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Moving Byzantium

Volume 1

Edited by
Claudia Rapp and Johannes Preiser-Kapeller

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Mobility and Migration in Byzantium: A Sourcebook

With 7 figures

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5 The Imaginary

This cluster draws attention to the many different ways in which the Byzantines represented travel in the widest sense in their fictional and religious imagination: both as painful departure from the known and as an adventuresome movement towards the unknown.

Claudia Rapp

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5.1.0 Movement and mobility in the Byzantine imaginary

Any journey described in a text – be it documentary, historical or artistic – is in a sense an 'imaginary' journey. It is imaginary because dynamic reality is recorded in a static text, where the narrative is created by the interpreting thought of the author. The author re-visualizes and re-works in his imagination the event that has already occurred and then verbally fixes the resulting image in his textual description. Byzantine culture, however, also recognised a special kind of mobility, which modern analytical thought qualifies as imaginary, since it has no real factual counterpart and is performed by a person in his or her imagination or dreams.

Byzantine imaginary journeys can be divided into at least three major types, which cut across genres. The first type is imaginary travels in the physical world by a literary character in his or her physical body, which are envisioned by the author's imagination. The second type is spiritual travels where a soul visits metaphysical spaces such as the hereafter, and the dwellings of angels, as well as the distant future. The third type is mobility in dreams of the sleeper himself or herself or of those who visit him or her in his or her dreams. To the Byzantines, the second and sometimes the third types of mobility could well seem to be not imaginary, but quite real events. Byzantine imaginary wandering is based on and continues predominantly two traditions, that of ancient Greece and Rome and that of the Jewish Old Testament; more rarely one encounters Muslim (Persian and Arabic) influences. The different traditions are in most cases tightly intertwined, but the impact of Semitic religiosity is predominant in spiritual travels.

The first type of imaginary physical travels in Byzantine literature continues the rich tradition of fictitious journeys in ancient Greco-Roman literary tradition.[1] Imaginary movement – be it a long journey or just moving from one spatial

1 For Greco-Roman heritage in Byzantine literature and culture see Kaldellis, Anthony, *Hellenism in Byzantium: The Transformations of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition* (Cambridge, 2008).

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point to another – is an important element in practically every genre of Byzantine *belles-lettres*, functioning as an effective literary device that helps to unfold the plot and enhances the informative as well as the entertainment value of the story.[2] The motif of travel and spatial movement is especially effective in fictional narratives such as historic and epic novels (*Alexander Romance, 5.1*, the Byzantine *Iliad*, *Belisarios*, the famous *Digenes Akritas* cycle set at the Arab-Byzantine borderlands, etc.) and romantic novels (by Theodore Prodromos,[3] Eumathios Makrembolites[4] etc.).[5] The novels as well as other works of prose and poetry exemplify diverse kinds of imaginary movement performed by the narrator himself or by other *dramatis personae*.

The second type of spiritual travel can be found in many genres of Byzantine secular and church literature. Byzantine spiritual travels were profoundly influenced by both literary Greco-Roman and religious Semitic traditions. The roots of spiritual journeys can be traced back to animistic ideas and experiences in prehistoric times. The visions of the Old Testament prophet Daniel (Dan. 2, 7, 8, 9, 10–12) were of particular importance for the Byzantine Christian mentality. However, the impact of Greek philosophy is also perceptible, such as, in particular, in the motif of the soul's enlightenment and purification in the course of a journey, which was introduced in Plato's *Phaedrus* ('chariot allegory') and further developed in the later philosophical tradition.[6]

Byzantium inherited from the Greco-Roman past a colourful and paradoxical genre of fantastic travels to the otherworld. Three works of this genre are of major importance, the prose novels *Philopatris* (10th or 11th century), *Timarion* (12th century), and *Mazaris* (1414–1415), which have much in common. These are satirical dialogues continuing the Lucianic tradition that was quite popular in Byzantium. All three texts tell us about a fictitious hero who being alive or, for one reason or another, temporarily dead travels to the otherworld, descending into subterranean spaces or ascending into the sky; he converses with the souls of those who died in the distant past and those who died quite recently; finally, he

2 For travels in Byzantine literature, see also Mullett, Margaret E., In Peril on the Sea: Travel Genres and the Unexpected, in: Ruth Macrides (ed.), *Travel in the Byzantine World. Papers from the Thirty-Fourth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Birmingham, April 2000*, Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies, Publications 10 (Aldershot and Burlington, 2002) 259–284, here 260–261.

