

Symbols and Models in the Mediterranean

Symbols and Models in the Mediterranean:

Perceiving through Cultures

Edited by

Aneilya Barnes and Mariarosaria Salerno

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Illustrations	viii
List of Tables	x
Editors' Preface	xi
Introduction	1
Aneilya Barnes	
REPRESENTING AND RE-MODELING ORDER IN THE MEDITERRANEAN	
Chapter One.....	18
Political and Religious Models in the Medieval Mediterranean	
Jean-Marie Martin	
Chapter Two	33
A Model of Leadership: Descriptions and Portraits of the Normans	
in Southern Europe	
Mariarosaria Salerno	
Chapter Three	51
Terminology in the Models of Economic Structures in Medieval	
Calabria (11 th -13 th Century)	
Riccardo Berardi	
Chapter Four.....	70
Interpretation and Symbolism in Medieval Thought: The Joachimite's	
Break at the End of the Twelfth Century	
Luca Parisoli	
SYMBOLISM IN MEDITERRANEAN ART AND ARCHITECTURE	
Chapter Five	90
Constructing Maritime Worlds: The Problem of Objects	
Linda Hulin and Damian Robinson	

Chapter Six.....	107
The Eagle as a Divine Symbol in the Ancient Mediterranean Simone Voegtle	
Chapter Seven.....	124
A Lamp from the Belgrade City Museum with a Representation of SS. Constantine and Helen Branka M. Gugolj and Danijela T. Tešić–Radovanović	
Chapter Eight.....	136
Symbols and Figurative Sacred Art as a Representative Overview of the Christian East Attilio Vaccaro	
Chapter Nine.....	160
Evoking a Distant Past? The Chevron Motif as an Emblematic Relic of Crusader Architecture in Late Medieval Cyprus Thomas Kaffenberger	
STUDYING SYMBOLS IN LITERATURE	
Chapter Ten.....	190
Dream Symbols in the Mediterranean World: Woman’s Position in Byzantine Society Vassiliki Kokkori	
Chapter Eleven.....	210
Reality and Symbols in Byzantine Ecphrastic Texts of the Ninth and Tenth Centuries Gioacchino Strano	
Chapter Twelve.....	229
The Cult of the Dragon-slaying Saints in Calabria Massimo Bidotti	
Chapter Thirteen.....	242
Abduction in the Slovenian Ballad of “Fair Vida”: Symbolism and Parallels in the Mediterranean Region Irena Avsenik Nabergoj	

Chapter Fourteen	265
Symbols of the Mediterranean in Ernest Renan's <i>La Vie de Jesus</i> Yousra Sabra	
Notes on Contributors	280

CHAPTER TEN

DREAM SYMBOLS
IN THE MEDITERRANEAN WORLD:
WOMAN'S POSITION IN BYZANTINE SOCIETY

VASSILIKI KOKKORI*

Every society develops a system of symbols that expresses the mental life of human beings via a new perspective of the world that surrounds them.¹ For example, symbolism holds a prominent position in the Byzantine world with an emphatic presence in the Divine Liturgy, in iconography, and in literary texts,² as well as in the texts of dreambooks (*Oneirocritica* in Greek). The tradition of the Byzantine dream interpretation includes nine dreambooks, which cover the period from late antiquity until the fifteenth century. Spurious or not, they are attributed to the pagan Artemidorus Ephesius (second century),³ to the prophet Daniel (fourth to the seventh century),⁴ to the “Arab” Achmet (ninth century),⁵ to

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¹ According to the social psychologist Erich Fromm: “symbolic language is the only universal language that has been created by humankind. It is the language in which the internal experiences, feelings and thoughts are expressed as being felt experiences and events of the external world,” E. Fromm, *The forgotten language* (Holt, 1974), Greek transl., *Η ξεχασμένη Γλώσσα*, (Athens, 1975), p. 17.

² About the symbolism in Christianity, see: F. W. Dillistone, *Christianity and symbolism* (London, 1955), W. L. Rowe, *Religion Symbols and God* (Chicago, 1968), *Symbolik des Orthodoxen Christentums*, ed. K. C. Felmy (Stuttgart, 1968), M. van Parys, *Le symbolisme dans la liturgie Byzantine* (Louvain, 1985), pp. 265–73.

³ Artemidorus, *Artemidori Daldiani Oneirocriticon libri V*, ed. Roger Pack (Leipzig, 1963).

⁴ Daniel I = Daniel, *Ὀνειροκριτικόν σὺν Θεῷ ἀγίῳ τοῦ ἀγίου προφήτου Δανιὴλ κατὰ ἀλφάβητον*, ed. F. Drexl, “Das Traumbuch des propheten Daniel nach dem cod. Vatic Palat. Gr. 319,” *BZ* 26(1926), 290–314. Also, there is another edition of

the magician Astrampsychus (ninth to the thirteenth century),⁶ to the Patriarchs of Constantinople and Nikephorus I (ninth to the twelfth century),⁷ to Germanus I (tenth to the fourteenth century),⁸ and to the Byzantine emperor Manuel II Palaeologus (fifteenth century).⁹ In addition to the above, there are two *Oneirocritica* of unknown authorship: Anonymous I (ninth to the fifteenth century)¹⁰ and Anonymous II.¹¹ The dreambooks' variety of subjects includes the political, social, and everyday life, as well as the perceptions of the position of women in Byzantine society, which is the subject of this chapter. Below, we will examine only the symbols that refer to fauna and flora of the Greeks' and Romans' Mediterranean Sea. Before continuing, it is important to highlight two main factors that affect the conclusions of this study decisively. The first factor is that the dreambooks' texts are products of male writing and, therefore, convey a one-sided perspective. The second factor concerns the symbolic character of their writing, which hampers a more thorough study, and it often demands a hypothetical approach of interpretation and a great deal of imagination.

Daniel's *Oneirocriticon*: Daniel II = Daniel, *Όνειροκριτικόν βιβλίον τοῦ προφήτου Δανιὴλ πρὸς τὸν βασιλεῖα Ναβουχοδονόσορ κατὰ ἀλφάβητον*, ed. E. De Stoop, "Onirocriticon du prophète Daniel dédiée au roi Nabuchodonosor," *Revue de Philologie de Littérature et d'Histoire Anciennes*, 33(1909), 93–111.

⁵ Achmet, *Achmetis, Oneirocriticon*, ed. Franz Drexl (Leipzig, 1925).

⁶ Astrampsychus, *Artemidori Daldiani et Achmetis Sereimi F. Oneirocritica, Astrampsychi et Nicephori versus etiam oneirocritici*, ed. N. Rigault (Paris, 1603).

⁷ Nicephorus I = *Das Traumbuch des Patriarchen Nikephoros*, ed. F. Drexl (Bonn, 1922), pp. 94–118. Also, there is another edition of Nicephorus's *Oneirocriticon*:

Nicephorus II = *Pseudo-Niceforo, Libro dei sogni*, ed. G. Guidorizzi, *Libro dei Sogni* (Napoli, 1980).

⁸ Germanus, *Όνειροκριτικόν τοῦ Πατριάρχου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως κυροῦ Γερμανοῦ*, ed. F. Drexl, "Das Traumbuch des Patriarchen Germanos," *Λαογραφία*, 7(1923), 428–48.

⁹ Manuel, *Όνειροκριτικόν κατὰ Μανουὴλ τοῦ Παλαιολόγου*, in *Anecdota Atheniensia*, vol. I: textes Grecs inédits relatifs a l'histoire des religions, ed. A. Dellatte (Liège, 1927), pp. 511–24.

¹⁰ Anonymous I = *Άνώνυμος ἢ ἕτερον όνειροκριτικόν ἀπό πείρας φρονίμων*, ed. F. Drexl, "Das Anonyme Traumbuch des cod. Paris 2511," *Λαογραφία* 8(1925), 347–75.

