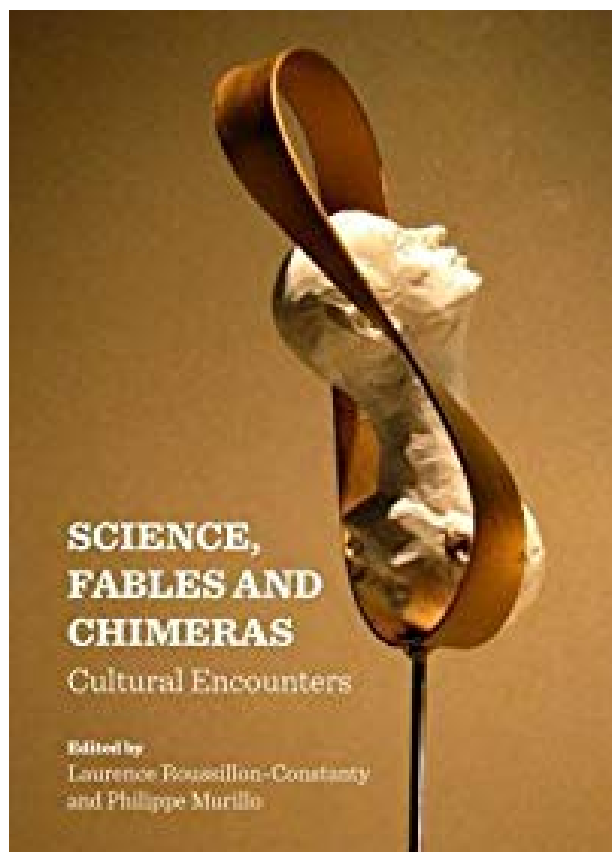


Science, Fables and Chimeras: Cultural Encounters



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The history of science provides numerous examples of the way in which imagination, religion and mythology have sometimes helped and sometimes hindered scientific progress. While established ideas and beliefs clearly held back the discoveries of Copernicus, Galileo and Darwin, the intuitive knowledge found in mythology, art and religion has often proved useful in indicating new ways in which to explore or represent new knowledge of the world. Stories, fables and images have contributed to drawing a fuller picture of the past, understanding the present and imagining the future. The essays in this book, written by academics, writers and artists from various fields ranging from La Fontaine's fables to nanotechnology and modern art, all point out the ways in which imagination works its way into all the fields of knowledge. At both ends of the spectrum, the hybrid nature of the chimera emerges as a pivotal symbol of both man's predation instinct and a powerful symbol of his fear of extinction. This interdisciplinary book, weaving together visual representation, literature, mysticism, and science, will appeal to historians of science, philosophy, art and religion. It will also be of interest to scholars in cultural studies and anthropology. Drawing on recent scientific research and artistic production, the volume will additionally interest a wider audience wishing to learn more about man's obsession and fascination with the potent symbolism of dinosaurs and dragons and all hybrid forms generated by the human imagination and recent technology.