
ZA	*Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie*. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1886–

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Contributors

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Karen Sonik is Assistant Professor of Ancient Art at Auburn University. She completed her Ph.D. in the Art & Archaeology of the Mediterranean World at the University of Pennsylvania, and has been a Visiting Research Scholar at the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, New York University and a postdoctoral fellow at the University of California, Los Angeles and Brown University. She specializes in the visual arts and culture of Mesopotamia and interconnections between the Near Eastern and Mediterranean worlds. Her previous work has focused on elucidating conceptions of the supernatural in Mesopotamia; current research explores the relationship between word and image in the ancient Near East and theoretical approaches to ancient and non-Western arts.

Part I: The Material Divine: Anthropomorphism, Animation, and Agency in Cross-Cultural Perspective

Beate Pongratz-Leisten and Karen Sonik

Between Cognition and Culture: Theorizing the Materiality of Divine Agency in Cross-Cultural Perspective

Abstract: Specifically addressing the means and manner whereby the divine might be materialized or *presenced* in a particular matrix, divine images might act on and interact with individuals, and inanimate or even animate objects or entities might acquire a measure of divine agency so that they come to function, in effect, as (secondary) divine agents, this contribution (as well as the diverse essays contained in this volume) maintains a central emphasis on and exploration of the communicative potential and actuality of the material divine. It also explores, as a corollary, such issues as mimesis and portraiture in the context of divine representations, the definition and application of the terms animate and anthropomorphic to the material and materialized divine, and the nuanced distinctions between the concepts of image, likeness, and representation as these are negotiated in diverse cultural and spatiotemporal contexts.

Keywords: Agency, animacy, divine, image, likeness, materiality, mimesis, *presence*, representation

1 Matter Matters and Materiality

In recent decades, the development of materiality as a critical term and the burgeoning interest in pursuing its implications across diverse disciplines – anthropology, art history, sociology, and the history and cognitive science of religion among these – has seen the expansion and nuancing of its use and meaning beyond mere corporeity, the possession of physical substance.[1] It is

1 This proliferation of uses across diverse disciplines has had some unfortunate repercussions: the concept of materiality has been (rightfully) criticized as not merely unwieldy but, indeed, sometimes utterly opaque and impenetrable, Ingold 2007. It is vital, consequently, to delineate those aspects of or approaches to materiality that are specifically relevant where the concept is being deployed.

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frequently if not always intentionally delineated as overlapping with material culture,[2] itself a complex and somewhat protean concept diversely or even simultaneously signifying the material expression or reflection of human behavior or practice (Glassie 1999: 41),[3] an active and dynamic "social practice constitutive of the social order" (Preucel 2006: 5),[4] and a "scaffold for distributed cognition" (Dunbar et al. 2010: 4; DeMarrais et al. 2004; Renfrew and Scarre 1998).[5] In addition to these inherited implications, materiality has been productively delineated as a multifaceted concept in its own right: a means of exploring both *immateriality*, "the merely apparent, behind which lies that which is real" (Miller 2005: 1),[6] and *mutuality*, "the myriad ways in which material culture mediates social being" (Preucel 2006: 5; Gosden 1994: 82 ff.), as well as comprising "a relational perspective on materials, one that obliges us to think about their properties, qualities, or affordances" (Hodder 2012: 191; Ingold 2007; Graves-Brown 2000: 4).[7]

Concomitant with a renewed emphasis on the material, the eliding or obscuring of the traditional boundaries erected between art and nature (Pomian 1990: 69–79; Daston and Park 1998: 265–76; Daston 2004: 21, 24), subject and object (Gell 1998; Miller 2005; Marcoulatos 2003), person and non-person (Hallowell 1960; Kopytoff 1986; Dubois 2003; Knappett 2005), human and non-human (Latour 1993, 1999), the mental and the material (Renfrew and Scarre 1998; DeMarrais et al. 2004), the functional and the symbolic (Hodder 1982; Knappett 2005: 8), and spirit and matter (Keane 2003; Meskell 2005) – along-

2 Some of the nuances of the various scholarly conceptualizations of material culture, materiality, and material agency are usefully unpacked in Hicks 2010 and further elucidated (if not necessarily consistently interpreted) in the various other contributions contained in Hicks and Beaudry 2010.

