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The Goddess, Daenerys Targaryen and Me Too Values

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Abstract. In this article the author interprets the image of Daenerys Targaryen from the HBO television series, *Game of Thrones* (2011–19) as an allegory for the Me Too movement and as a symbolic depiction of the concepts of women regaining their power. She follows the connection between the emerging visualization of Daenerys with the tiny dragons and ancient depictions of Goddesses and dragons, and connects this motif to feminist scholars who researched the revival of feminine language in the 1970s and the 1980s of the 20th century. The article also suggests that the nudity of women depicted in fantastic art, particularly in images with women and dragons, are not necessarily titillating but representative of the early feminist stage of women seeking a symbolic power figure. The author also contrasts Daenerys's visualization with those images, suggesting how she demonstrates the evolution of the motif in light of the changing focal points of feminist movements. Daenerys's image, she suggests, reflects one of the central issues of the Me Too phenomenon – considering the female body as a sanctuary, which even if exposed and suggestive, is dangerous and forbidden to touch.

Keywords: Daenerys Targaryen, Goddess, Me Too, Dragons, *Game of Thrones*.

The so-called Me Too movement has revolutionized norms regarding behaviour toward women, particularly in work environments. But it also upholds values that retain the feminine language. In several of her articles, Julia Kristeva stated how feminine language is more present in art as a non-verbal language (Kristeva and Goldhammer 1985). This study suggests that the image of Daenerys Targaryen (Khaleesi), a key figure in the HBO television series *Game of Thrones* (2011–19), written by David Benioff and D. B. Weiss, adapted from George R. R. Martin's book series *A Song of Ice and Fire* (see Martin 1996), represents far older concepts of the Great Mother Goddess and embodies the values of the Me Too revolution.

In the last episode of the first season of *Game of Thrones*, Daenerys Targaryen goes through a metamorphosis (Martin 1996, 798–807; Benioff and Weiss 2011, 1.10.40–49). Daenerys's husband, Khal Drogo, has just died, and she has lost her unborn baby. His cremation is arranged in the form of two circles of fire. Daenerys's wedding gift – three ancient dragon-eggs – are placed on Drogo's pyre, and the witch Mirri Maz Duur, who intentionally did not save his life, screams in the background, as she burns alive with him. Suddenly, Daenerys begins to walk into the fire, allegedly desperate and longing to join her dead husband. When the fire subsides and a new day breaks, we discover Daenerys possesses her ancestors' powers and has not been harmed by the fire, and the three baby dragons have magically hatched from the eggs thought dead. [Figs. 1–3.]

Prior to this moment, Daenerys was a foreign wife sold into marriage by her brother, and a descendant of a lost civilization. In this fiery moment, she is transformed into "the mother of dragons" and a force to be reckoned with, to whom all of her *Dothraki* tribe bow. Her imperviousness to fire and her contribution to the birth of three baby dragons relate to an ancient structure that signifies power and domination, and completely changes her character and our attitude towards her. This moment has a profound effect on the audience's perception of her: she instantly changes from a queen who attained her position by marriage and who is part of a barbarian tribe of little importance to a force to be reckoned with, a powerful figure worthy of the coveted Iron Throne that was taken from her ancestors. In my article *Mother of Dragons* (Khalifa-Gueta 2022) I outline the visual motif of "the woman and the dragon" in Western history and the origin of the image of Daenerys in the iconography of the motif of the woman and the dragon. In this article, I maintain that women and dragons encounters, of which there are hundreds of artworks throughout history, are almost always positive (Schubart 2016, 120; see also Khalifa-Gueta, forthcoming). In this essay, I compare Daenerys's visualization in this scene with the iconography of Great Goddesses with dragons in order to show their common inherent meaning. I also connect this visual motif and its inherited meaning with some of the values of the Me Too movement, suggesting that it is engaged in a continuing dialogue between past and present. My investigation of three millennia of Mediterranean and Western European art anchors this article and establishes the structure of the motif of "a woman and a dragon." The motif is a separate branch of, but emanates from the dragon-slayer topos and requires different analytical methods.[1]

1 For studies on the dragon-slayer topos, see Batto (1992), Watkins (2001), Delacampagne and Delacampagne (2003), Evans (2008), Ogden (2013a; 2013b), Arnold (2018).

