

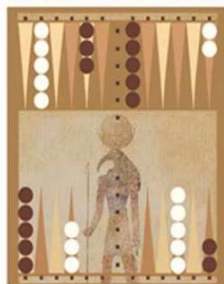


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Centrul de cercetare a
imagnarului *SPECULUM*

MYTH STUDY GROUP



Facilior progressus in regressu



Universitatea
„1 Decembrie 1918”
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România

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Orléans, Franța

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

National Conference with International Participation:

CREATURI IMAGINARE TERESTRE, AERIENE ȘI ACVATICE /
IMAGINARY CREATURES OF THE EARTH, SKY, AND WATER

ALBA IULIA (ROMANIA)
September 26-27th, 2022

CONFERENCE AIMS AND SCOPE:

Affiliated with 1 Decembrie 1918 University of Alba Iulia, Romania, The *Speculum* Centre has been long activating in the field of Research on the Imaginary. This year the conference on *Imaginary creatures of the earth, sky, and water* has as partners The University of South Africa and Université d'Orléans, France.

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, 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.

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KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Professor Anna CAIOZZO

Université d'Orléans, France



Anna Caiozzo is Professor of Medieval Studies at the University of Orleans. Her works focuses on the representations and imagination of the Near Eastern medieval worlds and particularly on the function of the visual arts under the Turco-Mongolian dynasties. She has also worked on the celestial imaginaries, on the earthly wonders, and on the heroic imagination conveyed by illuminated epic poetry during the 14th and 15th centuries

Professor Sibusiso Hyacinth MADONDO

University of South Africa



Sibusiso Hyacinth Madondo was born in Ladysmith, in the province of South Africa. He obtained a BA degree from the University of Natal (Howard College), specializing in English, French and Spanish Literatures. He was awarded a French government scholarship to study in France, where he obtained a Master's degree from the University of Paris III (La Sorbonne Nouvelle), DEA and Doctorat de Lettres Modernes from the University of Paris IV (Paris-Sorbonne) specializing on the Medieval romancer, Chrétien de Troyes. He is also involved in the study of comparative mythology and he is the chairman of the Myth Study Group which he founded in 2006. He was the founding editor of the journal, *Trictrac: Journal of World Mythology and Folklore*. He has collaborated with many centers of research and has lectured in the following countries: Germany, England, Wales, France, Réunion Island, Japan, Romania, Iceland, Australia and New Zealand. He is the associate Professor at the University of South Africa (Unisa).

Professor Mircea BRAGA

CCI *Speculum*, 1 Decembrie 1918 University of Alba Iulia



Mircea Braga: University Professor, with a PhD in 1984, specialized in literary and historical criticism, born in Sibiu, Romania, in August 27, 1938. Member of the Writers's Union in Romania, of the Association of General and Comparative Literature in Romania, Professor Emeritus (2008), Director of the Center of Research on the Imaginary *Speculum* (1 Decembrie 1918 University from Alba Iulia). He directed many PhD students in the field of the theory of the imaginary and published more than 1600 articles in specialized journals, in Romania and abroad, he was the editor and

author of prefaces for more than 35 volumes, he signed more than 20 personal volumes, among which: *Sincronism și tradiție* (1972); *Conjuncturi și permanențe* (1976), *Destinul unor structuri literare* (1979); *Istoria literară ca pretext* (1982); *V. Voiculescu în orizontul tradiționalismului* (1984); *Când sensul acoperă semnul* (1985); *Recursul la tradiție* (1987); *Pe pragul criticii* (1992); *Decupaje în sens* (1997); *Cultura – o utopie asumată?* (2000); *Epoca marilor clasici* (2001; ed. a II-a, 2001; ed. a II-a, 2002); *Teorie și metodă* (2002); *Vasile Voiculescu* (2002); *Critică literară* (2003; ed. a II-a, 2004); *Replieri interpretative* (2003); *Dincolo de binele și răul culturii (Fr. Nietzsche)*, vol. I (2006); *Constantin Noica și Sibiul* (2007); *V. Voiculescu – Măștile căutării de sine (O hermeneutică a orizonturilor creației)* (2008); *Geografii instabile* (2010); *Despre ordinul suveran al receptării* (2013); *La izvoarele aventurii metodologice moderne* (2013); *Rătăcind prin canon* (2013); *Dincolo de binele și răul culturii (Fr. Nietzsche)*, vol. 2 (2014); *Ecce Nietzsche* (2015), *Ultima frontieră* (2020), *Biblioteca și irealul din real* (2020), *În căutarea sensului* (2021). He was awarded prizes and distinctions: the Romanian Academy Prize for the volume *Ecce Nietzsche* (published in 2015) etc.

PLENARIES

Professor Anna CAIOZZO,
Université d'Orléans, France

Some imaginary animals of the medieval Muslim worlds according to the cosmographies illustrated since the 13th century

Abstract: The bestiary of cosmographies includes two classifications in addition to animals living on land, sea and in the air, the animals listed since antiquity in the tradition of Aristotle and the fabulous animals or hybrids.