3 PBW http://pbw2016.kdl.kcl.ac.uk/person/Theodoros/25001/.

4 PBW http://pbw2016.kdl.kcl.ac.uk/person/Eumathios/20102/.

5 On these authors and works see chapters 2, 4, 10, 18, 19 concerning Byzantine literature in: Cupane, Carolina and Bettina Krönung (eds.), *Fictional Storytelling in the Medieval Eastern Mediterranean and Beyond*, Brill's Companions to the Byzantine World 1 (Leiden and Boston, 2016).

6 See chapters 2 and 9 in Ekroth, Gunnel and Ingela Nilsson (eds.), *Round Trip to Hades in the Eastern Mediterranean Tradition. Visits to the Underworld from Antiquity to Byzantium* (Leiden and Boston, 2018).

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returns back to earth and recounts what he has witnessed. The novels are satires that target human sins, vices and passions and caricature Byzantine social evils and the hideous habits of bureaucrats and nobility.[7]

A special group of spiritual travels concerns Christian saints and other righteous persons. Two major subtypes may be distinguished here. The first is the apocalyptic visionary tradition where a righteous person travels in the spirit to future ages, and then warns people about troubles to come and predicts the signs of the approaching eschatological moment (e. g. *Apocalypse of Anastasia,* see 5.1.2). Another kind of spiritual experience is encountered in various hagiographic texts which recount the travels of a saint's soul before or after his/her demise. The saint may also travel in other people's dreams, as can be seen from the activities of Saint Artemios who healed sick persons in their dreams (see 1.11.2). Such travels convey a strong religious message, providing testimonies of the Christian truth, justifying the historiosophical and metahistorical mission of Christianity, and also warning readers of their present sins and deviation from God.[8]

The third type of dream travels may be found in many genres of the Byzantine textual tradition, including *belles-lettres*, historiography and hagiography. Most important, however, is the specific technical genre of *oneirokritika* (books of dream interpretations), which were quite popular in Byzantium. *Oneirokritika* were a significant part of the occult scientific tradition that flourished throughout the history of the Byzantine civilization. Byzantine oneiromancy continued the Greco-Roman and – to a lesser extent – Old Testament traditions. Yet it also adopted a great deal of information originating from the Muslim East. The Muslim dream interpretations, along with their Greek roots, incorporated and systematised the rich Middle Persian, Near Eastern Semitic, and Indian occult experiences.[9]

The fictitious character of imaginary travels does not mean that such tales contain no evidence about Byzantine realities. Imaginary travels are characterised by a complex interaction of artistic, literary, folklore, and documentary elements. Most texts of this kind include valuable (and sometimes unique) in-

7 Hunger, Herbert, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, HdA 12; Byzantinisches Handbuch 5.2 (Munich, 1978) 149–158; see chapters 1, 2, 12, 16, 17 in Ekroth and Nilsson, *Round Trip to Hades.*

8 See chapters 13, 14, 15 in: Ekroth and Nilsson, *Round Trip to Hades.* For individual examples from the rich Byzantine apocalyptic tradition, see the classic study of Alexander, Paul J., *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition* (Berkeley, 1985).

9 Mavroudi, Maria V., *A Byzantine Book on Dream Interpretation: The Oneirocriticon of Achmet and Its Arabic Sources*, MMED 36 (Leiden, 2002).

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formation concerning Byzantine social, economic, cultural and even political life at the time of their creation.[10]

Further reading

Halsall, Guy (ed.), *Humour, History and Politics in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2002).

Pseudo-Lucian, *The Patriot*, in: Lucian, *Works*, ed. Matthew Donald Macleod, The Loeb Classical Library, vol. 8 (Cambridge, Mass., 1967) 413–465.

Mazaris' Journey to Hades: or, Interviews with Dead Men about Certain Officials of the Imperial Court, Arethusa Monographs 5 (Buffalo, NY, 1975).

Schmidt, Victor Michael, *A Legend and Its Image: The Aerial Flight of Alexander the Great in Medieval Art* (Groningen, 1995).

Georganteli, Eurydice, Transposed Images: Currencies and Legitimacy in the Late Medieval Eastern Mediterranean, in: Jonathan Harris et al. (eds.), *Byzantines, Latins, and Turks in the Eastern Mediterranean World after 1150* (Oxford, 2012) 141–180.

Marinis, Vasileios, *Death and the Afterlife in Byzantium* (Cambridge, 2016).

Rustam Shukurov

5.1.1 Kingly ascension: The journey of Alexander the Great into Heaven

Author: Pseudo-Kallisthenes
Text: *Alexander Romance*
Date of text: ca. 3rd-ca. 14th centuries
Genre: romance
Literary context: The *Alexander Romance*, an artistic reworking of famous historical events associated with the biography of Alexander of Macedon (356–323 BC), contains a series of legends relating to the protagonist's exploration of the world and its wonders.[11] In particular, Alexander once reached the end of the world and, in order to make sure of this, decided to travel into Heaven. The story forms part of Alexander's (fictitious) letter to his mother Olympias and is therefore recounted in the first person.