¹¹ Anonymous II = *Άνώνυμος ἢ ἕτερον όνειροκριτικόν ἀπό πείρας φρονίμων*, in *Anecdota Atheniensia*, vol. I: textes Grecs inédits relatifs a l'histoire des religions, ed. A. Dellatte (Liège, 1927), pp. 527–47.

Mammals and Serpents

The examination of symbols will start with those that refer to animals and birds. The relationships of humans with animals are reflected in many levels of life. Byzantines, fond of the animal stories, wrote texts with allegorical character, like *Physiologist*, which, in turn, influenced works known in the West as *Bestiaries*.¹²

The fox represented an evil and insidious woman. For dream interpreter Artemidorus, the fox indicates that the enemy will attack underhandedly, like a woman.¹³ Achmet's interpretation is similarly negative and ominous, as he states, "someone who dreams that he plays with a tamed fox or that he brings it home, will meet a vixen woman and a witch."¹⁴ From antiquity, sources impute both to woman and fox exactly the same negative qualities. The ancient Greek poet Semonides of Amorgos¹⁵ (seventh century BCE) believed that God created woman, like

¹² *Physiologos* is a didactic text, attached to animals' human qualities and defects. It was probably written in the second century AD, but it has different literary periods from the second until the thirteenth century. This kind of didactic fiction began in the sixth century by Aesop, who is considered as the founder of the literary genre now called parable or allegory. In medieval times, *Physiologos* proves the great love of the Byzantines for animals, and, although it contains moralizing and paradoxes, it strongly indicates the didactic character. The work had a profound literary influence on neighboring nations, and it was translated into Latin, Syriac, Coptic, Slavic, etc. Equally, it greatly influenced the medieval West, leading zoomorphic symbolism to flourish and to a widespread dissemination of the readings called bestiaries, H. G. Beck, *Geschichte der Byzantinischen Volksliteratur* (Munich, 1971), Greek transl., *Ιστορία της Βυζαντινής Δημόδου Λογοτεχνίας* (Athens, 1989), p. 280, ODB (Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium), *Physiologos*, 3:1674. For a general overview of medieval bestiaries, see: D. Hassing, *Medieval Bestiaries: text, image, ideology* (New York, 1995), J.-P. Clebert, *Bestiario, Οι μυθικοί συμβολισμοί των ζώων* (Athens, 2004). For the *Physiologos*'s source, see: *Physiologos*, ed. F. Sbordone (Milan, 1936).

¹³ Artemidorus 124₁₀₋₁₃: «άλωπηξ... ὡς ἐπὶ τὸ πλεῖστον γυναικας σημαίνει τὰς ἐπιτιθεμένας.»

¹⁴ Achmet 22415₋₁₇: «Εἰ δέ ἴδῃ, ὅτι συμπαίζει ἀλώπεκι ἢ ἦρεν αὐτὴν ὡς ἡμερον ἐν <τῷ> οἴκῳ αὐτοῦ, φιλιᾷσει γυναικὶ κακίστη καὶ μαγευθήσεται παρ' αὐτῆς.» In modern Greece, even today, the fox is considered by shepherds a big threat to their animals, and people fear similar curses and spells, An. Karanastasis, «Ποιμενικά στην Κω», *Λαογραφία* 16(1956), 21–104, p. 79–80.

¹⁵ Semonides of Amorgos is considered one of the earliest representatives of a literary way of expression of parody and satire. In the poem *Iamvos against Women*, he compared female characters to animals, which must be considered as an early example of a theme beloved in the later literature: the offense of women

the cunning fox, ruthless and unnecessarily “omniscient.”¹⁶ Simonides’s work epitomizes the bad reputation of women, which has prevailed since ancient times. The main source of inspiration of Simonides is believed to be the myth of Pandora (Hesiod, *Theogony*, 570–615). Despite the negativity towards women, the poem is a valuable source of information on perceptions about women for this period.

The bear symbolized woman in general. Bear is the continuity of a very ancient life with a prominent position in Greek mythology. Artemidorus explains, “bear means woman (because those who wrote of myths related to transformations say that it was Callisto from Arcadia who had been transformed into an animal).”¹⁷ This interpretation is based on the well-known myth of Callisto who had been transformed first into a bear and then into Ursa Major.¹⁸ In antiquity, the bear is one of the symbols of the goddess Artemis. It is worth noting that there was an ancient Greek ritual in which young virgins, “the arkti” (namely bears), used to visit the shrine of the goddess Artemis before their wedding.¹⁹

from a world view clearly in favor of men. The poet uses the characteristics of seven animals, two elements, and an insect. All similarities are negative, except that of the bee, which the Byzantine dreambooks do not attribute to woman but to the enemies of the dreamer, as the *Oneirocriticon* of Manuel 523₈₋₉ describes: “ἐάν ἴδῃ τις μελίσσας, κρίνεται εἰς ἐχθρῶν ἀποβολήν καὶ ἐπιδρομήν ἢ εἰς κοινοῦ λαοῦ ἐπανάστασιν.” For the source see: *Females of the species: Semonides on Women*, ed. H. Lloyd-Jones (London, 1975). For Simonides’s works see further: P.E. Easterling, B. M. W. Knox, *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature. I: Greek Literature* (Cambridge, 1985), Greek transl., *Ἱστορία Αρχαίας Ελληνικής Λογοτεχνίας* (Athens, 2000), pp. 214–9.

¹⁶ Semonides of Amorgos, *Women*, pp. 7–11

¹⁷ Artemidorus 122₂₂: “Ἄρκτος δὲ γυναῖκα σημαίνει (φασὶ γὰρ ἐκ Καλλιστοῦς τῆς Ἀρκαδικῆς μεταβαλεῖν τὸ ζῶον οἱ περὶ μεταμορφώσεων μυθολογήσαντες).”

¹⁸ According to Greek mythology, Callisto, follower of goddess Artemis, had her son Arcas with the god Zeus. Zeus, afraid of his goddess wife’s (Hera) rage, transformed Callisto into a bear, and then he placed her in the sky as a constellation called Ursa Major, Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, VIII.35.8, Ovidius, *Metamorphoses*, II: 405–531.

¹⁹ Artemis was the protector goddess of chastity and childbirth. In contrast to the urban goddess Athena, Artemis is presented in distant places close to nature, which makes her the protector of the plant and animal world. She had many names and according to mythology, her cult was connected with rituals of human sacrifice. Relevant sources include Hesiod, *Theogony*, 918, Apollodorus, *Library*, 1.4.1, Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, I.33, 8.27. See also: S. Blundell, *Women in Ancient Greece* (Harvard, 1995), Greek transl., *Γυναίκες στην Αρχαία Ελλάδα* (Athens, 2004), pp. 44–8, and C. Sourvinou-Inwood, *Studies in girls’ transitions:*

The cat symbolized the cunning and catty woman or thief. The cat was a widespread pet since the time of ancient Egypt. It is generally accepted that dreambooks impute to cat negative traits, like wile and fraudulence. In relation to this, Artemidorus reports, “cat signifies cunning and ill-tempered woman.”²⁰ Apart from the above, the dreambooks, for some reason, also reproach women for their thieving natures, stating, “if you dream of a cat, this means a thief woman,” reports Nikephorus’s dream book.²¹ This negative perception of the cat in oneirocritic sources is mainly a reflection of folks’ superstitions that cats are bad omens. For medieval people, a black cat was ominous because of its obscure color and because it was believed that witches used a black cat as a demonic carrier. The cat’s presence in Byzantine sources is rare and not at all flattering, as Ewald Kislinger highlights. For example, in the satirical poem “Battle of Cats and Mice (*Κατομωμαχία*),”²² the cat is described as a gluttonous and omnivorous animal.²³ Similarly, Semonides of Amorgos says that “nothing beautiful or attractive someone will find to a cat.”²⁴

Snakes represented wealthy women. Snakes, on a global scale, are characterized by symbolic polysemy. However, the snake is chiefly a phallic symbol, as evidenced by the female dream in Artemidorus’s *Oneirocriticon*, which he explains, “if someone’s wife hides a serpent in her bosom and this delights her, then she is committing adultery.”²⁵ The symbolic meaning of the serpent in dreambooks depends on the writing period of each text. Thus, in his *Oneirocriticon*, Artemidorus observed that the symbol has an auspicious character, stating, “if a man dreams that he is being bitten by a snake, this foretells illness and enemies.”²⁶ With the advent of Christianity, this interpretative approach of the symbol was

aspects of the arkteia and age representation in Attic iconography (Athens, 1988), pp. 15, 33, 39.