3 Any study of material culture, therefore, must inevitably grapple with its semiotic dimension since material culture – being a product of human activity – inevitably signifies something other than itself, Preucel 2006: 4.

4 As an example of this active functioning of material culture to shape, support, or constitute social order, Preucel (2006: 5) cited Hodder's (1982: 85) exploration of how different artifact types could diversely function to support or to disrupt specific ethnic distinctions or flows of information within the context of the Baringo district in Kenya.

5 For the elucidation of *things in motion*, see Appadurai 1986a: 5 ff.; Kopytoff 1986. For the disembodiment of mind into material culture, with material culture not only comprising an expression of human cognition but also playing an active role in the formulation of thoughts and the transmission of ideas, see also Mithen 1998b: 7–8.

6 See also fn. 3 above.

7 Affordances were succinctly described by Graves-Brown (2000: 4) as characteristics of the world that emerged only in the *relationship* between actor and matter. See, further, Gibson 1977, 1979; Lovelace 1991; Williams and Costall 2000.

side a developing interest in thoroughly elucidating specific object worlds and biographies (Kopytoff 1986; Gosden 1999; Meskell 2004b) – has given rise to a new and fruitful discourse on matters of matter in which the concept of materiality continues to play a central role.

The intention of the current volume is to scrutinize the notion of materiality in its contact with the divine and to reconsider its implications for human cognition. Prerequisite to such an undertaking is the understanding that the human mind operates using representations or mental contents – pictorial, compositional, and abstract – and that experience automatically organizes these in broader frameworks or schemas.[8] Taking such cognitive mental states and processes into account transforms the approach to materiality taken here into something distinct from the consideration of matter as mere physical stuff, that which is visible or tangible to the senses. If matter matters, it is the mental framework assigning it meaning in particular institutional and cultural contexts that provides the explanatory pattern for *why* it matters. The contexts in which it might occur, moreover, are by no means static or singular, so that objects might come down to us with an entire complex trajectory. This approach to materiality, while it acknowledges alterations in the meaning of matter that might (and do) develop over time, should still be regarded as distinct from the life history approach to things that has taken (productive) root in the humanities and social science over the past three decades (i.e. Appadurai 1986b; Schiffer 1999; Meskell 2004b; Morgan 2010).

The cognitive approach espoused here, based on the "epistemological condition that no human being can have direct knowledge of any 'thing'" (Carruthers 1998: 14) but depends rather on memory and active recollection – working, essentially, by association – not only allows for but, indeed, demands the use of information gleaned from textual sources where it is available. It ties into Mark Johnson's rejection of the rigid objectivist separation of understanding from sensation and imagination and his call for a theory of meaning that "highlights the dynamic, interactive character of understanding" (Johnson 1990: 175; Lakoff and Johnson 2003). Understanding an object is a historically

8 Schemas or schemata, first postulated by the British psychologist Frederic C. Bartlett (1932) to theorize the process whereby the past is flexibly utilized both to adapt to the contemporary environment and to prepare for the future environment (Wagoner 2012: 1040), have since been extensively explored and elucidated; see the discussions in Weisberg and Reeves 2013: 101–104; Anastasio et al. 2012: 127–59; Hollingworth 2008: 144–46 (specifically on scene schemas); Brewer 2000. While there is some variability in the definition of the concept of schema, it might generally be described as denoting a generic (and dynamic) knowledge structure by which concepts and experiences are organized and processed.