10 See for instance Galatariotou, Catia, Travel and Perception in Byzantium, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 47 (1993) 221–241; McCormick, Michael, Byzantium on the Move: Imagining a Communications History, in: Macrides, *Travel in the Byzantine World*, 3–29, here 7–10, 13–14.

11 For a survey of the current state of research and expert historical and philological commentary to the romance with further bibliography, see Nawotka, Krzysztof, *The Alexander Romance by Ps.-Callisthenes. A Historical Commentary*, Mnemosyne Supplements 399 (Leiden and Boston, 2017).

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Historical significance of the movement: The *Alexander Romance* exemplifies the Hellenistic universalistic roots of the Byzantine conception of supreme worldly power, and also the fusion of the traditional pagan with the new Christian world-view. The *Alexander Romance* was an important element in the Byzantine foundation myth, which focused on the notion that the Hellenistic world absorbed the entire universe through Greek civilization. In Christian times, this unification of the inhabited universe under the sway of Alexander was reinterpreted as an important prerequisite, conceived by God, for the acceptance of the Universal Truth of Christianity by all of mankind. Alexander's ascent into Heaven is a legend central to Byzantine mentality, which, depending on the context, was interpreted as a symbol of the sacredness of imperial power, or as a spiritual transformation of a person, or as a Christological metaphor referring to the Ascension of Jesus.[12] Alexander's journey into Heaven became an extremely popular theme in the visual arts of Byzantium, medieval Europe and the Arabic and Persian Muslim worlds.[13]

Type of movement: imaginary; physical travel.

Locations and date of movement: the end of the world where the sky touched the earth; no specific date.

Edition used: *Der griechische Alexanderroman Rezension β*, ed. Leif Bergson (Stockholm, 1965) 201–203 (II.41).

Translation used: Stoneman, Richard, *Pseudo-Callisthenes. The Greek Alexander Romance. Translation, Introduction and Notes* (London, 1991) 137–138 (modified by Dirk Krausmüller).

Alexander Romance

[p. 201] Then I began to ask myself again if the end of the world was really there and if the sky sloped down there. [p. 202] I wanted to discover the truth, and so I gave orders to capture two of the birds that lived in that place. They were very large white birds, very stout but tame; for they did not fly away when they saw us. Some of the soldiers climbed on to their necks, and they flew off bearing them. The birds fed on dead beasts, which was the reason why a great many of them

12 See Gero, Stephen, The Alexander Legend in Byzantium: Some Literary Gleanings, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 46 (1992) 83–87; Djurslev, Christian Thrue, *Alexander the Great in the Early Christian Tradition: Classical Reception and Patristic Literature* (London, 2020); Zuwiyya, David, *A Companion to Alexander Literature in the Middle Ages*, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition 29 (Leiden and Boston, 2011).

13 Galavaris, George, Alexander the Great Conqueror and Captive of Death His Various Images in Byzantine Art, *Canadian Art Review* 16/1 (1989) 12–18, 74–77; Stoneman, Richard et al. (eds.), *The Alexander Romance in Persia and the East*, Ancient Narrative, Supplementum 15 (Groningen, 2012) part 5 'Images' with further bibliography.

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came to us, because of the dying horses. I captured two of them and saw to it that they were given no food for three days. On the third day I had something like a yoke constructed from wood, and had this tied to their necks. Then I had made some kind of bag, and I climbed into the bag, holding two spears, each about ten feet long and with a horse's liver fixed to the point. At once the birds soared up to eat the liver, and I rose up with them into the air to such a height that I thought I must be close to the sky. I shook all over because of the extreme coldness of the air, caused by the beating of the birds' wings.

Soon a flying creature in the form of a man approached me and said, "O Alexander, you have not yet reached all places on the earth, and are you now exploring the heavens? Return to earth as fast as possible, or you will become food for these birds". And again he said to me, "Look on the earth below, Alexander!" I looked down, somewhat afraid, and behold, I saw a great snake curled up, and in the middle of the snake a tiny circle like a threshing-floor. Then my companion said to me, "Point your spear at the threshing-floor, which is the world. The snake is the sea that surrounds the world".

Thus, I returned to earth, as it was the wish of Providence above, landing about seven days' journey from my army. I was now completely mortified and half-dead. [p. 203] Where I landed, I found one of the satraps [rulers] who was under my command; borrowing 300 horsemen from him, I returned to my camp. From now on I will make no other attempt at what is impossible. Farewell.