²⁰ Artemidorus 216₁₁: “Γαλιῆ δέ γυναῖκα σημαίνει πανοῦργον καὶ κακότροπον.”

²¹ Nicephorus I 150: “Κατοῦδα φανεῖσα γυνή κλέπτει πέλει,” also see Nicephorus II 78:60.

²² *Katomyomachia* or *Galeomachia* is considered as a brilliant example of theatrical literature and unique in its kind. It is a tragicomedy, consisting of 384 iambic verses, and the authorship is attributed to Theodore Prodromos. See: *Theodoros Prodromos, Der byzantinische Katz-Mause-Krieg, Katomyomachia*, ed. H. Hunger (Granz, 1968).

²³ E. Kislinger, “Byzantine Cats,” in *Ζῶα και Περιβάλλον στο Βυζάντιο: 7^{ος}-12^{ος} αι.*, eds Ηλ. Αναγνωστάκης, Τ. Κόλιας (Athens, 2011), pp. 165–78.

²⁴ Semonides of Amorgos, *Women*, pp. 50–2.

²⁵ Artemidorus 127₁₇₋₁₉: “οἶον δ’ ἂν ἐρπετόν γυνή ἐν τῷ κόλπῳ ἔχουσα κρύπτη καὶ ἐπ’ αὐτῷ τέρπηται, μοιχεύεται.”

²⁶ Artemidorus 127₁₁: “Ὀφίς δέ νόσον σημαίνει καὶ ἐχθρόν.”

altered, because Artemidorus's world, dreamy and real, had no Devil with the Christian sense of temptation and of ultimate evil. For Byzantines, the snake is the most ominous symbol. In Daniel, for example, "a serpent in the bed of a dreamer betokens that a woman will enter their home."²⁷ In the Anonymous *Oneirocritica* I and II, the symbol is interpreted according to the dreamer's sex. Thus, "if a man dreams of a snake in his bed, then he will copulate with an unmarried woman."²⁸ On the contrary, if the dreamer is a woman, the dream "denotes widowhood." For the contemporary reader, the interpretations of Daniel and of the Anonymous texts consist of a rather pleasant event when the dreamer is a man. However, for the people of the *Oneirocritica* age the phrase "a woman will enter their home" sounds more like a menace. This could be due either to the moral and social offence of sexual intercourse outside of marriage or to the ill-tempered character of a woman.

Some people praise women, but the majority speak about them in humiliating and derogatory terms.²⁹ One thing is certain: these views are mainly the expressions of the male point of view. This negative attitude towards women is both evident in the perception of the Greco-Roman world³⁰ and also in the Jewish and Christian tradition: the "left" always symbolizes the female, the unfavorable and the ominous,³¹ while the right is the wise.³² This view is confirmed by the interpretations of the dreambooks in which the left eye and hand mean the woman.³³ Especially with the establishment of Christianity, women became the main recipients of an ambiguous attitude, resulting in a composite of views in antiquity

²⁷ Daniel I 263: "ὄφιν εἰς κλίνην ἀγαγεῖν, γυναῖκα εἰς τόν οἶκον σου εἰσελεύσεσθαι δηλοῖ," Daniel II 395: "ὄφιν εἰς οἶκον ἄγειν, γυναῖκα τῷ οἴκῳ σου εἰσεῖναι <σημαίνει>."

²⁸ Anonymous I 278: "ὄφιν ἐν κλίνῃ ἰδεῖν ἄγαμον γυναῖκα σημαίνει γήμασθαι. ἐχούσης δέ ἄνδρα χηρείαν δηλοῖ," see also Anonymous II 539¹³⁻¹⁴.

²⁹ Hesiod, for example, in *Theogony*, 535–602, talks about the pernicious type of women and about Pandora that led mankind to destruction.

³⁰ J. Gould, "Law, custom and myths: aspects of the social positions of women in classical Athens," *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 109(1980), 38–59, p. 38 passim, C. Mosse, *La Femme dans la Grèce antique* (Paris, 1983), p. 103 passim, S. Blundell, *Women*.

³¹ According to the Pythagorean philosophy, the creation of beings is based on contrasting principles: finite-infinite, light-dark, good-bad, right-left, male-female, etc., Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, A 986a–b. The first part of each pair has positive characteristics and the second negative characteristics. This theory underscores the symbolic association of women with the negative characteristics of the left side.

³² Lexicon *Souda*, 1.353.

³³ Artemidorus 37¹⁸⁻²⁰, Artemidorus 48¹³⁻¹⁴

and the Old and New Testament. Thus, according to these notions, women were created for the best and the worst: on one side, women were condemned by the legacy of Eve (receptive of temptation, vanity, foolishness, weak, and inclined to lust), and, on the other, they were exalted for the immaculate image of the Virgin Mary. Significant is the conversation between the emperor Theofilos and the hymnographer Kassia.³⁴ The emperor said to Kassia: *ἐκ γυναικός ἐρρήθη τά φαύλα*, “Through a woman [came forth] the viler [things],” referring to the sin and suffering coming as a result of Eve’s transgression. Kassia responded by saying, *καί ἐκ γυναικός πηγάζει τά κρείττονα* (“And through a woman [came forth] the best [things],”³⁵ referring to the hope of salvation resulting from the incarnation of Christ through the Virgin Mary.

The mule signified poor women and women without honor. The first who historically reported on the mule was Herodotus in the war expedition of Xerxes against the Greeks.³⁶ For Achmet, “if someone dreams of riding a mule with a saddle on, it means the poor and without honor woman.”³⁷ The reasons behind this ominous interpretation can be traced to the mule’s inability to reproduce. The diviner juxtaposes the reproductive incompetence of the animal with female infertility, an attribute that socially stigmatized women. Since antiquity, motherhood has been the most important role praised for women. Procreation is the means of their social recognition and childlessness for their impairment. Also, childlessness is considered shameful and causes great distress for the whole family. Moreover, the childless woman becomes an object of contempt and often isolated from her social surroundings.³⁸

³⁴ Three Byzantine chroniclers, Pseudo-Symeon the Logothete, George the Monk, and Leo the Grammarian, claim that Kassia was a participant in the “beauty contest” for the choosing of imperial wife.

³⁵ Pseudo-Symeon the Logothete, *Χρονογραφία*, 625. See Pseudo-Symeon the Logothete, *Χρονογραφία*, ed. I. Bekker (Bonn, 1838).

³⁶ Herodotus, *The Histories*, 1.55 and 7.57.

³⁷ Achmet 183₂₃₋₂₄: “Εάν ἴδῃ τις, ὅτι ἐκαβαλλίκευσεν ἡμίονον μετὰ τό σάγμα, ἐπί παντός προσώπου εἰς ἄτιμον γυναικα κρίνεται καί πένησσαν.”

³⁸ A. Laiou, “The role of the women in Byzantine society,” *JÖB* 31/1(1981), Akten I/1, 233–60, pp. 235–6, G. Clark, *Women in late antiquity* (Oxford, 1993), Greek transl., *Οἱ γυναῖκες στήν ὀμιμη ἀρχαιότητα* (Athens, 1997), pp. 84–6, K. Nikolaou, *Η γυναῖκα στη μέση Βυζαντινή εποχή* (Athens, 2005), p. 25 passim. Additionally, Missiou notes that in the early and middle Byzantine period, imperial wives acquired the right to coronation only after having children, D. Missiou, “Über die institutionelle Rolle der byzantinischen Kaiserin,” *JÖB*, 32/2 (1982), 489–98, p. 489.