The Metamorphosis Scene: Description versus Image

When George R. R. Martin wrote *A Song of Ice and Fire*, he was not only cognizant of other fantasy literature but also familiar with the visual tradition of the motif in question. Although a consensus has been established among writers of fantasy literature that the medieval period is its greatest reference, almost all fantasy literature treats women differently than the manner in which they were treated during the Middle Ages (Carroll 2018, Bynum 1987, Dinshaw and Wallace 2003). Female protagonists in the fantasy genre, particularly those in *Game of Thrones*, are differentiated from medieval women in so many ways: the former are active, opinionated, free to move about outdoors, and are not regarded as ignorant and replaceable wombs. Martin's description of Daenerys as her brother's property to be sold is nonetheless a relatively accurate mirroring of the social structure of several medieval norms and values. In the metamorphosis scene, Martin exceeds the limits of patriarchal social structure, since being unharmed by fire and mothering dragons elevates Daenerys to a significantly higher level in the social hierarchy, even that of Goddess-like. Martin links Daenerys with a scheme of powerful women, sometimes disturbingly powerful for androcentric cultures, this iconography also alludes to stereotypes of dangerous women and destructive female monsters. By that he links her figure to the motif of the woman and the dragon's multiple aspects.

The textual description of Daenerys after Khal-Drago's cremation and Daenerys walking into the fire is different from the on-screen one. The text informs us that Daenerys's hair was not resistant to the fire like the rest of her body and was burned completely off her head. Hair is a symbol of identity and strength throughout women's history. An ancient Greek bride would have her hair cut as a symbol of the surrendering of her familial identity. Khal Drogo's long hair is a symbol of male heroism and ascendancy akin to the long, flowing hair of Heracles and biblical Samson, which makes them look fearsome in battle and is their source of strength (Levine 1995, 82–88). Mythological descriptions of women with long and flowing hair indicate them to be witches or virgins, such as the description of Medea Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, loosening her hair when consulting the dragons and the agents of the night to create a potion of death and rejuvenation (Ovid 1998, 7:183–190). Martin's decision to burn Daenerys's hair symbolizes a metamorphosis – she is indeed going through a transformation of identity, and like an ancient bride, must shed her previous identity. Daenerys's loss of her hair also removes her as far as possible from the connotations of witches, as Schubart

asserts. The witch herself is being burned away, physically and metaphorically, as the cremation ceremony takes place (Schubart 2016, 120–122).

Visualizing Daenerys with long, floating hair is to stress her femininity, but at the same time it stresses how dangerous she can be. Images of women with flowing hair and a dragon symbolize voluptuousness and seduction, but are also related to the commonly popular medieval and early modern images of Saint Margaret, seated inside the dragon she summoned with the power of her prayer [Fig. 4]. The theme of fertility and infertility re-emerges in this scenario, when after losing her unborn human baby, Daenerys becomes the "mother of dragons," giving miraculous and grotesque birth to the three ancient eggs. This, again, reconnects to Saint Margaret: a virgin saint protector over childbirth rituals and imaged as delivering herself from the creature's belly (De Voragine 2012, 93; Dresvina 2016). Saint Margaret's iconography follows images of great fertility goddesses with dragons as symbolizing birth, death and rejuvenation.

In Martin's novel, the mother of dragons is described breastfeeding her dragons: "the cream-and-gold dragon was suckling at her left breast, the green-and-bronze at the right" (Martin 1996, 806). This image follows the iconography of Cleopatra from the Western Middle Ages and Early Modernity. Cleopatra VII Philopator (69–30 BC) was the last in the pharaonic dynasty and formed an alliance with Mark Antony (83–30 BC), who was at the time the most prosperous and decorated Roman warlord and expected to succeed Julius Caesar. Defeated in battle by Octavian, Antony committed suicide, after which Cleopatra did the same. She is remembered throughout Western history as an evil, seductive opportunist (Curran 2011; Geronimus 2006, 61–64, also fig. 41). Her iconography shows a serpent attached to each of her breasts [Fig. 5]. In Cleopatra's case, this image symbolizes her death, because she committed suicide with snake bites. However, she is portrayed very much alive in this iconography, as if she were breastfeeding the serpents, as Daenerys does in Martin's book, bringing a dualistic meaning into play. Cleopatra's breastfeeding iconography follows the iconography of Great Mother Goddesses in the shape of serpents feeding a King or a God, or holding a serpent in each hand. The description of Daenerys breastfeeding the dragons symbolizes the impending new life, new hope, and a new identity for her.

