



A selection of the author's bestiaries. (Phyllis Reeve photo)

## Uncatalogued Quarry

A safari through her bookshelves sparks the imagination of PHYLLIS REEVE in this gallery of wondrous creatures.

MY HUSBAND TED AND I never set out to collect bestiaries, those wonderful phantasmagoria of real and imagined creatures. We fell in love with our first in the early 1960s, and over the years others turned up, usually unexpectedly when we were looking for something else, and always bringing a similar sense of delight. Our definition has always been loose—if the book files somewhere between mythology/folklore/fairy tales on the one hand and field guides/encyclopaedias on the other, and if it looks, feels and sounds like a bestiary, then it is a bestiary. Consequently, I do not pretend to a scholarly or bibliographical approach; this is not the Aberdeen Bestiary Project ([www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary](http://www.abdn.ac.uk/bestiary)). Nor is it philosophy or critical theory; I am not prepared to discuss Jacques Derrida's discourse on the "creaturely," as Hal Foster did in reviewing *The Beast and the Sovereign* in the *London Review of Books* (March 17, 2011). What follows is a personal look at some of my favourite books.

### ORIGINS

Our first bestiary was T.H. White's *The Bestiary: A Book of Beasts* (Capricorn, 1960), a translation from a Latin bestiary of the 12th century. My husband found it in David Lewis's shop on Mountain Street in Montreal. A previous work by White, *The Once and Future King* (which grew from his Cambridge thesis on Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*), had recently become a Broadway musical called *Camelot*. He had also written about falconry and his own relationship with goshawks. *A Book of Beasts* likes to be read aloud; in my innermost ear I hear Ted intone "Lack of teeth is a sign of old age in lions"—a sign that acquired more significance for us with passing time.

"The immediate ancestor of our manuscript is the *Physiologus*," White explains. "An anonymous person who is nicknamed 'the Physiologus' appeared between the second and fifth centuries AD, probably in Egypt, and wrote a book about beasts, possibly in Greek." Compiled as a serious

work of natural history, the *Physiologus* became an international bestseller, widely translated and copied, gathering additions, amendments and distortions in the process. All subsequent bestiaries acknowledge their descent from the *Physiologus*, and all since the mid-20th century cite White's translation from Latin of a 12th-century copy, which, like its original, is both a serious work of scholarship and an entertaining work of art.

In the book's appendix, White lovingly describes the monks in the process of dictation and transcription, and puts us in the medieval world as firmly as he does when telling the tale of Arthur and Merlin. One illustration shows a monk at work with penknife in hand.

A bestiary is not just a fable, an animal story with a moral. White reminds us that the animal and the "moral" were not separate: "In the age of faith people believed . . . that everything meant something . . . Every possible article in the world, and its name also, concealed a hidden message." That said, some fable books do appear among my bestiaries.

White presents the beasts in the order of the original, including the explications of the *Physiologus*. He confines his personal comments to lively footnotes and the appendix, where he tells us that the bestiary is "a compassionate book . . . [which] loves dogs and is polite to bees." The illustrations have been traced by "the present limner," whom I take to be White, "one by one from a photostatic copy of the original."

The cover is another matter. Robert Galster illustrated children's books about such edifying topics as maps and air, and a motley assortment of adult books, including a novel by Philip K. Dick. The cover beast seems to be the artist's own idea of a mantichora, with orange body striding upright like a man, spiky extremities, dragon-like head and fiery tail, and wings of magenta flame. This Capricorn paperback, not a beautiful design to begin with, is now dog-eared and yellowish but remains among my favourite books ever.

*Bestiary; being an English version of the Bodleian Library, Oxford M.S. Bodley 764, with all the original miniatures reproduced in facsimile*, translated by Richard Barber (Boydell Press, 1999), is another version of the *Physiologus*, purchased in Oxford at the Bodleian in 2001. It was first published

for the Folio Society in 1992, and even in this cheaper edition, is quite lovely. On some level the glowing facsimile illuminations put White's black and white drawings to shame, but fail to inspire the same affection, at least in my heart. White's beasts look out at us from the drawings with sad, puzzled stares; the illuminations ignore us and retreat into their dense magnificence.

Barber's introduction is useful and readable but poker-faced; he eschews footnotes and criticizes White for "lightening the tone" of the text. He may be correct, but it is White who would accompany me to a desert island. White is closer kin than Barber to the monk who incorporated something of himself into the manuscript he was copying.