The horse indicated the woman as wife, Augusta, and mistress. Horse, in the context of semantics, is a complex symbol and generally is an auspicious dream symbol. Artemidorus mentions that riding a horse is a good omen for a man, because it means his wife and mistress are obedient:

if someone dreams of riding a horse and the horse is obedient to him, then this dream is an auspicious one, because the horse denotes the wife and the mistress and this is because the horse is very interested in its own beauty and it carries the one who rides it.³⁹

Similar is the interpretation in Anonymous I and II: “if someone dreams of sitting on a horse, he will get pleasure from a woman.”⁴⁰ In these dreams, one point is highly stressed: with the expression “επικάθηση επί” (“sitting on” with the sense of supremacy) in the oneirocritic sources, the dominant position of man over woman is implied, in both the social and erotic sense.

In relation to the above, Achmet’s *Oneirocriticon* makes a specific reference to the mare, stating, “if someone dreams of riding a mare with a long tail and a saddle on, then he will find a woman depending on the [length of the] tail.”⁴¹ According to the ethnologist and psychoanalyst George Devereux, the riding of a horse indicates sexual intercourse, a view which is in total agreement with the dreambooks interpretations.⁴² Based on the fact that only the tamed and submissive horses wear a saddle, it can be concluded that the *Oneirocritica* symbolically connect horses wearing saddles to legal wives, reinforcing perceptions that view the “ὕπανδρες” (married) women as submissive ones. On the contrary, “untamable horse was the virgin maiden,” as Achmet explains to us.⁴³

Women were also equated to donkeys in general. Donkey, in addition to the horse and mule, is the third animal that belongs to the horse family, and it also refers symbolically to the woman and is generally agreed upon as an auspicious symbol. According to Artemidorus, “donkey is propitious

³⁹ Artemidorus 64₁₃₋₁₄: “ἵππος γάρ γυναικί μὲν καὶ ἐρωμένη τὸν αὐτὸν ἔχει λόγον, ὅτι καὶ ἐπὶ κάλλει μέγα φρονεῖ καὶ τὸν ἐλατῆρα βαστάζει.”

⁴⁰ Anonymous I 265: “ξένω ἵππῳ ἐπικαθῆσαι χαρὰν μετὰ γυναικὸς ἀλλοτρίας σημαίνει,” see also Anonymous II 538₂₈₋₂₉.

⁴¹ Achmet 182₅₋₇: “ἐάν τις ἴδῃ, ὅτι ἐπωχῆσατο φαρὰν θηλείαν ἐστρωμένη μακρόουρον, εὐρήσει γυναῖκα τετιμημένην ἀναλόγως τῆς οὐράς ταύτης.”

⁴² G. Devereux, *Dreams in Greek Tragedy* (Oxford, 1976), p. 10.

⁴³ Achmet 183₇₋₉: “εἰ δὲ ἴδῃ τις, ὅτι νέα ἵππος φαρὰς ἀγύμναστος εἰσήλθεν ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ αὐτοῦ, κόρην πάρθενον εὐγενῆ νέαν εἰσοικίσει ἐν αὐτῷ.”

for marriage and for partnerships, because it signifies the woman or the partner.”⁴⁴

An exception to the promising symbolism of the donkey is the ominous interpretation of Germanus, who states, “if you sit on a donkey, it means that you will get insulted.”⁴⁵ The negative aspect of this dream interpretation depends, in my opinion, upon the punishment of pillorying.⁴⁶ According to the Greek grammarian Hesychius of Alexandria (fifth century AD), “Ονοβατίδες” (the ones who ride a donkey) are called the adulteresses who suffered the punishment of the pillorying on a donkey.⁴⁷

Although rarely, women were equated with guard dogs. Although the relationship between humans and dogs dates back to the Neolithic Era, only Artemidorus’s dream book refers to the guard dog as a dream symbol, stating, “The guard dogs symbolize the woman, the relatives and the estate of the dreamer.”⁴⁸ In this case, woman is identified with an animal that is the symbol of devotion, loyalty, and vigilance. Moreover, Artemidorus mentions that if the dogs shake their tail to their master, this

⁴⁴ Artemidorus 120₂₆₋₂₈–121₁₋₂: “Ονοι... αγαθοί πρός γάμον καί κοινωνίαν, πρός τῷ μὴ εἶναι πολυτελεῖ τὴν γυναῖκα καί τόν κοινωνόν καί προθύμως ὑπακούσσεσθαι σημαίνουσι.”

⁴⁵ Germanus 158: “Ὦνο καθεσθεῖς δυσπραγεῖς δηλοῖ τρόπους.”

⁴⁶ During the Byzantine period, pillorying could be imposed on people of every social class and of both sexes. However, for the offense of adultery, pillorying was suffered mainly by the adulterous women. This fact is not surprising, because it demonstrates the inequality of treatment observed in legislation against women. S. Troianos, “Ἡ Ερωτική Ζωή των Βυζαντινῶν μέσα ἀπό το Ποινικό τους Δίκαιο,” *Αρχαιολογία & Τέχνες*, 10(1984), 43–55, p. 44, supports that this unequal treatment occurred in the legislation, reflecting some metaphysical beliefs about the post mortem continuation of personality to descendants of the deceased. Thus, the exogamic sexual relations of women affected the authenticity of the gonads, and, therefore, it was a more serious crime than murder. Besides adultery, pillorying was imposed on other offenses, such as theft, pedophilia, defiling of a virgin, arson, engaging in witchcraft and astrology, and even in the case of provoking a revolution. By pillorying they could also punish offenders having committed minor offenses, such as drunkenness and hubris and even students did not attend school properly, Ph. Koukoules, *Βυζαντινῶν Βίος καί Πολιτισμός*, 9 vols (Athens, 1949–1952), 3:188–89.

⁴⁷ Hesychius of Alexandria, *Lexicon*, in entry *ονοβατίδες*: “αἱ ἐπὶ μοιχείᾳ ἀλοῦσαι γυναῖκες καί ἐξενεχθεῖσαι ἐπὶ ὄνω.”

⁴⁸ Artemidorus 118₆₋₇: “οἱ δὲ οἰκουροὶ γυναῖκα σημαίνουσι καί οικείους καί τὰ πεπορισμένα κτήματα.”

connotes a good and tidy woman.⁴⁹ In this case, the dream interpreter's perception is as ambiguous. On the one hand, he seems to appreciate woman, because he considers her as a guard of the family life; on the other hand, he describes her as a creature submissive to the authority of her husband, a creature who fancies living under the domination of a master, just like a dog.

The symbolism of woman as a hare represented hetaera, courtesans, and prostitutes. Hare,⁵⁰ as a symbol, refers to female lust as well as to fertility. In dreambooks, hare mainly denotes the prostitute or the hetaera. For example, in the Anonymous II it is written: "the one who chases a hare, a whore will long for."⁵¹ Similarly, Achmet writes, "hares connote the whores and the fake faces of the courtesans."⁵² The interpretative approach of dreambooks is directly connected to the perception of prostitution during the time of the writing of each dream book. Briefly, in Artemidorus's text, which was written in late antiquity, and partially in Achmet's, prostitution not only is not reprehensible, but it is also directly related to the basic criterion that determines the role that every woman is destined to play, the one which concerns her sexual offer. In the rest of the dreambooks, we discern the Byzantines' view of prostitution,⁵³ which is considered a great moral offense. Thus, analogous is the view found in oneirocritic sources, where whore is an ominous symbol that betokens sin, sorrow, and fatigue.

The hyena symbolized women as witches, whores, and adulteresses. The hyena, a hideous animal that feeds from corpses, was a synonym of

⁴⁹ Artemidorus 118₇₋₉: "ὄθεν ἐρρωμένοι καὶ σαίνοντες τοὺς δεσπότης ἀγαθὴν οἰκουρίαν καὶ περὶ τὴν γυναῖκα καὶ περὶ τοὺς οἰκέτους σημαίνουσι."