Presenting Daenerys naked, with floating silver hair and holding dragons, is part of Fantastic art's long iconographical tradition of erotic women reclaiming their power and reuniting with the dragon – a reception of the iconography of the Great Goddess (Hardwick 2003; Martindale and Thomas 2006; Hardwick and Stray 2008). This image, I contend, implies appreciation of the female body

and ecstatic elevation of the female character to the level of sainthood and goddesshood. This scene presents one tiny dragon in Daenerys's arms, another on her shoulders, and a third climbing up her thigh [Figs. 2–3]. Although she is naked, her stable and balanced standing pose does not allude to eroticism; there is nothing in her image that arouses the emotions of lust or titillation. Although she appears fragile and her dragons are tiny, she is transformed in the viewers' minds into a power figure. She stands covered with ash like a Phoenix rising from ashes to reclaim its golden glory. The Dothraki crowd instantly bows down to her, suggesting that seeing her with tiny dragons instantly places her outside the patriarchal order in which they grew up, and associates her with a structure of power and domination. Thus, the writer, director, and audience of this series harnesses the visual scheme of women with dragons, with its overtones of power and fertility, to create a climax in this scene.

The Great Goddess and the Dragon Iconography

I have analysed images of female figures with dragons from the Greco-Roman era to the Italian Renaissance era and have found that dragons, which originated from and were often referred to interchangeably with serpents (Khalifa-Gueta 2018), were not perceived as evil in antiquity, yet male mythological characters usually find themselves combatting them. When we look at the syntagma "man and dragon" and paradigmatically change "man" to "woman," a different signified emerges – women do not fight dragons!

The mythological structure of women with dragons relates to their striving for a union that is holy, which sprang from the fundamental connection between Great Goddess images and that of dragons, even from prehistoric eras. The Neolithic terracotta statue found in Ur [Fig. 6] is only one example of a variety of feminine *anguipedian* – part human part dragon being – found in Mesopotamia and the southern Europe (Neumann 1955; Gimbutas 1982, 112).

I contend that the dragon was a mythological analogy for the Great Mother Goddess, since many Great Goddesses metamorphosize into dragons or are imaged as anguipedian (also known as *dracontopede*). The Egyptian Great Goddess Hathor is a good example. Hathor, known even from the pre-dynastic era, is usually depicted as the cow Goddess. She is central and of cardinal importance in Egyptian mythology throughout the eras, and is particularly worshipped in a burial context, because she is considered the earth-womb where the dead incubate and are reborn in the afterlife. If she is not properly worshipped, she

metamorphosizes into Sakmet, the lioness Goddess of destruction and plagues – savagely destroying everything in her path. Another metamorphosis of Hathor is the cobra Uraeus that guards the Pharaohs and adorns the crown on every Pharaoh's head [Fig. 7]. Wadjet (Weret–Hekau) and Isis [Fig. 8] are other godly manifestations that sprang from her figure and were also usually depicted as anguipedian or as holding serpents in their hands. The Mesopotamian Tiamat is herself a dragoness. Astar and the Minoan Goddesses are other examples of Great Goddesses depicted as holding serpents in their hands (Troy 1986, 21–25, 53–61; Johnson 1990; Marinatos 1993, 148, 157–159, 222–223, 276–279, 292; Roberts 1995; Lesko 1999, 69–76; Lapatin 2002, 60–90; Trčová-Flamee 2003).

The Greek statue of Athena *Parthenos* presents her with her attribute serpent – the *oikouros ophis* – a real serpent worshipped in the temple on the Acropolis in Athens and believed to be a metamorphosis of the goddess herself [Fig. 9]. Athena is also depicted as riding a chariot driven by dragons, as are Demeter/Ceres and her ambassador Triptolemos [Fig. 10]. The iconography of Hygieia, the goddess of health, depicts her feeding a holy serpent from a sacrificial plate called a *patera* [Fig. 11], as depicted in a Roman marble statue from the first century AD, which is a copy of a third century BC Greek statue. This iconography is also evident in Firminus Pupius's *Vesta* statue dated to 140–150 AD [Fig. 12] and a first century AD marble statue of *Bona Dea* (the Good Goddess) [Fig. 13], and is typical of other Great Goddesses (Herodotus 2008, 6:60; Lucian of Samosata 1913–1967, 7:358–65:2. Ogden 2013a, 204–205; Bowden 2010, 26–48).[2]