The latter integrate the normal order of things and play a role in the life of human beings or in their environment. We will attempt a classification of this fantastic bestiary.

Keywords: cosmography; animals; hybrids; seas; Asia.

Sibusiso Hyacinth MADONDO
University of South Africa

The 'fearful symmetry' and the alexipharmic properties of the alicorn trio of magical ungulates: the unicorn, rhinoceros and hippopotamus

Abstract: Over the years, the unicorn, rhinoceros and hippopotamus have been either erroneously or correctly linked to each other. For some authors, they are the same side of the coin, while for others, they are completely different species. The earliest sources that mention these animals are the Biblical Books of the Old Testament, the Vedic texts, and the Greek and Latin encyclopedists (Ctesias, Aristotle, Albertus Magnus, Isidore of Sevilla, Bartholomeus Anglicus, etc), followed by the *Physiologus* and Medieval Bestiaries (Pierre de Beauvais, Philippe de Thaün, Guillaume le Clerc de Normandie, Brunetto Latini, etc). The common features that group them together are the hybrid nature of their bodies, alicorn appearance and ungulate hoofs. They are all endowed with fierce force, provoking atavistic horror, and are belligerent and defensive with their singular horns, which are said to be imbued with magical or alexipharmic attributes that give protection to those who use them. Queen Elizabeth I, the Indian aristocrats and many other rulers of the world are said to have possessed the horns of the above-mentioned trio of alicorn ungulates. In some instances, their horns are used as aphrodisiacs, which is implied by their phallic appearances, hence making them symbols of creation, fertility and purity.

Their symbolism links them to other terrestrial and aquatic entities such as the oryx, hippocampus (seahorse), narwhal, and *égliceron*, among others. In mythology, the alicorn trio is usually associated with symbols of royal power and deities, such as Seth and Thoueris (Egypt), Rishyashringa (Ekashringa) and "Gazelle Horn" of *The*

Mahabharata epic poem (India) and most African kings are eulogized as the rhinoceros: *ubhejane ephuma esiqiwini* (KwaZulu-Natal).

Keywords: Unicorn, rhinoceros; hippopotamus; narwhal; oryx; hippocampus; bestiaries; encyclopedias; Seth; Ekashringa.

PAPERS

Professor Maria-Ana TUPAN PhD Habil.

1 Decembrie 1918 University of Alba Iulia, Romania

Alchemy and Mermaids in Contemporary Poland: The Lure

Abstract: What kind of stories would mythological creatures tell on entering the world of the confused European East in search of an identity at about the time of the collapse of communism? The mix of boring and gloomy everyday life and the escapist flights to musical performance and nightclub entertainments bred a tension which remained unresolved for humans feeling more and more like strangers on earth, so much estranged from their human essence as to become prey to the hybrid creatures of the deep. The two mermaids, who step onto the shore and become singers in a nightclub, are ironically called Silver and Golden. Inspired by a fairy tale – Hans Christian Andersen’s *The Little Mermaid* –, Robert Bolesto’s screenplay for *The Lure*, a movie directed by Agnieszka Smoczyńska (2015), is actually playing upon esoteric plots and symbols, such as the alchemical wedding of the sun (gold) and the moon (silver), or their association with the philosopher’s stone. Their singing is indeed fatal, luring humans into their death and losing their own identity in the attempt to appropriate human form and relationships. In an interview, Smoczyńska provided a key for the interpretation of her refurbishing of this mediaeval topos: “I gave the cameraman, [Jakub] Kijowski, the screenplay in one hand and a CD with the Wrońska sisters’ songs in the other hand. Once he heard the dissonance between the psychedelic lyrics of the songs and the violent text of the screenplay, he began to understand the film as a series of dualities: that which is bestial and that which is human, and that which is naive and that which is brutal. We were looking for a way to present the world like a nightclub: on the one hand, enchanting and dazzling, and on the other, dirty and putrid.”

Keywords: Genre Studies; Fantasy; Ecocriticism; Posthuman Studies; Human-Animal Studies.

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Associate Professor Gabriela CHICIUDEAN

Center for the Research or the Imaginary *Speculum*, 1 Decembrie 1918 University of Alba Iulia, Romania

Puiu and Ursu, two symbolic characters in Liviu Rebreanu's novel, Ciuleandra

Abstract: Universal literature testifies the presence of animals since its beginnings, thus continuing oral traditions of all nations. Animal symbolism was attributed to human beings in different circumstances of life, in accordance with their personality and behavior. Liviu Rebreanu's novel *Ciuleandra* (1927) comes with two characters, Puiu (Cub, in an approximate translation) and Ursu (Bear), and their struggle for a central place after the discovery of rivalry in love. The first one is rich and occupies an important social position, while the other earns everything by himself. While the name of the first character sends to frailness or childish behavior, the second one evokes the strongest animal of the Romanian forests, sometimes mocked at because of its massiveness and slowness.