⁵⁰ Most sources mention the ambiguity and the ambivalence of the hare. For example, Aelianus, in *On the Nature of Animals*, XIII: 12, talks about a hunter who claimed that the male hare does have children, gestates, and copulates with both sexes.

⁵¹ Anonymous II 537₁₋₃: "Λαγῶν ὁ καταδιώκων γυναῖκα πόρνην ποθήσει."

⁵² Achmet 225₂₋₃: "οἱ λαγῶι εἰς ἐταιρίδων καὶ ψευδομόρφων ἐπιπλάστων ἐν κάλλει γυναικῶν κρίνονται πρόσωπα."

⁵³ For a general overview about prostitution in Byzantium, see H. Magoulias, "Bathhouse, inn, tavern, prostitution, and the stage as seen in the lives of the saints of the sixth and seventh centuries," *EEBS* 38(1971), 233–52, p. 246–52, ODB, *Prostitution*, 3:1741, G. H. Beck, *Byzantinisches Erotikon* (Munche, 1986), Greek transl., *Βυζαντινὸν Ἐρωτικόν* (Athens, 1999), p. 141, J. Evans Grubbs, "Virgins and Windows, Show-girls and Whores: late Roman legislation on women in Christianity," in *Law, Society and Authority in late antiquity*, ed. R. Mathisen (Oxford, 2005), pp. 235–41, V. Kokkori, *Woman in Byzantine dreambooks: from the late antiquity to the late Byzantium*. Dissertation (Athens, 2015), p. 144 passim.

filth, instability, and the two-faced individual; thus, it could not be more related to negative and ominous dream symbols. For Artemidorus, “hyena means an androgynous woman or a witch.”⁵⁴ It is also an ominous symbol for Achmet⁵⁵ and for Anonymous I and II in whose works “the hyena refers to the evil woman, the prostitute, and the pharmaceutria,⁵⁶ or sorceress.”⁵⁷

Two distinct elements are evident: all of the oneirocritic sources interpret this symbol in a negative manner, and there is an emphasis on the relationship between woman and magic. The semantic connection between magic, or charm, and woman is intercultural and primeval.⁵⁸ It has been proven that the connection between magic and women is essentially a gender issue. In the Byzantine world, magic was a taboo subject under prohibition, and it was considered mainly women’s work.⁵⁹ This conceptual approach derives from collective perceptions, according to which women can become easily a servant of the Devil because of their naive and gullible nature.⁶⁰ The accusations against women reflects their

⁵⁴ Artemidorus 125₄: “Υαινα δέ γυναικα σημαίνει ανδρόγυνον ἢ φαρμακίδα.”

⁵⁵ Achmet 22310₋₁₁: “Ἡ ὕαινα εἰς πρόσωπον φαύλης γυναικός κρίνεται κασσωρίδος καί φαρμακίσης, ἅμα δέ καί μαγευτριάς.”

⁵⁶ The word “pharmacia” constitutes complex concepts, including “pharmacia” (treatment)/“pharmacia” (poisoning), Lexicon *Souda*, *φαρμακεία*, 1:534.

⁵⁷ Anonymous II 545₉: “ὕαινης κρέας ἐσθίων ὄρα, μὴ τι μαγικόν πάθης ἀπό κακῆς γυναικός,” see also Anonymous I: 424.

⁵⁸ The relationship of women with the magical cataplasm and filters has been claimed since ancient times. Spells of erotic attraction and compulsion are found within Hellenistic Greece, combined with Egyptian and Hebraic elements, as documented in texts, such as the *Greek Magical Papyri*, and archaeologically on amulets dating from the second century BCE to the late third century AD. See H. Dieter Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation: Including the Demotic Spells* (Chicago, 1997), J. Rowlandson, *Women and society in Greek and Roman Egypt* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 358, M. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* (New York, 2003), G. Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic: a history* (Cambridge, 2008). The issue of sorcery and women revived during sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as “witch hunts.”

⁵⁹ In Byzantium, the magic was popular even among scholars, such as Michael Psellos J. Duffy, “Reactions of Two Byzantine Intellectuals to the Theory and Practice of Magic: Michael Psellos and Michael Italikos,” in *Byzantine Magic, DOP*, (Washington, 1995). Basil of Caesarea refers to the involvement of women with magic: *γυναῖκες πολλὰκις ἐπαιδαῖς τισι καὶ καταδέσμοις φίλτρον ἐπάγεισθαι τινος πειρῶνται*, G. A. Ralli and M. Potli, *Σύνταγμα των θεῶν και ιερῶν κανόνων*, 6 vols, (Athens, 1852–1859), 4:114.

⁶⁰ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1102a, suggested that women had to marry at a young age, and they should remain housebound because of their moral weakness.

social marginalization. The witch was dangerous, because she disrupted motherhood and the household and, thus, disrupted the social order.⁶¹ The belief in the hyena's magical forces is not exclusively in oneirocritic sources. For example, Claudius Aelianus (*ca.* 175– 235) reports in his work, *On the Nature of Animals*,⁶² that the hyena has the ability to bewitch its victims.

Birds

The swallow is a migratory bird very familiar to the Mediterranean landscape. For Artemidorus, the swallow denoted the faithful wife, the housewife, and the Greek woman.⁶³ The swallow, as a symbol, was dedicated to the goddess Aphrodite/Venus, and it is considered the harbinger of spring. As Artemidorus notably says, “when spring comes the swallow arrives first.”⁶⁴

The harpe (a kind of water bird) “means a queenly woman and a rich one, who considers herself significant for her beauty, who is prudent and behaves with morals.”⁶⁵ Through this symbol, Artemidorus describes a timeless “ideal” type of woman desired by every man: rich, beautiful, and simultaneously prudent and with morals. However, it is difficult to answer whether Artemidorus expresses generally the wishful desires of men or the popular perception that a woman with royal origin befits nothing less than perfection.

In Aristophanes's comedy, *The Birds* (414 BCE), a chicken is called “the Medic bird,” which points to an import from the East.⁶⁶ In general, this symbol relates to reproduction and to maternal care. The chicken is found only in the dream book of Nikephorus, and it is a symbol that refers to “the good slave woman.”⁶⁷

⁶¹ See J. Klaitis, *Servants of Satan: the age of witch hunts* (Indiana, 1985), C. Holmes, “Women: witnesses and witches” in *New perspective on witchcraft magic and demonology*, vol. IV: *Gendering and witchcraft*, ed. B. P. Levack (New York, 2001).

⁶² Aelianus, *On the Nature of Animals*, VI: 14.

⁶³ Artemidorus 191₃₋₅: [the swallow] “πιστήν γάρ καί οικουρόν ἔσσεσθαι τήν γυναῖκα σημαίνει καί ὡς ἐπὶ τό πλεῖστον Ἑλληνίδα καί μουσικήν.”

⁶⁴ Artemidorus 190₁₈₋₁₉: “...ὅταν δέ τό ἔαρ παραβάλλη, πρώτη πρόεισιν.”

⁶⁵ Artemidorus 136₁₈₋₂₀: “ἄρπη γυναῖκα βασιλικήν καί πλουσίαν, μέγα σε ἐπὶ κάλλει φρονούσα καί εὐγνώμονα καί τοῖς ἤθεσιν εὖ κεχρημένην.”

⁶⁶ Aristophanes, *The Birds*, pp. 277–78.

⁶⁷ Nicephorus I 234: “ὄρνις φανεῖσα δουλίδα καλήν νοεῖ,” see also Nicephorus II 79:84.