Every dragon has a mother; Gaia is either the mother or grandmother of these creatures. Repentance to her is required after killing a dragon – even Apollo was exiled from his temple at Delphi for several months every year to atone for the slaying of Python (Varro 2014, 7:17; Hesychios 1953–1966, fr. 54.T1134. Holland 1933, 201–207; Fontenrose 1980, 374–377). In the *Homeric Hymns to Apollo* Hera is recognized as the mother of Typhon, who gave him to the dragoness Python to raise (*The Homeric Hymns* 2003, 3: 242–276, 3: 375–387. Fontenrose 1980, 70–93). Echidna is herself a dragoness and mother of several dragons (Ogden 2013b, 13–18).

The presentation of images of Great Goddesses as communicating, collaborating or fused with dragons was such a fundamental mental image in antiquity that led Christian art to adopt this iconography for the biblical great mother Eve, presented as conversing with the dragon in the Eden myth, which is also sometimes depicted as an anguipedian [Fig. 14] (Joines 1967, 68–145; Hoffeld 1968; Johnston 2000, 20–23). Mary, the mother of Christ, is also represented with

2 On snake cults, see Ogden (2013a, 347–382).

the dragon, but is usually depicted as standing on it to indicate her victory over it (Dunlop 2002; Brown 2017).

Thus, it is evident that Western society sustained the mental image of a great feminine power that itself is manifested in the images of dragons or shown in a collaborative and combined image of a female goddess with a dragon. All the goddesses mentioned are considered as Mother Goddesses, presiding over the fertility of the land and of humans. They are usually depicted standing firmly on both feet and not in *contra-posto* (unbalanced and unequal pose) or in motion, but steady and firm, such as Athena *Parthenos* [Fig. 8] or Mary, to symbolize them as a pillar that supports the temple (Parthenon) or the church (Brown 2017, 28, 30–32).

Reception of the Great Goddess with the Dragon

This iconography of the Great Goddess was revived in modern fantasy art paintings of the 1970s–1980s, which repeatedly imaged women with dragons. The two figures, lady and beast, are usually posed in a collaborative and peaceful interaction and are sometimes even fused, as in paintings such as Boris Vallejo's *Flight of the Dragons* [Fig. 15], Julie Bell's *Golden Lover* [Fig. 16], and Rowena Morrill's *Vision Tarot* [Fig. 17] (Sackmann 1986). Some would say the women are titillating, and therefore conclude that fantasy art is a popular artform of a male-dominated culture that serves the demand for the erotic, bordering on pornographic, and so cannot be considered fine art (Layne 1986). I maintain that although valid in some cases, this is not the only perspective from which to analyse these paintings. It is especially important in this case to consider the artists' perspective. An example is Boris Vallejo's foreword for his book of illustrations *Mirage* (1982), in which he describes in detail how editors and clients asked him to censor the eroticism of his artworks, labelling them "indecent." He contends that his images manifest love to the human body and identifies erotica as an important motif. The female artists Julie Bell and Rowena Morrill evince equal enthusiasm for eroticizing women with dragons.[3] Thus, titillation may not have been the artist's goal. Since this iconography has an element that seeks to elevate and promote women, I suggest here that eroticism has a significant role in stressing the power of this female archetype and adoration towards her

3 Rowena Morrill: Artworks. *Arthive: https://arthive.com/artists/64732~Rowena_Morrill/works/type:painting.* Last accessed 22. 09. 2022.

(see Vallejo and Vallejo 1982, Foreword).[4] Moreover, I maintain that the nudity presented in the on-screen image of Daenerys Targaryen aims to stress precisely those aspects.

This artistic movement was contemporaneous with a feminist agenda that emerged at the time, best exemplified by Hélène Cixous's manifest *Le rire de la Méduse* (*Medusa's Laughter*) that perceives women as being severed from their Great Goddess powers, once part of women's identity, and following that severance women were oppressed and subjugated (Cixous 1975; Rountree 1999). Medusa is also considered a dragoness in antiquity, and a great Mother Goddess severed of her powers. Another example is Julia Kristeva's claim that feminine language is a nonverbal one, infused with feelings and suppressed issues (Kristeva 1982; Kristeva and Goldhammer 1985). I see the images of women united with dragons in these fantasy art paintings as a visualization of women reclaiming their ancestral strength and reuniting with their god-like qualities. This neo-classical (or rather neo-Baroque) iconography recalls ancient Great-Goddess iconology that presents the naked female body with the same adoration we encounter in Greco-Roman art towards the masculine body (Bonfante 1989). The naked female body is transformed into a sanctuary (*locus sanctus*) guarded by the most powerful beast; adversarial to men but allied with women. Their beautiful and seductive appearance may be pleasing to the eye, but they are forbidden fruits.