The field of battle between the two characters is represented by their levels of conscience. Puiu Faranga crosses a series of concentric circles which should represent symbolic stages in his inner transformation on the way towards spiritual harmony. But in his psychological fight with Doctor Ursu, he is defeated for not knowing how to use his own powers. He will thus pass to another stage of his life, followed by the obsession of the folk dance "Ciuleandra", imagined by Doctor Ursu as a scary vortex out of which one cannot escape.

Keywords: cub; bear; animal symbols; struggle for power; Liviu Rebreanu.

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Senior Lecturer Alina BAKO
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The narrative functions of the wizard in Vasile Voiculescu's and Mihail Sadoveanu's fiction

Abstract: The wizard, as he appears in folklore studies, is connected to narratives regarding weather predictions and, implicitly, the study of astrology, including ancient wisdom regarding the stars and their influence on the human being. The different understandings of the term were studied by Șăineanu, Tudor Pamfile, I. A. Candrea, Densușianu, Mircea Eliade or Mihai Coman, evincing certain common traits: master of the floods, fellowship with a dragon/snake, key instruments such as the cane and the bridle, appearing to be a human being, alongside a white mare, etc., all these elements being traced back to the legend of “preminte Solomon”. Andrei Oișteanu holds that the oldest literary reference to the wizard is in a version of Ioan Budai-Deleanu's *Țiganiada*, and the term's association with king Solomon in a legend from 1857, *Die Erben von Salamonis Weisheit* discovered by Fr. Muller in the area of Sighișoara (Oișteanu, *Ordine și haos. Mit și magie în cultura tradițională românească / Order and chaos. Myth and magic in traditional Romanian culture*, Polirom, Iași, 2004, p. 222). Like any other magical character, they are neither entirely benevolent nor malevolent, protecting both humans and animals. We will analyse three such hypostases in Romanian prose writings: in Mihail Sadoveanu's *Hanu-Ancuței*, the image of the old man Leonte Zoderul appears associated with the one of the dragon; in the same novel, we have the camouflaging in the character of the traveling salesman Ioniță and his white mare; in Vasile Voiculescu's *Ultimul berevoi/ The last witch doctor*. In the unfolding of the epic, the wizard holds both an important narrative function, like in Voiculescu's prose, and a catalysing one, as in the case of Sadoveanu. The typologies established by Barthes (*An Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narrative*, Roland Barthes; Lionel Duisit, *New Literary History*, Vol. 6, No. 2, On Narrative and Narratives. (Winter, 1975), p. 238) correspond to the role that writers confer to such a character. The central wizard character brings order to the action, concentrating all narrative events around himself, while the catalysing one merely augments the epic space and contributes to the redistribution of narrative events.

Keywords: wizard; Romanian prose; narrative functions; epic space; dragon.

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Senior Lecturer Silviu MIHĂILĂ
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Fabulous creatures in the books of wisdom of old Romanian literature

Abstract: Old Romanian literature is considered, to a large extent, by the general public, as a niche period in the less friendly history of Romanian literature. Difficult to read and understand, it remains somehow isolated within its own revolutionary epoch. This paper proposes to dismantle this hasty and axiologically unfounded critical prejudice by presenting a series of fantastic and/ or mythological “characters” or creatures – the Statue of Memnon, the “Gripsor”, The Wiseman, the Debauched World, etc. They offer real life lessons to readers by connecting old Romanian literature with contemporaneity, thus illustrating the concept of “fragrant reading” (Doina Curticăpeanu) and supporting the aesthetic and axiological edifice of the role of literature in general: the one of offering models of behavior in life and in assuming the human condition.

Nevertheless, at a *close reading* grid, the present research focuses on a scale of ethical and religious values for the contemporary reader, emphasizing at the same time the recuperative and saving role of the old Romanian literature in a secularized era – much too hasty to effectively answer to the existential questions that torment us as individuals in this world and that essentially articulate our purpose in the universe. Old Romanian literature undoubtedly has the function of a *vademecum* in which the reading of the text transcends the rigid boundaries of the archaic language, offering an epistemological understanding of one’s self. The result is, therefore, a construction and a deconstruction of the individual who is being offered the fertile tracks of a sapient life towards the concept of Good and Beauty in life.

Keywords: Paraenetic literature; ethical values and principles; mitological creatures; the Statue of Memnon, the “Gripsor”; the struggle between „the Wiseman” and “the debauched World”; Divine Grace; *nihil sine Deo*.