The partridge is a conceptually contradictory symbol. However, it was popular enough, as it appears in most *Oneirocritica*. Because its semantic meaning varies in the context of each text, the symbol is examined separately in two groups. In the first group, which includes only Artemidorus's interpretation, the partridge is considered a negative symbol and refers to an atheist, impious, and ungrateful woman as follows: "partridges mean men and women, but mainly atheist and impious women."⁶⁸ The second group comprises the dream interpretations of Achmet, Nikephorus, and Manuel, which approach the partridge with a more positive view. As Achmet reports, "partridge means the beautiful woman,"⁶⁹ and, if the dreamer is a king, "he will find pleasure in Augusta."⁷⁰ Manuel's approach could be regarded as a neutral one, as he states, "partridges signify the talkative, but of noble origin, women."⁷¹

Artemidorus's negative interpretation of the partridge as a dream symbol could possibly be explained as the expression of the collective unconscious based on ancient myths.⁷² The myths' effects, along with the negative predisposition against the partridge, are also obvious in the subsequent Byzantine sources. The historian Genesisios gives us a typical example of the partridge as a warning, the murder of the Caesar Bardas⁷³ before he campaigned to Crete against the Arabs. The narration was associated with ominous omens and the bad reputation of the partridge. The text makes mention of a gown that was sent to Bardas by his sister, Empress Theodora. Theodora, knowing the treacherous reputation of the

⁶⁸ Artemidorus 180₄₋₅: "Πέρδικες καὶ ἄνδρας καὶ γυναῖκας σημαίνουσιν, ὡς δὲ ἐπὶ τὸ πλεῖστον γυναῖκας [μᾶλλον] ἀθέους καὶ ἀσεβεῖς."

⁶⁹ Achmet 237₁₆: "Ἡ πέρδιξ εἰς εὐειδή γυναῖκα κρίνεται."

⁷⁰ Achmet 237₂₅₋₂₆: "ὁ βασιλεύς ἐάν ἴδῃ, ὅτι κυνηγεῖ πέρδικας, εὐρήσει χαρὰν ἐν τῇ αὐγούστῃ."

⁷¹ Manuel 513₁₉₋₂₀: "Αἱ πέρδικες δηλοῦσιν εὐγενικῶν, γυναικῶν πολυλάλους καὶ πολυταράχους ὑποθέσεις."

⁷² According to the ancient Greek tradition, the craftsman Daedalus knocked down from the Acropolis his student Partridge, because he feared that he would surpass him in the arts. While he was falling, the goddess Athena transformed him into the namesake bird. When Daedalus wept over the loss of his son Icarus, the partridge began to shake his wings with joy, singing merrily and taking revenge for his loss, Ovidious, *Transformations*, VIII: 236–60.

⁷³ Bardas (ninth c.) was the brother of Empress Theodora and her advisor after the death of emperor Theophilus. He was a distinguished politician, military commander, and protector of letters. He was assassinated in 865 by Basil I during a military campaign, J. Karagiannopoulos, *Ιστορία Βυζαντινῆς Κράτους*, 3 vols, (Athens, 1993–1999), 2:267.

partridge, sent to her brother a coded message: a gown embroidered with a partridge scene to warn him of the conspiracy against him.⁷⁴

The dove represented women as hostesses, foreign wives, and female offspring. The dove is one of the few non-ambiguous dream symbols. It symbolizes purity, the spirit of life, beauty, and maternity but also marital eroticism. In dreambooks, for Artemidorus, the dove signifies “women with morals.”⁷⁵ For Achmet, it represented the wife and daughters as follows: “if someone dreams that he has given a dove...he will be probably get married to a woman who will give birth to a daughter.”⁷⁶ Despite the fact that Artemidorus’s and Achmet’s interpretations are not identical, they confirm the female nature, as well as the positive character of the symbol.

The peacock denoted the sightly (pleasing to the eye) and wealthy woman. The peacock originates from India and came to Europe in antiquity. An auspicious symbol, the peacock for Achmet means woman and, especially, female beauty. The diviner reports, “if someone dreams that he has found a peacock, he will obtain wealth and dignity and a very beautiful woman.”⁷⁷ Elsewhere, he also tells us that “if someone dreams that he has a peacock at home, he will find a wealthy woman and he will get a son.”⁷⁸

The goose signified an unfortunate omen for women, including female offspring, adulteress, and slave. The goose, like chicken, in the *Oneirocritica* consists of a female symbol that refers mainly to slaves, as it is cited in Nikephorus’s dream book.⁷⁹ It should be noted that Achmet’s interpretation of this symbol mainly highlights the sexual relations between a master and a slave, as he states, “if someone dreams of a female goose, then he will find the slave he has always desired, and if he sees that

⁷⁴ Genesis 4:22: “ἔξαπεστάλη κατά Κήπους διάγοντι παρά Θεοδώρας τῆς αὐτοῦ ἀδελφῆς ἐσθῆς τοῦ προσήκοντος μήκους ἐλλείπουσα, ἧτιν πέρδιξ χρυσόπαστος καθιστόρητο.” For the source see: *Regum libri quattuor*, eds A. Lesmuller-Werner, H. Thurn, (Berlin/New York, 1978).

⁷⁵ Artemidorus 137₁₂: “περιστεραὶ δὲ ἔσθ’ ὅτε οἰκοδεσποίνας καὶ κοσμίας.”

⁷⁶ Achmet 235₂₀₋₂₁: “Ἐάν ἴδῃ τις, ὅτι ἔλαβε παρά τινος περιστεράν, ἀπό ξένης εὐρήσει χαράν καὶ πλοῦτον, ἴσως καὶ γυναῖκα λήγεται καὶ τέξει θῆλυ.”

⁷⁷ Achmet 233₂₂₋₂₅: “Ἐάν ἴδῃ τις, ὅτι εὔρε ταῶνα, εὐρήσει πλοῦτον πολὺν καὶ ἀξίωμα καὶ γυναῖκα εὐειδεστάτη.”

⁷⁸ Achmet 236₁₅₋₁₆: “Ἐὶ δὲ ἴδῃ, ὅτι εἶχε κατ’ οἶκον ταῶνα ἡμερον, εὐρήσει γυναῖκα μετὰ πλοῦτου καὶ τέξει ἄρσεν ἐνδοξον διά τό χρυσαυγές τοῦ περοῦ.”

⁷⁹ Nicephorus I 338: “Χῆνες φανεῖσαι δουλίδας καλὰς νόει,” see also Nicephorus II 82:120

he lost a goose, he will lose his most beloved slave.”⁸⁰ Achmet’s interpretation reflects the ancient Greek perceptions that regard the goose as an erotic bird. For Artemidorus, goose, apart from a beauty symbol, signifies the birth of a female child as follows: “If a pregnant woman dreams of bearing a goose, the child will live, because geese are sacred and are fed in temples. If the child is a girl, she will live but she will lead a prostitute’s life, because of the great beauty of geese.”⁸¹

Flora: Trees and Plants

The Mediterranean Basin is home to considerable biodiversity. Just as an array of cultures mix and match throughout the regions of the Mediterranean, so do varieties of animals and plants. The olive tree signified women only in Artemidorus’s dream book. According to Braudel, “The Mediterranean’s life is balanced upon the following triad: olive, vine and wheat.”⁸² In the oneirocritic sources, only in Artemidorus is the olive tree an auspicious symbol for women, because it foretells marriage. Also, Artemidorus attests that an olive wreath symbolizes marriage with a virgin maiden, because the olive is the symbol of the “virgin,” namely of the goddess Athena.⁸³

The vine represented women in general. The older use of the vine in the making of bridal wreaths is indicative of the meaning of this symbol, which relates to fruitfulness, fertility, marriage and child-bearing. These symbols are confirmed in the dream book of Achmet, in which “the vine means woman.”⁸⁴ Of great interest is also Manuel’s interpretation in *Oneirocriticon* in which the vine denotes family.⁸⁵ According to Steven Oberhelman, this approach refers to the structure of the nuclear family, the woody, stemmed trunk of the vine surrounded by the children with their families, the vine’s creepers.⁸⁶

⁸⁰ Achmet 237₁₀₋₁₁: “εάν ἴδῃ θηλείας χήνας, εὐρήσει δουλίδας πεποθημένας αὐτῶ, εἰ δέ ἴδῃ, ὅτι ἀπόλεσεν ἐξ αὐτῶν, ἔσται τὸ πάθος ἐν τῇ πεποθημένῃ αὐτοῦ δούλῃ.”