Rustam Shukurov

5.1.2 Saintly ascension: the journey of Saint Anastasia to Heaven

Author: anonymous
Text: *Apocalypse of Anastasia*
Date of text: ca. 1000
Genre: apocalypse; hagiography
Literary context: The passages from the *Apocalypse of Anastasia* exemplify Christian imaginary travels of a pious soul, which thus gains new spiritual and worldly knowledge and experience.[14] The nun Anastasia became ill and soon died; however, three days later, she arose and recounted the story of her journey to the Other World.
Historical significance of the movement: Two passages from the *Apocalypse* are presented here. The first one concerns the beginning of Anastasia's journey. It

14 For the Byzantine apocalyptic tradition see above and also Baun, Jane, *Tales from Another Byzantium. Celestial Journey and Local Community in the Medieval Greek Apocrypha* (Cambridge, 2007), chapters 5–9.

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speaks about the moment of transition to another world and gives us an insight into the purposes and meanings of such spiritual travels. The second excerpt concerns Anastasia's visit to Hell. It shows how the heavenly and terrestrial worlds were regarded as mutually permeable and interconnected; and how metaphysical experiences could be blended with presumably real historical events: the meeting of emperor Nikephoros II Phokas (r. 963–969)[15] and his nephew John Tzimiskes[16] in Hagia Sophia and the oaths taken may have happened in reality. Similar instances of blending and interweaving of spiritual and material realities can be found in Byzantine literature in general.

Type of movement: imaginary; spiritual travel.

Locations and time of movement: travel from earth to heaven, travel in heavenly space; no specific date

Edition used: *Apocalypsis Anastasiae*, ed. Rudolf Homburg (Leipzig, 1903) 3–4, 27–28.

Translation used: Baun, Jane, *Tales from Another Byzantium Celestial Journey and Local Community in the Medieval Greek Apocrypha* (Cambridge, 2007) 413 and 422 (according to the Palermo version) (modified by Dirk Krausmüller).

Apocalypse of Anastasia

[p. 4] And after she had finished her prayer, she said, "So then, after I had fallen ill, an angel came to me, who as I knew was not someone from this world, whose name was Michael.[17] He took my hand and led me to the heavens and said to me, 'Do you know where you are standing?' I said, 'No, my lord.' And he said to me, 'I took you out from the lower world, and brought you to the heavens, at the command of God, and I shall bring you back again to this place. Fortify yourself, and put aside all fear, and apprehend everything that you hear and observe, so that you may report everything to men.'"

[Anastasia's soul on its way to Heaven approaches the seven gates, one after the other.]

[p. 27] And I saw there the throne of an emperor, and he did not have imperial status, and behind him there lay a dark man. And the angel said to me, 'This is John, who is also called Tzimiskes, and he killed Nikephoros the Emperor; he neither has respite, nor was he deemed worthy of a throne.' And when I gazed at him, I saw again Nikephoros the Emperor, standing and rebuking him: 'Lord

15 PmbZ 52535, https://www.degruyter.com/document/database/PMBZ/entry/PMBZ27689/html.

16 PmbZ 22778, https://www.degruyter.com/document/database/PMBZ/entry/PMBZ24932/html.

17 The Archangel Michael, mentioned in the Book of Daniel, accompanies souls to Heaven and will judge souls at the Last Judgment.

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John, why did you do this unjust murder to me? Why did you not have mercy with your own soul? Do you not know that we put our hands <together> at Saint Sophia, and made peace with one another, so that there should not be treachery between us? But you did not keep this, and now for the kind of deed you did, you receive such a kind of deed.' But that one, lamenting, said nothing, but only 'Ah me,' and 'woe is me, ah me, ah me'.

Rustam Shukurov

5.1.3 Going to Hades: Timarion's crossing the border of life and death

Author: anonymous
Text: *Timarion*
Date of text: first half of the 12th century
Genre: satirical dialogue
Literary context: The dialogue is a remarkable example of the continuity of the Hellenic tradition. The adoption of Christianity by the Roman Empire did not prevent the reproduction and further development of ancient pagan forms, models, ideas, and conceptions. *Timarion* represents a typical example of the genre of satirical travels to the Beyond. On his way from Thessaloniki to Constantinople, Timarion dies of a severe illness and is taken to Hades by demons; however, the law court in Hades decides that his disease is not fatal and sends him back to his body. Timarion arises and finally reaches Constantinople where he tells his story to his friend Kydion.
Historical significance of the movement: The passage selected gives an interesting insight into how the Byzantines envisioned the process of personal death, that is, the initial point of one's journey to the next world. The transition from this world to Hades that is described here mostly reflects the interpretations of personal death in ancient Greece, with some cosmetic adjustments necessitated by Christian dogma. It may be contrasted with St Anastasia's journey in 5.1.2 above, which gives a thoroughly Christian version of the initial stages of the afterlife.
Type of movement: imaginary; spiritual travel.
Locations and date of movement: from earth to subterranean spaces; no specific date.
Edition used: *Pseudo-Luciano, Timarione. Testo critico, introduzione, traduzione, commentario e lessico*, ed. Roberto Romano, Byzantina et Neo-Hellenica Neapolitana 2 (Naples, 1974) 49–92, here 61–63, lines 334–386.
Translation used: *Timarion*, translation, introduction and commentary by Barry Baldwin (Detroit, 1984) 50–52 (modified by Dirk Krausmüller)