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Senior Lecturer Dana RADLER

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Gary and Buru or the duality of an alter ego in Ion D. Sîrbu's Dansul ursului [The Dance of the Bear, 1988]

Abstract: Taken for an “underground writer” (Mihai Barbu, 2010), Ion D. Sîrbu publishes in 1988 the novel *Dansul ursului [The Dance of the Bear]*, apparently a children’s book. Two characters placed in between the reality and the imagination are the bear Buru and the donkey Gary, both lively *alter egos* of the writer. If at the surface the narrative builds on characters whose life is upset by the WWII, the writer actually addresses the theme of freedom. What happens to humans, domestic and wild animals when their existence is troubled? Who are Gary and Buru, in fact? The forest is a welcoming and generous territory, yet the gentle Gary is the one looking for meaning and communicating on his own. A mediator of spaces, of trying moments, Gary looks for “freedom and equality among all beings in the world” (p. 150). He is aware, while people often forget, the humanistic boundaries of his identity: “If I look deep down myself, I am three quarters history and memory” (p. 150). He accepts the jokes about him honestly and wisely, as well the historical figures having ridden on his back. There is both a natural, as well as a huge gap between Gary and Buru. While Buru’s personality is dominating and permanently mysterious, Gary displays the tender, meditating side of an herbivore. The initiating journey of three adolescents willing to render Buru his freedom meets an unexpected obstacle: it is him, the brown bear, the one returning to his concrete den in Romanescu Park, becoming thus unable to regain his freedom. Understanding this ultimate and tragic experience of his friend, Gary deepens in the forest, reflecting upon his own past and accepting his foreseeable end.

Keywords: Ion D. Sîrbu; *alter ego*; freedom; hybridity; initiation.

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Senior Lecturer Cristina Matilda Vănoagă

1 Decembrie 1918 University of Alba Iulia

Creaturi din alte lumi in Murakami's 1Q84/ Otherworldly creatures in Murakami's 1Q84

Abstract: Q84 defines a time and a space parallel to the real ones: the year 1984 in the Japan of ordinary mortals. The character Aomame calls this time "1Q84" using the letter Q from "question mark". Murakami imagines a religious dystopian world where the "little people" are creatures coming from other worlds to weave air chrysalides hiding feminine beings combining the human and extraterrestrial features through a process of reigning over chosen individuals. Next to the fantastic dimension of Murakami's novel, a more concrete one develops, highlighting religious fanaticism and children's abuse, crimes and practices that have nothing to do with other worlds, even if periodically possessed by them.

Keywords: religious dystopia; Murakami; fantastic creatures; parallel worlds.

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Assistant Professor Lucian Vasile BĂGIU

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***Death and immortality in Dracula's diary: an imaginary creature of the earth, sky, and water*¹**

Abstract: The knowledge existent at present, which generates the need for a new approach to the myth of Dracula, refers to an almost unanimous reception based on the novel published in 1897 by Bram Stoker and on the tens of the subsequent picturizations which have induced a social and cultural paradigm standardized as commercial kitsch. Within this fictitious construct, Dracula has been expounded in manifold keys. However, to ordinary perception, his figure is reduced to the semi-caricatural vampire character, the living-dead craving for blood. This article aims to answer a series of questions about the representations of Dracula and their relevance to the fields of cultural and literary studies: Which is the “real” Dracula? Which are the psychological, cultural, social and historical impulses determining the actions of the character and the established myth? To what extent the deeds of the personage can be accounted for through the instrumentality of psychological impetus and by the agency of cultural, philosophical, esoteric, and occult principles? Thus can the “real” Dracula be integrated in an ampler context of culture and civilization, where his alienation and his monstrosity belong less to the paradigm of “the other”, of “the stranger” and refer more to the revealing of some of “our” intimately repressed human features?

The article proposes a critical examination and reinterpretation of Dracula's image, starting from the novel *Jurnalul lui Dracula (Dracula's Diary)* (1992) by the Romanian writer and academic Marin Mincu. Original responses are being suggested to the questions defined previously, through several writing and literary theory techniques, including references to *Corpus Hermeticum*.

By comparing and contrasting the hermetic philosophical text and the Romanian novel, the essay aims at finding out whether the entire construct of the myth of Dracula can be explained through two cultural and philosophical aspects, namely death and immortality. It also offers a new reading, another conceptualization of a familiar but debatable subject, which reinterprets and even rejects the mainstream view. The work by the extremely well-informed Romanian academic, which was first published in Italy, has nothing in common with Bram Stoker's (“vampiric falsification”, asserts the author in the preface...), but vividly portrays the “real” Dracula, the Prince Vlad the Impaler, imprisoned in the underground cave of a castle under the Budapest Danube, writing a journal between February, 2nd, 1463 and August, 28th, 1464. In his diary the character recalls his historical fate and legendary destiny through references to aspects of Romanian culture and civilization considered in a European context. For instance, the study approaches topics such as: the religion of Zalmoxis as the philosophical and existential foundation of the Romanians; Dacians' attitude towards death, as described by Herodotus, which might have influenced Pythagoras, Socrates, the Eleusinian and the Orphic Mysteries; the boycott of history by the Romanian people (an echo from

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philosopher Lucian Blaga's writings); the orality of the Romanian culture (as opposed to the written culture of the western Europe); the oral folkloric creations, the ballad *Miorița* (*The Little Ewe*) and the fairy-tale *Tinerete fără bătrânețe și viață fără de moarte* (*Youth without old age and life without death*), etc. All of these are put forward within the humanistic, Renaissance context of the epoch, given that Dracula was a friend of Marsilio Ficino, Nicolaus Cusanus, Pope Pius II, Cosimo de' Medici, etc. Researchers will discover new speculative themes and directions with regard to the seemingly exhausted myth of Dracula.