⁸¹ Artemidorus 299₁₋₂: “γυνή ἐν γαστρὶ ἔχουσα ἔδοξε χῆνα τετοκέναί. . . τὸ τεχθέν ζήσιν, ἱεροὶ γάρ οἱ χῆνες οἱ ἐν ναοῖς ἀνατρεφόμενοι, εἰ δέ μὴ μὲν θῆλυ εἶη, ζήσιν μὲν, ἑταιρικῶ δέ χρήσεσθαι βίῳ διὰ τὸ περικαλλές τῶν χηνῶν.”

⁸² F. Braudel (collectif), *La Méditerranée: les hommes et l’héritage* (Flammarion, 1986), Greek transl., *Μεσόγειος* (Athens, 1990), p. 37

⁸³ Artemidorus 263₁₃

⁸⁴ Achmet 154₂₀: “ἡ ἄμπελος εἰς γυναῖκα” [κρίνεται].

⁸⁵ Manuel 515₂₀: “Ἡ ἄμπελος κρίνεται εἰς γένος”.

⁸⁶ S. Oberhelman, *Dreambooks in Byzantium* (Hampshire, 2008), p. 203, note 66.

Barley represented female offspring. Barley is considered the most ancient food, which was given to humans by gods, as Pliny the Elder⁸⁷ and Artemidorus assert.⁸⁸ For Artemidorus, “field means woman, wheat means sons and barley means daughters.”⁸⁹ The symbolic reference of barley to daughter is mainly based on the gender of the Greek words: barley/κρίθῃ in Greek (female), wheat/σίτος son (male). This interpretation can be also based on the perceptions of the time regarding both the subordinate position of women and the type of bread. Namely, white bread was made of wheat (σίτος/son, male), and it was regarded as a superior quality and consumed by the rich. On the contrary, barley flour (female) denotes daughter, and it was regarded as an inferior quality and consumed by the poor and the peasants.

The Hydnum signified women in general, unpleasant women, and women without a family. The word hydnum is derived from ὕδνον/ῥτυνον, an ancient Greek word for truffle. According Gimbutas, the immediate relation of this mushroom to the earth refers to the prehistoric worship of the mother-goddess Earth and to the posterior worship of the goddess Demeter.⁹⁰ The inextricable relation of this fungus to the earth, as well as its relation to female deities, justifies Achmet’s interpretation, who claims that hydnum means a woman with no family, namely with no “roots.” Also, in Germanus’s dream book, hydnum is ominous, because it refers to women with an unpleasant character, as he states, “if you dream of a hydnum, then you will meet a corrupted woman.”⁹¹

The walnut tree exemplified a woman of noble origin with an adventuresome life. The walnut tree, like the olive tree, is characterized by durability, longevity, and also an auspicious symbolic meaning. According to Manuel, “walnut tree means woman with noble breeding but with adventuresome life.”⁹² What is remarkable about this dream interpretation is that a woman of noble birth has an opportunity to lead an adventuresome life, rich in love affairs, without being socially reprehensible. From the large number of dreams (and erotic literature texts), we can conclude that the erotic game was not forbidden in Byzantium; however, sex was a

⁸⁷ Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 18.72.

⁸⁸ Artemidorus 75₁₇₋₁₉: “ἄρτοι δέ κρίθινοι πᾶσιν ἀγαθοί, πρώτην γάρ ἀνθρώποις τὴν τροφήν ταύτην παρά θεῶν λόγος ἔχει δοθῆναι.”

⁸⁹ Artemidorus 58₁₂₋₁₄: “ἄρουρα μὲν γάρ οὐδέν ἄλλο ἐστὶν ἢ γυνή, σπέρματα δέ καὶ φυτὰ οἱ παῖδες, πυροὶ μὲν υἱοὶ, κριθαὶ δέ θυγατέρες.”

⁹⁰ M. Gimbutas, *The living Goddesses* (Berkeley, 1999), Greek transl., *H επιστροφή της μεγάλης Θεάς* (Thessalonica, 2001), p. 56.

⁹¹ Germanus 238: “Υῦδα βλέπειν νόει μοι γύναιον βλέπειν.”

⁹² Manuel 515₁₇₋₁₈: “ἡ καρέα κρίνεται εἰς γυναῖκας μεγάλας, πολυταράχους δε.”

complex issue. Their views did not remain unchanged through the centuries. The severity of the early period lent its position in other more refined manners.⁹³ It is worth mentioning that in the Byzantine language the words “eros” and “love” express two different things: the flesh-devilish and spiritual-sacred.⁹⁴

Epitomising Augusta, both women of noble origin and lovely women were the cypress tree. Cypress, the symbol of mourning, according to the Greek traveler and geographer Pausanias, grows always near tombs and holy groves, a custom that is alive still today.⁹⁵ Although its connection to the worship of the dead attaches a negative symbolism to it, the cypress, always green and stretched up to the sky, is supposed to own a strength that saves the corpse from decay, a positive perception that is also endorsed by dreambooks. This auspicious symbolism of the cypress in the *Oneirocritica* refers to a woman, both beautiful and also of high rank; as Achmet⁹⁶ and Anonymous I⁹⁷ report, “Cypress if you dream, noble and beautiful woman means.” An equally interesting example, for the semantic connection of the cypress to women, is found in the allegorical story of the Byzantine theologian and writer Basilakes Nikephorus. Basilakes narrates the desire of a gardener to plant a cypress in his garden and make it fruitful. Semantically speaking, the garden concerns love and desire, while the cypress means woman and the gardener denotes man. The aim of the male gardener is to conquer woman and make her “fruitful.”⁹⁸

The apple tree represented wife, woman, and mistress. The apple tree was probably carried to Europe from Kazakhstan by Alexander the Great.⁹⁹ Symbolically, the apple appears in many religious traditions, often as a mystical or forbidden fruit. In the tradition of dream interpretation, the apple tree and apple are auspicious symbols that refer to attraction, joy, woman, or to the mistress of the dreamer; as Artemidorus reports, “If you dream of eating sweet and mature spring apples it is good, because it means that you are attractive, especially for those who are interested in

⁹³ Kokkori, *Woman*, pp. 75–79, Beck, *Byzantinisches*.

⁹⁴ ODB, *Love*, 2:1254.

⁹⁵ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, II.2.4–4, 35,5–8.

⁹⁶ Achmet 154_{17–18}: “ἡ κυπάρισσος εἰς πρόσωπον βασιλίσσης ἢ εὐγενοῦς καὶ εὐειδοῦς γυναικός.”

⁹⁷ Anonymous I 187: “Κυπάρισσον ἰδεῖν ἐν τινὶ τόπῳ εὐγενῆ γυναικὰ ἰδεῖν δηλοῖ.”

⁹⁸ Niceforo Basilace, *Progimnasmī e Monodie: testo critico, introduzione, traduzione*, ed. A. Pignani, (Napoli, 1983), p. 225–8. Also see: C. Barber, “Garden in Byzantium,” *BMGŚ* 16(1992), 14–9.