In the *Game of Thrones* television production, Daenerys is imaged according to the fantasy art genre, visually and conceptually structured as another link in the long chain of the "the woman and the dragon" motif (only a small portion of which is presented here). She is a female protagonist whose instant metamorphosis grants her *apotheosis*, elevation to the gods. At the beginning of season one, she played her part within the patriarchal social structure: being sold into marriage, raped, and subordinated. Her union with the dragons undermines this social structure and raises her status within the hierarchy so greatly that she actually changes the social structure around her. She becomes a semi-goddess, a guarded sanctuary no one dares to take by force, a source of life and rejuvenation, and the resumption of an ancestral force.

Another issue that needs to be discussed is the masculinized female. Fantasy artists reacted to the blurred borders between masculinity and femininity. In the 1960s, feminist revolutionaries "burned bras" (n.a. 2018, *BBC*), which became a

4 For the quantity of erotic women's images of Julie Bell, see *Boris Vallejo and Julie Bell: Official Fantasy Art Website of Boris and Julie*, *https://www.borisjulie.com/product-category/prints/julie-prints/*. Last accessed 22. 09. 2022.

metaphor for eliminating restrictive female clothing. It became socially acceptable and even fashionable for women to style themselves more androgynously: they cut their hair short and later even added shoulder pads to their manly suits, giving the female silhouette a masculine, broad-shouldered appearance. In response, fantasy artists created strong, masculine female protagonists [Figs. 15–17]. They did not, however, give their women male anatomy, as Michelangelo did, but used female body builders as models. These artistic manifestations mirrored social norms reflecting that a woman is perceived as strong if she adopts a masculine attitude, or, in other words, defeminizes herself.

In contrast, Daenerys's images in her metamorphosis and other scenes from season one reflect the twenty-first-century approach to the concept of a powerful woman. Her appearance is of a fragile, very young, and not-quite-mature woman. She is petite and her sand-coloured silky dress emphasizes her feminine curves, stressing her anti-masculine appearance. When her clothes are incinerated in the fire, she is revealed as a woman without strong muscles, and her hair remains long. Choosing to present her figure that way highlights her femininity. The paradox remains that she is shown small, naked, fragile and giving birth – the most feminine act a woman can perform – yet the manifestation of her union with the power symbol of the dragon forces the viewer to accept binary concepts about her. Her figure is strong yet fragile, exposed to the viewer and maybe even erotic but not open to being touched, matriarchal within patriarchy, utopian and dystopian. She is not a woman who adopts masculine behaviour and appearance (as Brienne of Tarth and Cersei Lannister do later in the series), but a totally feminine force that comes to challenge masculine power and becomes united with the ancient sanctity of females.

The Power of the Goddess and Its Meaning

Daenerys is imaged as a reception of Great Mother Goddesses; standing firmly and equally on both her feet and attributed with three dragons. But this reception is not only visual, it is also full of meaning. At this point I would like to connect Daenerys's image to the subtext and concepts embedded in the Me Too movement. Many women who are leaders in their fields have declared the masculine wrongdoing they had to endure in order to approach their field of interest and be able to climb the hierarchical ladder. See for example Alyssa Milano's statement from October 15, 2017, on her blog: "If you've been sexually harassed or assaulted write 'me too' as a reply to this tweet" (Dorking 2017).

Such statements have illuminated a conceptual gap between the commonly held belief in the new moral attitude towards women in contemporary global societies, and the common objectification and diminishment of the female body. One of the Me Too aims, in other words, was a global message that a woman being beautiful, seductive, and even exposed, does not obviate her consent (Ohlheiser 2017; Frye 2018; Edwards, Dockterman, and Sweetland 2018; Rogers 2018). I suggest that presenting a voluptuous woman together with a dragon at her side sends the exact message of the Me Too movement: one can look but cannot touch. Daenerys's image manifests concretely the thin line between objectifying women and titillation, on the one hand, and a message of power and danger demanding respect, on the other. Daenerys reflects danger and power that direct the viewer's feelings toward admiration and elevation of women. The re-evaluation of her figure by the viewers not only instigated a re-evaluation of the medievalist social structure of Westeros but also motivated the viewer to re-evaluate stereotypes of the vulnerability and helplessness of women in general.