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Timarion

[p. 61] Since my poor body was completely worn out by dysentery, my dear Kydion, and even more so by going twenty full days without food, I began, so it seemed, to sleep the last sleep. [p. 62] Now, there are in the universe certain avenging spirits, who are appointed by divine providence to punish those who transgress against the laws of God. There are also benevolent spirits who reward the good. In addition to these, there are conductors of souls[18] whose mission it is to bring down by whatever way they can the souls that have already left their bodies to Pluto, Aeacus, and Minos[19] so that they may undergo examination according to the customs and laws of the dead before being accorded their lot and dwelling-place. This is also what happened to me. Just before midnight, some shadowy creatures of dusky appearance came flying through the air and landed on my bed where I was stretched out trying to sleep. As soon as I saw them, I froze at the strangeness of the sight. My voice was paralysed although I tried very hard to scream and my organs of speech were immobilised. I cannot say whether I dreamt it or was awake since terror had also robbed me of my faculty of judgement. Whatever it was, it was so clear, so very clear. Indeed, it seems even now to be right in front of me, so frightful was it what happened to me then. For having placed, as it were, an unbreakable gag over my tongue, they bound my faculty of speech either through the frightfulness of the sight or through some hidden power, and began to whisper to each other, saying, "This is the man who lost the fourth of his constituent elements by voiding all his bile. He cannot be allowed to go on living on the strength of the remaining three. Asclepius[20] and Hippocrates[21] have said as much in the decree they wrote down and posted up in Hades whereby no man, even if his body be hale, shall go on living if he has been deprived of one of his four elements". [p. 63] "So", they expressed in harsher tones, "follow us, you wretch, and be numbered as a dead man among the dead". I had to follow them, for what else could I have done. Against my will I was transported through the air the same as they were; I became light, nimble, weightless, my legs unimpeded so that I went forward lightly and without any problems, like ships that run before the wind. You could hear a light rushing sound as I was carried along, similar to the whizzing noise that arrows make when they are shot from bows. When we had crossed that river we have heard about,

18 These are to be understood as a combination of pagan Hermes and Christian angels as conductors of souls to the underworld (see Baldwin, *Timarion*, 101–102, n. 96).

19 Pluto is god of the underworld, Aeacus and Minos are two of the three judges in Hades along with Rhadamanthus who is not mentioned here (see also Baldwin, *Timarion*, 102 n. 98).

20 Greek god of healing.

21 Famous Greek physician (d. 370 BC).

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without getting wet, and also the Acherusian Lake[22] – a name, incidentally, which my guides also used – we approached a subterranean opening, much larger than the one wells have. The darkness that one could make out from the mouth was foul and horrible. I did not want to go down there, but my guides separated and took me in their midst until one of them went headfirst down the opening and dragged me after him with a fierce look. I resisted as best I could, clinging to the mouth with hands and feet until the other guide who was following behind hit me across the cheeks with his knuckles and beat me over the back as well, thus forcing me with both his hands down that dark pit. Once inside, we journeyed a long way in darkness and solitude until we came at last to the iron gate through which the realm of Hades is closed in.

Rustam Shukurov

5.1.4 Dreaming about means of locomotion

Author: anonymous (Pseudo-Achmet)
Text: *The Oneirokritikon of Achmet*
Date of text: 9th–10th centuries
Genre: science (occult); book of dream interpretation
Literary context: The so-called *Oneirokritikon of Achmet* exemplifies the ancient Mediterranean tradition of occult sciences. The book is attributed to a certain Achmet son of Sereim, who is in all probability to be identified with Muḥammad Ibn Sīrīn (d. 729), a famous dream interpreter at the court of the Umayyad caliphs.[23] The claimed authorship, however, is fictitious. The book extensively borrowed translated material from the Arabic tradition that became popular in middle Byzantine times. As a result, its dream interpretations draw heavily on the famous dream book of Artemidoros of the 2nd century AD, which was accessed either directly or through Arabic adaptations, and also on additional information from Sasanian and Indian occult science, which was accumulated by Muslim scholars. Accordingly, the book is divided into Indian, Persians and Egyptian sections, although in many cases the indicated ethnic affiliation of an interpretation is hardly justifiable.
Historical significance of the movement: Two passages on seeing ships in dreams are presented here. For Byzantines, the idea of a ship was normally connected with long-distance travel, which many of them loathed. Consequently, the ship's symbolism was often connected with negative expectations, trials and hard-