⁹⁹ Athenaeus VII: 277. For the source see: *Athenaei Naucraticae Dipnosophistarum libri 15*. 3 Bde., ed. G. Kaibel, (Leipzig, 1887–1890), (Stuttgart, 1985–1992).

their wife or mistress.”¹⁰⁰ This general acceptance of apple as the symbol of love and woman is also confirmed by Manuel’s *Oneirocriticon* as follows: “apples and peaches concern love affairs.”¹⁰¹

Fruit, like apples, juicy and with an oval shape, apart from expressing female fertility and love, are also related to wedding events. The roots of these perceptions are found in pagan antiquity, and they have passed almost unchanged into everyday life of the Byzantine age, into the tradition of dream interpretations, and into Byzantine literature. For example, the Byzantine historian Niketas Choniates reports that the apple serves as estrogen for young women.¹⁰² Additionally, in the Byzantine imperial beauty contest (which was a way to choose the imperial bride), there was a custom that the chosen one of the emperor would be given a golden apple.¹⁰³

The laurel indicated a rich and beautiful woman. The ancient presence of laurel in the Greek landscape was witnessed by Homer. Generally, in the *Oneirocritica*, the laurel is regarded as a good omen. To Artemidorus, “laurel means the wealthy woman, because it is evergreen and beautiful as it is a graceful tree.”¹⁰⁴ The laurel is the symbol of the highest status and victory.¹⁰⁵ The ancient custom of wreath making for feasts also passed from Romans into Byzantium, where laurel and myrtle decorated the Byzantine palaces, as well as the bridal bedroom.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁰ Artemidorus 78₁₆₋₁₈: “Μῆλα μὲν ἑαρινὰ γλυκέα καὶ πέπανα καὶ ἰδεῖν καὶ φαγεῖν ἐστὶν ἀγαθόν. πολλὴν γάρ ἐπαφροδίσιαν σημαίνει μάλιστα τοῖς περὶ γυναικός ἢ ἐρωμένης φροντίζουσι.”

¹⁰¹ Manuel 514₂₈: “Τὰ μῆλα καὶ τὰ ῥοδάκινα κρίνονται εἰς ἐρωτικὴν ὑπόθεσιν.”

¹⁰² Choniatas, 4.148. For the source: Nicetas Choniatas, *Χρονικὴ Διήγησις*, ed. J. Van Dielen (Berlin, 1975).

¹⁰³ For the imperial “beauty contest,” see also p. 172, note 34. Additionally, see W. T. Treadgold, “The Bride-shows of the Byzantine Emperors,” *Byzantion* 49(1979), 395–413, L. Ryden, “The Bride-shows at Byzantine Court: History or Fiction?” *Eranos* 83(1985), 175–91, An. Vakaloudi, *Καλλιστεία καὶ Γάμος στο Βυζάντιο* (Athens, 1998).

¹⁰⁴ Artemidorus 144₃₋₄: “δάφνη δὲ γυναῖκα σημαίνει εὐπορον διὰ τὸ ἀειθαλὲς καὶ εὐμορφον διὰ τὸ χάρειν.”

¹⁰⁵ P. G. Gennadios, *Λεξικὸν Φυτολογικόν* (Athens, 1914), pp. 239–40.

¹⁰⁶ In Greco-Roman antiquity, myrtle was a symbol of Venus. It symbolized virginity, love, and marital happiness. In these beliefs is rooted the custom from many parts of the East, according to which marriage wreaths are made of myrtle, Gennadios, *Λεξικὸν Φυτολογικόν*, p. 689. See also: *Compendium of symbolic and ritual plants in Europe*, eds M. De Cleene, M. C. Lejeune, 2 vols, (Ghent, 2002–2003), B. Bergmann, *Der Kranz des Kaisers. Genese und Bedeutung einer römischen Insignie* (Berlin, 2010).

The rose bush signified an erotic and merry woman. Ancient Greeks and Romans identified the rose bush with Aphrodite/Venus. It was praised by many poets as the symbol of love and sensuousness. The meaning of the rose bush in the *Oneirocritica*, as is expected, is the same. For example, in Manuel's dream book "the rose means erotic woman, lighthearted and joyful, but only in words not in real."¹⁰⁷ The image of the light-headed woman is a stereotype that has its roots in antiquity.¹⁰⁸ The semantic approach of this symbol poses the following question: does this interpretation just convey the social stereotypes of that period, which describe women as jovial, vain, and frivolous, or does it concern some convivial and simultaneously clever and deft women, who know how to set limits for their own benefit in love games? The second case is more realistic, especially if we consider that the symbol under examination is not the rose (flower), but the one that has thorns, namely, the rose bush.

The phoenix equaled women in general, queens, and noble women. The generic name of phoenix derives from *φοῖνιξ*, the Greek word for the date palm used by Theophrastus.¹⁰⁹ From antiquity, the phoenix is a symbol of victory and, according to Pausanias, a synonym of beauty.¹¹⁰ In the Bible, beautiful women are called "Tamar," meaning phoenix in Hebrew.¹¹¹ For Achmet, "phoenix means queen because of its sweetness, it also means noble women and those who have been born with royal blood."¹¹² It is worth mentioning that the phoenix relates to the widespread tradition that says that trees fall in love with each other. According to Michael Glycas (twelfth century), a Byzantine historian and poet, "phoenixes are divided into in males and females, and the strange thing is that they fall in love."¹¹³

¹⁰⁷ Manuel 515₁₅₋₁₆: "Αἱ τριακονταφυλλέαις δηλοῦσιν γυναῖκας ἐρωτικὰς καὶ μεταδιδοῦσας εἰς εὐθυμίαν καὶ μόνον ἀπὸ λόγων καὶ οὐ δι' ἔργων."

¹⁰⁸ For the perceptions about the women see above pp. 169.

¹⁰⁹ The phoenix is also known as "Phoenix Theophrastii." In the fourth century BCE, the classical Greek botanist Theophrastus wrote of the palm trees growing on the South Aegean island of Crete. See Theophrastus, *On Plants*, 1.2:3.

¹¹⁰ Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, VIII.8,48.2.

¹¹¹ *Genesis* 38.6.

¹¹² Achmet 108₁₉₋₂₁: "ὁ φοῖνιξ εἰς βασιλίδα κρίνεται διὰ τὸ εὐανθές καὶ γλυκὺ καὶ ὀξύφυλλον καὶ ἀφυλλόρροον." Also see Achmet 153₂₃₋₂₄: "Οἱ φοίνικες τὰ δέντρα εἰς τὰς εὐγενεῖς τῶν γυναικῶν καὶ τὰς ἐκ βασιλέως αἵματος διακρίνονται."

¹¹³ Glycas, 24:22. For the source see: M. Glycas, *Βιβλος Χρονική*, ed. I. Bekker (Bonn, 1836).

Conclusions

In conclusion, this chapter examined only some selected dream symbols that concern the more general categories of animals, birds, plants, and trees. These symbols are globally known, and they refer archetypically to the Mediterranean landscape and way of life. The oneirocritic sources reveal that they attribute to women both negative and positive qualities. The negative qualities, which the *Oneirocritica* attribute to women, are stereotypical and timeless: wile, chatter, fraudulence, immorality, cunning, malice, adulterous, prostitution, thievery, as well as magic. On the other hand, the positive qualities of women mainly exist in order to respond to men's needs, namely to become spouses, bear descendants, and satisfy sexual desires. The ideal wife, regardless of when dreambooks were written, is morally spotless, faithful, and obedient to her husband. She also has the capacity to run a household and is characterized by beauty, erotic flair, and wealth.

Indicative of the roles that a woman has to play are the different types of women, classified according to three criteria in the dreambooks: the life cycle and family life as a wife, mother, and daughter (barley); the erotic life as a wife (horse), concubine/mistress (apple), whore/hetaera (pigeon, hyena), adulteress (goose), and slave (goose); and social class as an Augusta or queen (horse, phoenix), as a woman of noble origin (partridge, cypress), and finally as a slave (chicken). Furthermore, out of the examination of this category of dream symbols, only indirectly were found some elements concerned with marriage, child bearing, and spouses' relationships. Specifically, for couple's relationships in the dreambooks, the women, without doubt, are under both social and sexual male domination, an image that highlights gender inequality (horse with a saddle on). The fact that the dreambooks approach women ambiguously is a consequence of the social and religious perceptions that have their roots in antiquity and have influenced Byzantium. Thus, according to these notions, women are capable of the best and of the worst, and they are under male domination in a world of patriarchal authority. However, it would be an "aphorism" to charge exclusively to the Byzantine era what diachronically follows women for centuries.