Keywords: Corpus Hermeticum; Dacians; death; Dracula; immortality; Zalmoxis.

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The metamorphus – construct of the fantastic eliadesian imaginary

Abstract: Romanian folklore and its fundamental myths have aroused a real interest both for the researcher in the field of the history of religions and for the writer. Mircea Eliade found here a rich fund of magical-religious beliefs, untouched by the destructive

effects of modern civilization. In the study “From Zalmoxis to Ghehis-Han. Comparative studies on the religions and folklore of Dacia and Eastern Europe”, the Romanian scholar analyzed the etymology of the word “Dacian”, which he connects to a rite of warrior initiation, focused on the sacrificial rite of construction, the magico-cult significance of picking the blackthorn.

Eliade’s fantastic prose is anchored on several themes and folklore motifs, among which we mention: Sânzienele (gentle fairies), the fairy-tale battle between good and evil, the magical-cult and destiny relationship between The Savior and The Star (*The Forbidden Forest*); “craftsman grandmother”, midwife and guardian of the threshold between the worlds, with her bear-daughters (*La țigănci*); Angel of Death, muse and “grace” (*In the court of Dionysus, The three graces*); the metamorph (the undead-woman, in *Miss Christina*; the undead, the Flyer, the kite, in the eyes of the profane, an Adamic being, purified from primordial sin, in the Edenic space of the island, in *The Serpent*; the giant, in *A Big Man*, etc.).

In this paper we will focus on the metamorph and on how Mircea Eliade builds a true archetypal construct. The metamorph is the result of a metamorphosis, a process defined biologically (transformation of a lower creature into a higher one, passing through the natural stages of development), ontologically (essential transformation of an essential order, transition to another kind of being) and magically (transformation of a human being into the animal). The three types of metamorphosis can be hybridized, a process discovered in Mircea Eliade’s prose: in *The Three Graces*, the internal organs of the three patients undergo morphological and functional transformations into plants, women living half a year like flowers, young and beautiful, old and withered during the other half. In *The Serpent*, Andronic is a meta- and poly-morphus: the fairy-tale kite that abducts restless maidens and fierce wives, the satyr of Greek mythology, the male god of nature (Pan), the serpent, messenger of the dead and symbol of sexuality, fearsome undead, Primordial Adam, pure and untouched by any “lust”. All these stasis correspond to the imaginary projections of the other characters. The shapes of his transformations are regressive, finally reaching the purest ones: the Edenic man in harmony with nature, the virginal feminine and the creator. Miss Christina is not only the undead that haunts the mansion and excites the imagination of Mrs. Moscu’s guests, but the deity of the place, who ensures the connection of the sky, through its brightest star, Luceafărul, with the earth, the vast Bărăganu plain. The ignorant masculine (Egor) intervenes and destroys the magical connection between the hypostasis of the feminine (the old woman, the young woman, the child, the field), interposing the aggressive and destructive virility.

All these will be extensively analyzed.

Keywords: metamorphus; Mircea Eliade; fantastic; folklore; vampire.

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The Goat – manifest projection of two facets of the archetype of evil: Azazel and Satan

Abstract: Considered an unclean animal in Jewish monotheism, the goat's demonological history begins for the Jews with the establishment of the Yom Kippur holiday and ends with the Witches' Sabbath, intentionally associated with the Jewish Sabbath. Beyond the Christian terrors projected as a shadow over the Jewish people, we are dealing with a continuity of an intention whose permanence had to be ensured. From a demonological point of view, evil had to survive by the constant imposition of an "inverted" monotheism, in what we might call the "understanding" of Good and Evil for this world. From the biblical verses: "Aaron shall cast lots for the two goats: one lot for the Lord and one lot for Azazel" (Leviticus, 16, 8), to the at least curious expression of Jesus: "Render to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's!" (Matthew 22, 21), it is only one step to ascertain the still active belief in monotheism, from the heart of Judaism of the first century. Thus, the presence of the impure in the goat of Azazel, will continue with the image of Caesar associated with the evil angel Samael or "God's poison", passing through the ages, in Christianity in the sabbatical rite of the witches. One constant remains: the constant antagonism against the Jewish people.

Keywords: goat; monotheism; Jewish and Christian beliefs; Azazel and Satan.

