



Dreaming in Byzantium and Beyond

George T. Calofonos

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Although the actual dreaming experience of the Byzantines lies beyond our reach, the remarkable number of dream narratives in the surviving sources of the period attests to the cardinal function of dreams as vehicles of meaning, and thus affords modern scholars access to the wider cultural fabric of symbolic representations of the Byzantine world. Whether recounting real or invented dreams, the narratives serve various purposes, such as political and religious agendas, personal aspirations or simply an author's display of literary skill. It is only in recent years that Byzantine dreaming has attracted scholarly attention, and important publications have suggested the way in which Byzantines reshaped ancient interpretative models and applied new perceptions to the functions of dreams. This book - the first collection of studies on Byzantine dreams to be published - aims to demonstrate further the importance of closely examining dreams in Byzantium in their wider historical and cultural, as well as narrative, context. Linked by this common thread, the essays offer insights into the function of dreams in hagiography, historiography, rhetoric, epistolography, and romance. They explore gender and erotic aspects of dreams; they examine cross-cultural facets of dreaming, provide new readings, and contextualize specific cases; they also look at the Greco-Roman background and Islamic influences of Byzantine dreams and their Christianization. The volume provides a broad variety of perspectives, including those of psychoanalysis and anthropology.

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