22 Lake or swamp in the underworld.
23 Mavroudi, *Byzantine Book*, 32–34.

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ships.[24] However, as it often happens in dream interpretations, the symbolism of an object which is known to the waking mind does not hold true for dreams where different senses are suggested. In dream interpretation, the image of the ship has a neutral meaning and signifies one's destiny and life path, that is, continuous movement from birth to death; soundness of a ship in dreams refers to the well-being of a dreamer. Additionally, the selected passages underscore that shipping as a means of transportation and an element of everyday life was quite common in Byzantium.

Type of movement: imaginary; mobility in dreams.

Locations and date of movement: one's dreams; no specific date.

Edition used: *Achmetis Oneirocriticon*, ed. Franz Drexl (Leipzig, 1925) 139–140.

Translation used: *The Oneirocriticon of Achmet: A Medieval Greek and Arabic Treatise on the Interpretation of Dreams*, transl. by Steven M. Oberhelman (Lubbock, 1991) 176–177 (modified by Dirk Krausmüller).

The Oneirokritikon of Achmet

[p. 139] From the Indians concerning ships

Ships can refer to various people. If someone saw that he died aboard a ship, the death signifies life and a release from need. If he saw that he filled a ship with his belongings in order to go away, he will find anxiety and grief. If he saw that after he embarked, he was sailing under a fair wind, he will be prosperous and find analogous favour from a ruler; but if the wind was adverse, he will have illness, sorrow, shackles, and hindrances to his wishes. If he saw that he turned his ship to land in order to anchor, [p. 140] his affliction will be less in accordance to his proximity to land. If he saw that grain and pulse were loaded on this ship, he will find worry and lengthy sorrow in proportion to the size of the load, but he will not die: for the ship signifies salvation. If someone saw that he was building a merchant ship, he will assemble men for secret aims; however, this will only be seen by the greatest men. If he saw that he completed the ship to his satisfaction, he too will see his will fulfilled in all things; but if it was not finished, he will have a long period of days that is not to be despised and will be proportionate to the work. If he saw that he was sailing on dry land he will have long-lasting worry while on a long trip and his end will be perdition.

24 Kazhdan, Alexander and Simon Franklin, *Studies on Byzantine Literature of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1984) 263–78; McCormick, Byzantium on the Move, 9–10; Galatariotou, Travel and Perception, 225–230.

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179. From the Persians and Egyptians concerning ships
If someone saw that he was crossing a river or ocean in a ship, the ship is his salvation and signifies absence of fear from enemies; but if the boat came into danger, he will lose his health and become ill; but if the boat is in a good condition, each one will be fruitful in his pursuits. If someone saw that he owned merchant ships, he will acquire men of servile character as household slaves; and if he sees that his ships were in some danger, those slaves will become imperilled and he himself will become poor. If someone saw that he was building ships, he will get the additional wealth he has anticipated in proportion to the number of ships.

Rustam Shukurov

5.1.5 Sinister mobility: harsh reality of the imagined

Author: Eumathios Makrembolites[25]
Text: *Hysmine and Hysminias*
Date of text: 12th century
Genre: romantic novel
Literary context: This novel is a typical Byzantine love story, which continued the similar genre of ancient Greek fiction.[26] It recounts in a highly entertaining style the travails of two lovers, Hysmine and Hysminias (who also acts as the first-person narrator) who struggle to be together despite many expected and unexpected obstacles.
Historical significance of the movement: The chosen passage is a part of the imaginary travels of the novel's main characters and concerns piracy in the Mediterranean.[27] Despite the purely fictitious character of the novel, it mirrors quite credibly the realities of sea travel in the Eastern Mediterranean during most of the Byzantine era. Piracy in the Eastern Mediterranean, which for many centuries could not be extinguished, played a significant role in the economies and politics of coastal areas and their hinterland and often was taken for granted by the authorities. With almost documentary precision the novel depicts the vicissitudes of the fate of prisoners who were captured by enemies (whether pirates or government troops) and normally condemned to slavery; the excerpt

25 PBW http://pbw2016.kdl.kcl.ac.uk/person/Eumathios/20102/.
26 For the author, creation date and analysis of the novel, see the introduction to the translation by Jeffreys, Elizabeth, *Four Byzantine Novels. Theodore Prodromos, Rhodanthe and Dosikles; Eumathios Makrembolites, Hysmine and Hysminias; Constantine Manasses, Aristandros and Kallithea; Niketas Eugenianos, Drosilla and Charikles*, (Liverpool, 2012) 159–175 (see reference below).
27 Mullett, In Peril on the Sea, 259–284.