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PhD. Sonia ELVIREANU

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The elves in Brother Grimm's, Lord Dunsany's and Muriel Barbery's fairy tales

Abstract: Imaginary creatures exist in peoples' mythologies. They have magical powers and different denominations: elves, gnomes, trolls, dwarfs, lepricons, ondines, nymphs, salamanders, etc. These creatures – spirits, genies of woods, water, fire and air – are invisible. Thus, in northern, scandinavian mythology from where they spread in all Europe, the elves are such spirits. They have fed and go on feeding the imagination up to the 21st century. They passed from mythology to folklore, fairy tales, short-stories and novels. My research is focused on the elves and their relatives in Brother Grimm's *Fairy Tales*, Lord Dunsany's *The Kith of the Elf Folk* and the novel *La vie des elfes* de Muriel Barbery.

Keywords: elves; fairy tales; Brothers Grimm; Lord Dunsany; Muriel Barbery.

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The Imaginary and Mythical Bestiary of Southeast Asia and their Symbolic Significance

Abstract: The bestiary of Southeast Asia is rich with a vast variety of imaginary mythical/non mythical creatures, all complete with their own specific symbolic associations (some common to all countries in the region, some specific only to a few of them). While an exhaustive discussion would certainly be enough to fill a book, what I aim within this paper is a much shorter account of those I encountered and had the opportunity to research during my trips to the area between 2016-2020. Leographs for example are very common and include the Burmese Chinthe (a leograph which is a stylized motif of an imaginary lion-like creature mainly found in Indospheric or Sinospheric regions). The Chinthe guards temples in Burma (Myanmar). Other leographs include the Thai and Chinese inspired leographs while the Singaporeans have the Merlion (a lion with a fish tail). Thai temples are guarded by mythical demons called yaksha or yaks (giant in the Thai language) while Cambodian and Laotian ones by the naga. Vietnamese have a trinity of mythical creatures that include imaginary dragons, phoenixes and tortoises, all possessing mythical attributes and functions that transcend the physical realm. Thai and Burmese mythical animals of Indian origin include Ganesha, the elephant god, one of the best-known and most worshipped deities in the Hindu pantheon. Airavata, another elephant-like creature is believed to be guarding one of the points of the compass. In modern day Burma on the other hand, the zodiac is not monthly as is in the case of the western and sinospheric world. Days of the week are represented by animals, both real and imaginary, that are given symbolic and mythical qualities as well as representing different cardinal directions. Garuda, the monster eagle represents Sunday as well as North-East for example. The Buto Ijo are monsters who eat children for breakfast and are Indonesia's version of the orcs while the Kinnari of Thailand seem to have the function that angels play in Christian myth. These are some of the main ones I aim to discuss.

Keywords: Southeast Asia; imaginary; myth; bestiary; Thailand; Vietnam; Myanmar; Cambodia.

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Garuda – between the symbolism of ascension and the presidential gift

Abstract: The Museum of Universal Ethnography “Franz Binder”, a department of the National Museum Complex ASTRA, Sibiu, holds in its patrimony, besides the old, exotic collections, constituted in the 19th century through successive donations of Transylvanian merchants and travelers, a very special collection, the so-called “Ceaușescu Collection”. It comprises 485 ethnographic objects, gifts received by Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu from non-European countries between 1965 and 1989. The special collection of non-European handicrafts, which was added to the museum’s patrimony by two orders of the Ministry of Culture in 1991 and 1999, includes objects from over 62 countries of the world.

One such ethnographic item is the wooden carving of the mythological bird *Garuda* (Inv. No. 1815-E). The intricate sculpted ornaments, the impressive finesse of the artifact as well as the special symbolic value it holds for the Indonesian culture places it among the major items in the collections of the ASTRA Museum.

Half human, half Uranian bird, with prominent eyes and teeth, oversized wings attached to an athletic male body, *Garuda* is depicted in her uninterrupted battle with *Nāga*, a Chthonian anthropomorphic snake. There is a whole microcosm unfolding throughout the sculpture. A space of life/death, ascent/descent, light/dark antitheses. Ever-present creatures at opposite poles of the cosmic tree, the bird and the snake are in a constant rivalry that both dramatizes and verticalizes the image of the cosmos. As the vehicle of Vishnu, bearing the attributes of the God, *Garuda* symbolises preservation of cosmic order. It is the embodiment of Indonesian ideology, *Pancasila*, a symbol of virtue of knowledge, power, bravery, loyalty, and discipline.

We will try to explore in the paper (The present paper aims at exploring the imagery of this artifact), a true “axiomatic scheme of verticality”.

Keywords: *Garuda*; Ceaușescu gifts collection; Franz Binder Museum; Indonesia.