and culturally embedded, humanly embodied, imaginatively structured event, the meaning of which is always tied to a particular community.[9] Meaning, in such a context, becomes a matter of relatedness that is irreducibly intentional: a mental event or symbol may possess meaning only provided there exists some *one* for whom it "is meaningful by virtue of its relation to something beyond itself" (Johnson 1990: 177) – in this case taking divinity as a referent. It is the specific performative actions of an individual, grounded in his or her understanding and imagination, that establish a relationship between an agent operating on behalf of a divinity and the divinity itself as referent – and that enables us to speak of objects or images as agents or even (detachable) *parts* of the composite divine.[10] In this point in particular, then, the stance on materiality adopted here diverges from that often adopted in material culture studies, according to which (materially existing) things possess a significance, and a capacity to affect the world, that is independent of human action or manipulation of them (Tilley et al. 2006: 4).[11] Whether meaning may actually be severed from language in this manner, indeed, remains unclear, and studies on cognition continue to debate this point. The approach adopted here regards cultural knowledge and cultural memory as central to and inextricable from any discussion of the materiality of things, particularly – as in this volume – things that have been assigned sacred status due to their consecration, their use in cultic contexts, or their functioning as (secondary) divine agents.

2 A Definition of Terms: Divine, Sacral, and Animate(d) Things

It is useful to include here a brief definition and elucidation of key terms and concepts considered in this chapter and in the volume at large:[12] divine, sacral

9 The contributions contained in DeMarrais et al. 2004 address some of these concerns.

10 The concept of the partible person, as delineated in Strathern 1988, and the concept of the partible mind, as delineated in Gell 1998, have contributed to a productive conception of the composite divine; see also (discussing the Mesopotamian context specifically) Pongratz-Leisten, this volume, 2011; also Bahrani 2003: 137.

11 Material culture meanings, as compared in Hodder (1989: 64–78, 73) to meanings in language, have indeed been described as "less logical and more immediate, use-bound and contextual than meanings in language," and, by virtue of these qualities, as "non-arbitrary." While this argument must necessarily be examined on its own merits, it emphasizes the necessity of elucidating material culture meanings where possible.

12 Significant care has been taken, wherever possible, to ensure a consistency in the use and meaning of specific terms and language throughout this volume.

or sacred, and *presence*. (Agency or "doing," the capacity to act as a person or at least social other, and anthropomorphism, the possession of human physical form and/*or* other human qualities, characteristics, or behaviors, are elucidated in the pertinent sections below.) The term divine, notably, is adopted – where appropriate and where possible – in preference to the term God or gods; it has the benefit of being both sufficiently neutral and sufficiently nonspecific to be broadly applicable in the type of cross-cultural discussion undertaken here. Divinity, moreover, need not necessarily be localized in a singular agent, anthropomorphic or otherwise, but may also comprise a relative rather than an absolute status, a cluster of qualities applicable and applied to varying degrees to a range of different types of things.[13]

Similarly broadly applied are the terms sacral or sacred, which describe things deriving from, offering a channel or a portal to, or otherwise being formally associated with religious practice or even identified with the divine. Sacred objects, in opposition to mundane or even profane ones, were famously defined by Durkheim (1964 [1915]: 47) as "things set apart and forbidden." This definition may be retained here provided that sacred (as divine) is recognized as a relative rather than an absolute status, one existing on the latter end of the continuum stretching between the ordinary and the special, and that thing is understood as encompassing not merely material objects or matter but also persons, phenomena, or events.[14]

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13 This conceptualization of the divine as a relative category rather than an absolute one was developed by Gradel (2002: 26) with respect to Rome and was productively applied to the Near East by Pongratz-Leisten (2011 and this volume), who noted that divinity as a *relative status* can be assigned to living and dead kings, ancestors, steles, and cultic paraphernalia. Further pertinent analyses of divinities and divine status in Mesopotamia appear in Selz 1997, 2008; Porter 2000, 2009. See also, on the challenges of constructing any hard and fast divisions between the various supernatural (interstitial) entities of Mesopotamia, which overlap in various features and modes of functioning, Sonik 2013a.

