

Cuvînt înainte

According to the testimony of The Sacred Scriptures, man, who came on the last day of creation, had the mammoth task of naming the animals that preceded his own creation. He did this by pairing the earth creatures with the denizens of the deep and those of the sky. Therefore, most of the animals found on earth have their counterparts in the aquatic kingdom and in the firmament of the sky. Consequently, the more one penetrates the mysterious waters and flies to the highest point of the sky, the more one remains in familiar territory. This is because one is likely to encounter the horse, rat, frog, lion and other species in water, and the weaver, kinglet and other birds in the sky. However, man's flight of imagination did not stop with the pairing of the Earth creatures with those of the water and sky but assumed the role of God himself. Man created his own imaginary, fantastic beasts imbued with more magical powers than those who were created by God. The only problem is that they are not visible to the naked eye and their existence is therefore in doubt. Overall, they are neither here nor there and they are just the creations of imagination. Thanks to the imagination of the Ancient Egyptians, the sphinx, with its gaze, can turn those who fail to answer his questions into stone. The creativity of the Phoenicians left us with an enduring legacy of the fabulous phoenix, which can live up to a thousand years. When it wants to die, it flies up towards the sun and thus becomes cremated by the scorching flares of Helios, and from its ashes rises a new young bird. In other versions, it is the phoenix itself that makes the nest of wood in which it cremates itself and then rises again as a new bird. Aristotle, who is considered the father of modern zoology,

Creaturi imaginare terestre, aeriene și acvatice

tells of fishes called *scolopendra* and “the fox”, saying that when they swallow a hook, they turn themselves inside out until the hook is ejected, and then reverse the manoeuvre to assume their normal appearances. The medieval encyclopedia *L’image du monde* (Gautier De Metz, 1245) tells of the existence of a strange race of extremely hirsute people living in the submarine world, feeding on raw fish and quenching their thirst with the salty water of the sea. In fact, the medieval imagination created imaginary landscapes of perpetual youth for their inhabitants, and worlds of no return for the mortals who set their feet down there. Such imaginary landscapes are populated by human cloned entities such as fairies, selkies, dwarfs, etc. The modern imagination has invented the existence of aliens from other planets who visit the Earth, ensconced in their UFOs and who sometimes hobnob with humans, playing pranks on them and leaving them with no memories.

Sibusiso Hyacinth MADONDO