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Supernatural creatures and hardships in surpassing a threshold in Romanian fairy tales

Abstract: In the Romanian fantastic fairy tales volumes *Fata răpită de Soare* (*The Girl Kidnapped by the Sun*), *Frumoasa Lumii* (*The Beauty of the World*) and *Inimă Putredă* (*Rotten Heart*), belonging to the I. Opreșan collection, several imaginary creatures from the earth, the air and the water can be identified. These creatures' shapes and characteristics acquire fantastic dimensions and features, and their presence in the structure of the fairy tale marks a symbolic threshold. The human character in a crisis meets a numen being who mediates the passing from here to there, to the other realm. Thus, one passes from a familiar space to a contrasting, timeless one, representing a way towards self-knowledge. There will be confrontations in a fictional world with evil presences or benefic entities. Both in the ascendant and descendant spatial structures, the characteristics of the imaginary creatures usually get hyperbolic dimensions, thus increasing the suspense and emphasizing the dominant features.

Keywords: fantastic; hyperbolic; confrontation, good, evil, creatures.

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Terrestrial and aerial creatures in Romanian fantastic folktales: the horse, the bull and the bird

Abstract: The paper aims to shed some light on the morphology of terrestrial and aerial life in Romanian folktales, by offering a list of creatures populating one realm or another, their description in accordance with a specific type of imaginary, the relationships established with humans. It will offer a comprehensive picture of the anthropomorphic elements that constitute the Romanian mythical fauna and express the fact that human mind has developed in relation with nature and magic.

Therefore, I propose an insight into the folktale representation of the bulls (better known in Romanian folklore as aurochs), the horses and the birds which are found and depicted not only as mere animals or birds in the rich tradition of folktale, but as characters endowed with human speech, cognitive functions, their primary role in the folktale narrative being to aid the hero in his initiatory journey.

Visual and symbolic features of the animals mentioned, as part of the Romanian mythical fauna, will be presented, with some aspects of their naming. Folktale names and the naming itself serve as a creative act helping us to understand the symbolic value imprinted by the community on these animal representations.

Even though they have a zoomorphic appearance, they are not ruled only by the primary instincts of their species, they also have the ability to think and speak articulately. Moreover, all these types of animals belonging to the mythical fauna are relicts of the solar cult that developed in the area from which the folktales were collected. Thus, reference will be made to them as “fantastic animals”, in order to differentiate them from other types of characters, which only have the appearance of animals or can shape shift in animal bodies.

Keywords: folklore; morphology; creature; aerial, terrestrial.

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The dragon in the painting – an aesthetic projection as a form of liberation

Abstract: The dragon as an ambivalent being becomes a character both in the space of literary folklore and in fantasy literature. Through this paper, we aim to explore another dimension of it, transformed into aesthetic projection. We will start from a Chinese fairy tale, *The Blue Dragon and the Yellow Dragon*, in which the representations of the two dragons confronting each other are exploited, an expression of the “neutralization of opposing spirits” and the result of a long process of successive purifications until the essentialization of forms. We will explore the area of children’s literature through the novel *The Old Man in the Moon* written by Grace Lin in which Dragon, the work of a famous painter, comes to life and detaches from the corseted space of the painting, then becoming an adjutant to the main character, a little girl named Minli.

Slipping into the painting as a form of liberation from an oppressive reality orchestrated by a tyrannical ruler, the Celestial Dragon, into a compensatory universe, is achieved in the first text of *Oriental Tales, Wang-Fo’s Deliverance*, under the sign of the creative act. By the *opus*, the painter Wang-Fo opens a gate to another world and the ignorant can only assist helplessly at this impressive and at the same time natural exit from the scene. Crossing a boundary either in the sense of exiting the painting or in the direction of entering the aesthetically designed space is equivalent to the establishment of a new world, with “an analogy of the divine work of creation”.

Keywords: dragon; painting; mirror; heterotopia; fairy tale; threshold.

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Half Fish, Half Woman: Amphibious Creatures in the Short Stories of Vasile Voiculescu and Mihail Sadoveanu

Abstract: Romanian lore describes *știma* as an archaic deity that dominates the aquatic stability of flowing waters, such a creature being ascribed to every body of water. It has the power to overthrow this stability by conjuring either floods or severe droughts. *Știma-s* are described as women of unearthly beauty that take the shape of a fish (a huchen or redfish) when in water.

This paper opens up for examination a somewhat neglected aspect of Romanian literature, i.e. literary works that take as their subject matter the nautical realm and the creatures that populate it, with V. Voiculescu's *Loștrița* and M. Sadoveanu's *Zâna lacului* as exemplification.

Canonical nautical literature works, such as *Moby-Dick* (Melville, 1851) and *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (Coleridge, 1798), focus on the sea or the ocean and the creatures, either real or mythical, that dwell underneath their surfaces or in the air. Romania has not been a maritime nation *per se*, hence the scarcity of nautical literary texts. The narratives discussed focus on natural flowing watercourses and the creatures specific to them. The authors in question have no first-hand knowledge related to either sailing or seafaring, that is precisely why they both focus on the mythological creatures that populate the rivers of Romania. Their short stories also display strong elements of romance intertwined with powerful forms of fantasy and supernatural.