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also exemplifies instances of coerced population movement as it was viewed by a 12th-century writer.[28]

Type of movement: imaginary; physical travel.

Locations and date of movement: the Mediterranean Sea and islands; no specific date.

Edition used: Eumathius Macrembolites, *De Hysmines et Hysminiae amoribus libri XI*, ed. Miroslav Marcovich (Munich-Leipzig, 2001), 94–100, Book 8, ch. 1–9.

Translation used: *Four Byzantine Novels. Theodore Prodromos, Rhodanthe and Dosikles; Eumathios Makrembolites, Hysmine and Hysminias; Constantine Manasses, Aristandros and Kallithea; Niketas Eugenianos, Drosilla and Charikles*, translation, introduction and notes by Elizabeth Jeffreys (Liverpool, 2012) 236–239, Book 8, ch. 1–9 (modified by Dirk Krausmüller).

Hysmine and Hysminias, Book 8

[p. 94] So I rose from sleep with pleasure and delight, and with all my eyes I sought to see Hysmine, but she was nowhere to be found. But I see a host on the seashore, an incalculable host of Ethiopians,[29] savage men, and when I saw them – oh, the bitter sea of my misfortunes! – I rose immediately and wished I was dreaming. But I was awake, for they see me and savagely drag me by the hair, like some hunting trophy, to their *trireme* (for it was hovering above the ground with planks and cables). Taking me to the *trireme*'s hold, they sit me by an oar. When they depart from land, having drawn in all the cables, they spread wings on the ship with all those oars which are the pride of *triremes*. On coming to a calm and very lovely harbour, they moor the *trireme* and, after partaking of a little food and drink (for they had brought bread and water with them), they turn to sleep, setting guards who never nodded off at both the prow and the stern. [p. 95] About the third watch of the night they rise from sleep and again spread wings on the ship with oars and put out from the harbour. They come to a small town and tie the ship up without making noise; then taking shields in their left hands and drawing swords with the other and protecting themselves with arms, they swarm around the town like bees round a honeycomb. Generating a barbaric and un-

28 For slave trade and piracy in Byzantium, see Rotman, Youval, *Byzantine Slavery and the Mediterranean World*, transl. by Jane Marie Todd (Cambridge, Mass., 2009), especially 47, 48, 74–75 for piracy; McCormick, Michael, *Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce A.D. 30–900* (Cambridge, 2001) 244–254. On the ambiguous social position of pirates see also Reyerson, Kathryn, Pirates as marginals in the medieval Mediterranean world, in: Ann E. Zimo et al. (eds.), *Rethinking Medieval Margins and Marginality* (London, 2020), 186–203.

29 Most likely, Egyptian pirates are meant here. A 12th-century reader undoubtedly took this to be a reference to Muslim Egyptian pirates.

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intelligible noise, they made their attack – armed men falling on unarmed, the alert on the sleeping, grabbing and slaughtering them like wild beasts, totally tearing the town apart; they plundered everything that came into their hands, including women, maidens, youths, men – everyone whom the barbarians' dagger did not send to Hades.[30] Collecting up all their loot on the *trireme*, the pirates themselves went on board and left the harbour far behind. When they reached the middle of the sea and had the entire ship fixed with cables like a foundation, they share out the spoils. All the men, all the youths, all the maidens and women they stripped of their tunics and they were uncovered right down to their private parts and had their whole body naked. The *trireme*'s hold received the youths and the men, but the barbarians' immorality and licentiousness received the women while the maidens, by what barbarian law I do not know, were clad in a torn tunic and no arrogant hand was laid on them nor was anything barbaric or shameful done to them. [p. 96] After the barbarians had treated the women in shameless fashion and ordered everything else in disorderly fashion, they turned to dinner. Their table was plentiful and not barbaric or in any way paltry as it had been shortly before. The *trireme*'s hold, as has been said, was reserved for the men, while the area around the prow was kept for the maidens, but the women sat shamefully at the meal with the barbarians. After the delicate food, as has been mentioned, and the shameful table full of blood, they set the youths (there were few of them) to the oars whereas those of a higher age (woe to the barbarians' pitiless souls) became fodder for the sword, and their heads were hurled mercilessly into the sea. The women lay shamefully with the barbarians, and the *trireme* became a brothel full of turpitude and a symposium of blood. This is what went on at night. When night had vanished (for the sun was over the land) and the longed-for light smiled down on us and was the day, the barbarians emerged as if from a bridal chamber and were quite intoxicated with their pleasures, and when they conversed in their barbarian tongue it sounded like a hideous chatter. After an incredible noise of the sort that sailors, and especially barbarian sailors, raise, an alien and unintelligible song saw the *trireme* adorned with a white sail and the wind that blew from the stern billowed out the sail and the *trireme* bucked like a horse let loose on the plain. [p. 97] In order to pass over what took place in the meantime, all the barbarous riot, all their shameful behaviour towards the women and everything else that went on in a barbaric and indecent fashion, we reached Artykomis with a favourable wind and we see a crowd from Artykomis[31] on the shore. And after many negotiations of the sort that barbarians conduct and which pirates exchange in barbarian manner with those on land, the *trireme* took hostages on board while the land received the