Her character's trajectory is analogous to the Me Too revolution. Women in the past acted within and climbed the hierarchal ladder of the patriarchal social structure in which they lived and worked. At the inception moment of Me Too, these women had come to a point that they felt strong enough and empowered by their great numbers and empathy in social media to undermine patriarchal norms, changing the structure itself. They enacted the change by claiming that sexual harassment of women, in every field of occupation and at every social level, is wrong. They particularly stressed the fact that if a woman looks sexual and seductive, this by no means indicates consent. This new approach is particularly aimed against the "blaming the victim" line of defence in rape trials.

Presenting Daenerys naked, maybe even erotic, with floating hair and with dragons climbing up her thigh and shoulder, symbolizes her feminine reunion with the element of the earth – the Great Mother Goddess. Before this scene she had almost no power and had even lost the little hope for power she had with the death of Khal Drogo. Yet in entering the fiery maze, as if entering the womb of the Goddess, she sheds her old self and is reborn as a woman united with the forces of genesis, a pillar of the earth herself, a Goddess. She transforms from a socially vulnerable and powerless being into a force to recognize. Her power is emblemized in the image of the dragon. This scene manifests the transformation of women from being subordinated to a patriarchal order, to women who become united with their primaeval power and can choose to carve their own new path toward a new order. In her new pose, even if projecting what might accrue to

some as erotic, she is no longer permitted for sexual abuse but is guarded and manifest power and danger.

What was demonstrated before with the figure of Hathor is also true to almost all Great Goddesses – the dualist nature. A Great Goddess is a creator of life and of rejuvenation, but is also a messenger of death and destruction. The example of Hathor that turns into Sakmet, the Goddess of the plague, who destroys everything in her path, sustains the dualist nature of the Great Goddess. Another example is Demeter who grants life to the land, but in her sorrow the land becomes arid. The balance and stability of Daenerys's image and her acceptance of her metamorphosis shed light on the meaning of her image as directly allied with the Me Too, implying the concept of a woman who is at peace with her own body and sexuality, and with several, sometimes contradictory aspects of her persona, her past and future, her darkness and light, her fragility and power, and her ability to bring life out of death. The power hiding inside of her has suddenly exploded in the form of dragons. At this moment she poses the ultimate threat to the patriarchy of Westeros. But her power is constructed as positive and feminine in contrast to the Westeros's destructive and terrorizing masculine domination. Daenerys's power is based in genesis, re-emergence from ash, and the ability to give birth, although, as is later elucidated, she too has destructive powers like other Great Mother Goddesses. She is the master of her faith and is to never again be sexualized to be offered as assistance for men.

The paradox is that, at the moment Daenerys emerges from the fire, the dragons are tiny – they can harm and pose danger to no one – so the transformation actually occurs in the mind of the viewer. Like Saint Margaret, Daenerys outwardly materialized her inner self, and created a magical being that was assumed to have vanished from the world. The connection with the figure of Mary is not only through the dragon, which Mary is sometimes presented trampling under her feet (Cohen 2008, 255–256), but also through the famous star that decorated the sky soon after Jesus was born, leading the way for the Magi to come. The Star of Bethlehem alludes to the red star that hung in the sky for a long time in Martin's book *A Clash of Kings* (Matthew 2.1–12. Martin 1998, chapters: 1–13. Trexler 1997). It is interesting to note that throughout Western Christianity, Christ himself was often allegorized as a dragon, making Mary also a mother of a dragon (Kessler 2009).

These multiple disparate aspects underpinning this image cause a transformative reaction in the viewer/the reader for her character. They are forced to expand their intellectual approach toward a character with oppositional features and undergo a metamorphosis themselves, re-evaluating their judgments and rethinking their

categorization of her figure. This metamorphosis disrupts the viewers' established mindset and necessitates a re-evaluation of their attitudes, a moment so typical of Martin's series.