Keywords: water creatures; amphibious creatures; Romanian folklore; redfish; fantasy literature; nautical short stories.

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The metamorphic imaginary – Lostrîța (The Redfish) by Vasile Voiculescu

Abstract: Many fantastic literary works appeared as a means of response, as a reaction to the fascination and fear of people in front of the mysteries and miracles of the aquatic world, mysteries and miracles for which they could not find a logical explanation. Then the temptation of sensational was added, with the effect of an inevitable distortion of information passed from one individual to another and a literature generous in water creatures, mermaids, fairies, monsters or other marine entities, often with evil implications in people's lives, came to life.

Associated with the element water, mermaids, melusines, waves, nymphs, stigmas, spirits of the aquatic environment can guide, seduce and destroy mortals, either traveling overseas or oceans, or living around the waters. These entities awaken in the human being a living creative imagination, attracting through fascination, rekindling the desire to return to the primary state – communion with nature, the acquisition of androgynous perfection and the aspiration to overcome their condition, to reach the absolute.

The novelty of Voiculescu's vision will emerge from a brief look at previous versions of the myth. Certainly, at the time when this story was written, after numerous pilgrimages around the country, the writer took the legend of the "damned pond", popular in the northern part of the country, on the banks of Bistrita. The existence of the redfish is thus attributed an aura of legend. This creature is the aquatic counterpart of fairies or barbs that can enchant young people, just as "flyers" seduce young girls.

The redfish is not only beautiful and tempting as a girl, it also transmits an erotic sensuality that disturbs the male character, allowing an association with Melusina. For Aliman, the male character of the novel, the Redfish represents a constant and misunderstood call that starts from the depths of his being, a pulsation that will turn into the desire to fulfill an ideal. The young man detaches himself from everything that is earthly, from places and people, longing for fulfillment in the aquatic environment,

partially incompatible, but unconsciously beginning to feel the satisfaction of the fulfilled dream, with inherent transformations of personality.

Keywords: metamorphic imaginary; ambiguous game; evil spirit; unconscious pulsations, Vasile Voiculescu; *The Redfish*.

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Simbolul șarpelui în Ciuleandra/ The snake symbol in the novel "Ciuleandra"

Abstract: The realist writer Liviu Rebreanu created admirable scenes and characters in his novels. Many of his writings open with the hora or the Sunday game, which become nodal points from which future events are foreshadowed. And not by chance, several novels end with the image of the chorus or dance specific to where the action takes place, completing the novel construction and highlighting the author's obsession with spherical structures. Hora is important because the whole village participates, and the general merriment. As in a movie, the novelist captures the smallest gestures and reactions of the participants, regardless of age, gender or social category. Followed closely in novels such as *Ion*, *Răscoala* or *Ciuleandra*, the village choir gradually presents the reaction of the fiddlers. The change of music drives the dance's madness through the rhythm imposed by them, through the subsequent requests of the players caught up in

the frenzy of the game and who never want to stop the music to continue the game. No aspect of the chorus is neglected. The author highlights the variety of movements in both pair dances and collective choruses. The wildness of the dance triggers erotic impulses. The girls' thighs bubble, the girls' breasts touch the boys' chests, their arms wrap around the girls' middles, and the descriptions go on.

In the novel *Ciuleandra*, hora becomes a dance of destiny because by participating in this dance, many find their soul mate. Hora and circle, in general, signify the solar disk and are specific symbols preserved through popular culture, dances, rituals, decorations, etc., demonstrated by archaeological discoveries. The serpent, and especially the ouroboros, which is circular and resembles the choruses or dances of the mentioned novels, both in form and manifestation, hibernates in the earth during the autumnal equinox. It returns to the surface at the spring equinox with the revival of vegetation, superimposing its biological cycle on top of the annual astronomical cycle of the sun. Because of this, the snake is considered an essential symbol of the cyclical regeneration of nature, life force, well-being and fertility. At the same time, it is viewed with fear because it is a poisonous animal that can produce death. Likewise, in the case of choruses, when the customs of their organization are violated, it foreshadows the unfolding of tragic events that are to come.

Keywords: hora; folk dance; circle; snake; ouroboros; Liviu Rebreanu.

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The interaction between human and imagined creatures in Ion Pop Reteganu's tales

Abstract: Stories, and folk tales, as part of the collective memory of the popular, create an imaginary shared by the members of the same group, starting in childhood. Fairy tale narratives feed individuals with a sense of life experience. These narratives contribute to the imposition of a social canon in the collective imaginary. People learn how to think, feel and behave in specific social situations.

The present paper aims to highlight the contribution the imagined creatures bring to initiation in Ion Pop Reteganu's tales. I intend to analyse these creatures' relations with humans and the situations they develop around the main characters. At the same time, I underline that all tales collected by Reteganu have a didactic function, and imagined creatures have an important role in this aspect.

Keywords: folk tales; Imagined creatures; initiation; didactic role; Ion Pop Reteganu.

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