30 The term 'barbarian' in this passage confirms non-Greek/Byzantine affiliation of the pirates.
31 *Artykomis* is in Greek "Village of Artemis", a fictitious city.

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trireme's load, which the pirates had looted from the town. And there was a makeshift celebration on the seashore. Everything made of silver, gold, bronze and iron and all clothing and anything else that a barbarian band takes as loot, was unloaded from the *trireme* and all made available for sale. But the loot that consisted of us human beings was not unloaded onto dry land but was put up for sale on board of the *trireme* itself. About the women and us young men who were captives there was little discussion among the inhabitants of Artykomis – or rather, none; their entire attention was devoted to the acquisition of the maidens. These were much prized by the barbarians and purchased by many of those in Artykomis, after the bow and spring of Artemis, which Artykomis considers to be the Celtic river Rhine. For there is in Artykomis a famous temple of Artemis; in the middle of which is a golden statue of Artemis aiming a bow [p. 98] with her hands and with a spring bubbling up at her feet and flowing like a raging and turbulent river. If you saw the springs you would say that they are boiling. These – the bow and the spring – test virginity and its loss. If anyone is in doubt about a virgin and seeks to test her, they garland the maiden with a laurel wreath and put her in the spring. If the girl who dips into the spring has not lied about her virginity and has not been despoiled of her chastity, Artemis does not aim her bow, the water grows calm and the maiden floats comfortably on the water, her head adorned with the garland of laurel. But if a gale from Aphrodite has snuffed out the lamp of her maidenhood and Eros has surreptitiously stolen her virginity, Artemis – the maiden goddess – aims her bow against her who is no maiden, who has deceived her, and seems to shoot at her head; the girl shudders at the weapon, dips her head beneath the water and the foaming water takes away her garland. So all the maidens who had been collected by the barbarians were garlanded with laurel and put in the spring. All who did not dip their heads and who did not lose their garlands were sold for a high price; all who falsely claimed virginity were allotted to the *trireme* and counted among the women, receiving bronze instead of gold, and a barbarian bridal chamber in place of the virgin's laurel wreath. [p. 99] Thus matters stood at Artykomis, and thus the loot was unloaded from the *trireme.* Once again the *trireme* put its accustomed wings in motion and the barbarian fleet made for another city while we were dragged along who had become the barbarians' slaves instead of free men. On the third day we landed in another harbour, and when we had hauled the *trireme* up onto the beach and made it entirely fast with cables, all the barbarians jumped out and stood on the shore. They dragged the women out with them and set up a tent by the waves and prepared a splendid table. After all the food and drink and barbarian jests and all the other unseemly and barbarian behaviour to which they subjected the women, the barbarians turned to sleep with the women, immersing their souls completely in pleasure and being entirely intoxicated with their passions. Thus matters were with the barbarians. We in the ship's hold, putting our trust in the barbarians'

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drunkenness, let ourselves out and were tormented by countless thoughts. Should we disembark from the *trireme* on to the shore or should we escape the hands of the barbarians together with the *trireme* itself, or should we arm ourselves in Hellenic fashion with the many weapons that the *trireme* carried and attack the barbarians and either be victorious or fall during the fight? While matters stood thus with us, [p. 100] an armed troop attacks the barbarians on land as they all sleep, all intoxicated with wine and lust; and while the barbarian band was plundered by the others, we exchanged servitude to Hellenes[32] for servitude to barbarians and having been slaves became slaves once again, becoming our barbarian masters' fellow slaves, and while being enslaved with our former masters, we had become the slaves of Hellenes who shared our tongue. And in the middle of the market and city of Daphnepolis, the city sacred to Apollo, the general and his army chant the victory odes over us, and the city applauds and shouts happily.[33] All of us – the booty, the spoils – are dragged pitiably to the shrine of Apollo, which is the wonder of Daphnepolis.

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32 The term 'Hellenes' indicates here that the attacking soldiers were compatriots of the captives (implying 'Byzantines' for a 12th-century reader). Judging by the context, these 'Hellenic' troops must have been governmental military forces.

33 According to Roman laws, a Roman who was enslaved by the enemy remained of slave status even if he returned to Roman territory.

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