Thus, what can be considered as the postfeminist aspect of Daenerys's metamorphosis is suggested here to be a concept transformed from antiquity and Renaissance art. The fact that her single image can signify multiple, even contradictory aspects, is suggested here to relate to the recipient of the Great Goddess. This scene possesses various contradictory aspects: death and birth, destruction and creation, witchcraft and miracles (both intervention into the natural order, one a manipulation of faith and the other a godly intervention), great feminine power and fragility, and the inherited binary connotation of dragons as good and evil. Multiple concepts and a contradictory nature are embedded in the iconography of the Great Goddess, initiating power, danger, honour, and admiration in the mind of the beholder.

To conclude, both Martin and the HBO directors and scriptwriters of *The Game of Thrones* were reacting to the conceptual motif of "the woman and the dragon" and, whether consciously or otherwise, harness the iconographic tradition of the Great Goddess and the dragon to convey meanings. The ancient motif of "the woman and the dragon" has been embedded with binary concepts of holiness, healing, and power, along with negative concepts of destruction, witchcraft, and temptation. The brief outline of the motif here focused solely on Great Goddesses, but is much more elaborated, Daenerys's image can be further discussed in accordance with it. Furthermore, fantastic visual artists of the 20th century apply reception of ancient concepts of the motif and inject into it changing attitudes toward women in their own time. These concepts have been suggested as both positive and negative, and manifest the ability to insert multiple meanings into an image. The image of Daenerys, from both George R. R. Martin's series of books and the HBO series *Game of Thrones*, is thus the recipient of this long and diverse tradition, operating within the structure this motif has carved over the years. Ultimately Daenerys is a woman who challenges her surrounding patriarchal social structure and embodies both positive and negative binary qualities, making her a perfect example of disparate strategies of postfeminist thinking and a visual manifestation of the Me Too revolution.

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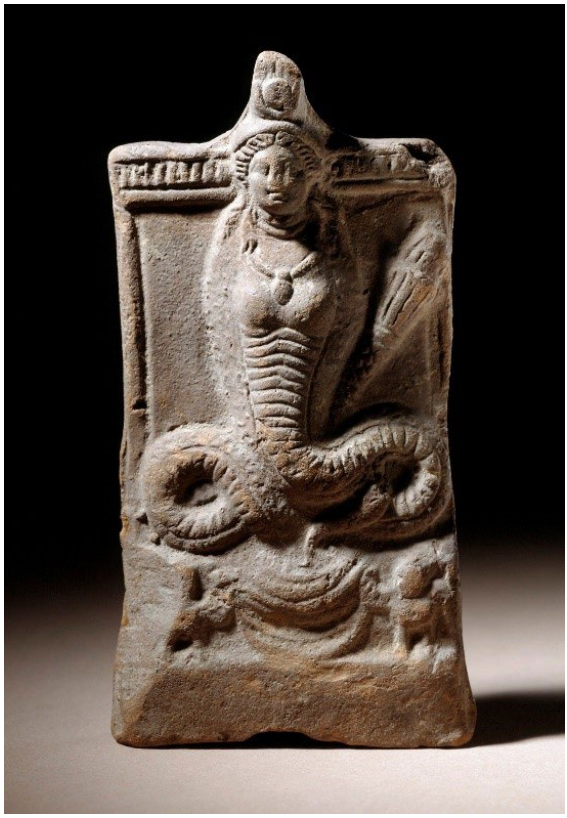

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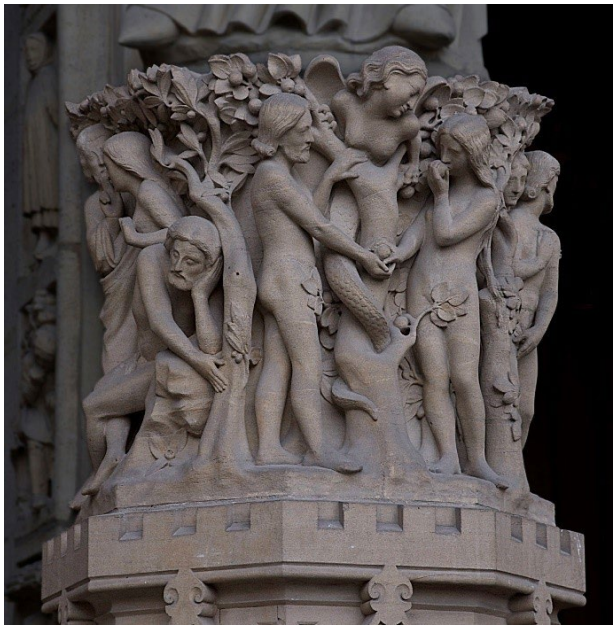

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