14 A considered analysis of Durkheim's treatment of the sacred appears in Riley 2005. Discussing things set apart or special (whether positive or negative), Taves (2009: 10–14, 27–29) has also productively drawn on Kopytoff's (1986, esp. pp. 73–83) analysis of the processes of singularization and individualization. Importantly, the distinction drawn between sacred and profane/mundane/secular is neither absolute nor applicable in all contexts, a point that has been productively elucidated in a number of recent symposia and volumes on the ancient and medieval worlds; see, as a small sample of these works, Ragavan 2013 (publishing a 2012 Oriental Institute Seminar), Walker and Luyster 2009 (publishing the results of a 2006 College Art Association session); Gerstel 2006 (publishing a 2003 Dumbarton Oaks Symposium). Pertinent case studies forcing us to confront the fact that the borders between secular and profane or mundane are often neither what nor where we might expect them to be, if they are to be located at all, include two particularly striking material examples from the western medieval world: the secular and sometimes sexually explicit or even apparently obscene pilgrim(age)

The term animate is applied here to describe the awakening of specific divine images or objects as well as the *presencing* (discussed below) of the divine within particular material matrices.[15] In some cases, certainly, one might better discuss such sacral or divine things within the framework – quite literally, in some cases – of "things that talk," *composites* of different species that "straddle boundaries between kinds" (Daston 2004: 21). The term animate, however, remains useful in that it foregrounds a practical grappling between *made things*, which are produced or crafted through human agency or mediation, and *divine or sacred things*, with respect to which human agency is often effaced or even explicitly denied – a grappling that frequently leaves traces in originating contexts even where it has been deliberately downplayed or effaced in theological theorizing. The Greek term *acheiropoieta*, for example, identifies miraculous portraits or representations that were "not made by any [human] hand," encompassing in the Christian tradition such images as the Mandylion (Image of Edessa). The *acheiropoieta* are not limited to this context, however; ancient Greek sources include various accounts of divine images that had miraculously *appeared*, having fallen perhaps from the heavens or yielded by the seas, and that were understood as products of divine rather than human agency.[16] In Mesopotamia, for its part, written sources referred to the birth (Sumerian **tu**(**d**); Akkadian [*w*]*alādu*) rather than the making or crafting (*epēšu*) of cult statues, which could also be recognized as divine or gods (*ilu*) even prior to the performance of the rituals (*mīs pî* and *pīt pî*) that enabled them to interact with humans and to both receive and give attention (Walker and Dick 1999:

badges, which are extant especially from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (Koldeweij 1999, 2005; Jones 2002, 2004; Stockhorst 2009), and the confounding (at first and even second or third sight) grotesque, bizarre, and sometimes astonishingly graphic renderings in the margins of otherwise sober religious manuscripts (Randall 1966; Camille 1992, 1994; Hamburger 1993; Nishimura 2009). This being said, the delineation of particular spaces, objects, and persons as sacred in specific (if delimited) contexts remains both legitimate and, in our opinion, necessary for analytical purposes.

15 The term animate(d) is here used in preference to living (vivified or enlivened) as a descriptor for matter or images perceived in their originating contexts as possessing or attributed with agency: (social) agency, which may be possessed by all manner of things and images, is not equivalent to biological life or to the full spectrum of human agency, though this latter may be possessed or demonstrated to a greater degree by animate(d) – formally, spontaneously, or otherwise – matter. The term living image (Freedberg 1989; Mitchell 2005) is deliberately eschewed here to avoid entanglement with certain unintended connotations that it has acquired in recent theorizing; see Van Eck 2010: 18 n. 3.

16 The ancient Greek accounts of divine images linked with ephiphanic arrival narratives is thoughtfully explored in Platt 2011: 92–100. See also main text below for a more detailed discussion of this phenomenon.