On the same visit to Oxford I purchased *And to Every Beast . . . : Treasures of the Vatican Library* (Turner, 1994). This pretty little picture book is a collection of miniature illustrations from the Vatican's Urbino Collection, Latin Volume 276. It begins with a griffin, presents a strange array of fact and fiction, including both male and female centaurs, and concludes with a very realistic grasshopper. Each beast or group of beasts is assigned a Bible verse. Beast and text illustrate each other, but they are not identical.

#### FANTASTIC ANIMALS

When I thought I was going to write a PhD thesis having something to do with animal lore and earth magic, my mentor Patricia Merivale, whose own book *Pan the Goat-God* lives in the adjoining section of my library, pointed me to Margaret W. Robinson's *Fictitious Beasts: A Bibliography* (Library Association, 1961). Robinson's introduction to the 75-page pamphlet exemplifies the difficulty of discussing bestiaries. The very title is problematic. Are beasts fictitious if their cataloguers believed they are real, or might be real? Some highly respectable classical authors of natural history struggled with beliefs and doubts and disagreed with each other. Robinson writes: "In the Classical period, for example, the writers' attitude alters continually, from the fantastic beginning of the subject in Hesiod's mythology, through Herodotus' and Aristotle's cautious acceptance of contemporary beliefs, to the scepticism of

Lucretius; back to the credulity of Pliny, then on to the comparative accuracy of Pausanias.”

She cites two other influential sources from the period: the Bible, “which, owing to the words used to translate various words from the Hebrew, conferred its seal of authenticity on the basilisk, the dragon, the phoenix and the unicorn,” and the *Physiologus*. She points to a recurring pattern of “the few scientifically minded enquirers powerless against popular legend and against all those writers who copy, mistranslate and improve upon the works of their predecessors.” Her criteria admit griffins, centaurs and unicorns as part of the European body of myth, but not as they occur in Wonderland or Narnia, and triffids—a venomous, but thankfully fictitious plant—are explicitly excluded. Still, one could spend years pursuing the works listed, and some minutes enjoying the drawings she borrows from them. An added bonus in my copy is a Duthie’s bookmark bearing a heraldic dragon.

But I prefer not to separate the imaginary beasts from the fictitious, the deliberately fictitious from the mythically fantastic, the fantastic beasts that turned out to be real from the real beasts that proved to be fantastic. I keep Pat’s *Pan* with the works of Thomas Bulfinch, George Fraser and Robert Graves close at hand in case they feel like spilling over into the bestiary section or vice versa.

However, should we find it necessary to distinguish fact from fiction, we can consult Herbert Wendt’s *Out of Noah’s Ark: The Story of Man’s Discovery of the Animal Kingdom*, translated from the German by Michael Bullock (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1956), a readable account of what, how and when we learned or thought we learned about animals, illustrated by the usual bestiaries, travellers’ illustrations and 20th-century photography. And all without completely destroying our suspension of disbelief.

#### MEDIEVAL SPAWN

*Middle English Animal Literature* (1975), a pamphlet edited by Klaus Weimann for the Exeter Medieval English Texts series, alleges that medieval authors “were hardly ever interested in animals as such. . . . They either interpreted their nature—as they saw it—allegorically;

or they exploited their supposed similarity to human beings of instructional, didactic or satirical purposes.” Weimann proposes to “make available in one small volume an anthology representing the whole range of Middle English animal literature.” He offers a sampling from *The Bestiary*, then Fables, Animal Fables and Beast Epic, Debates [Thrush or Cuckoo vs Nightingale] and Miscellaneous Animal Poetry, thoughtfully followed by a glossary of Middle English words. The little book looks as if it were reproduced directly from a typescript, albeit a clean one, and the only illustrations are on the cover—a business-like rabbit and fox striding out on a mission.

Beast fables flourished in France also. Edouard Brasey, a specialist in the world of fairies and fairy tales, retold some of these in *Le bestiaire fabuleux: contes et legendes de France* (Pygmalion/Gerard Watelet, 2001), a charming book I purchased in its natural habitat, in the Loire Valley. The running theme, “c’etais un temps où les bêtes parlaient,” takes us to a time when beasts talked and people listened. The four-colour illustrations on the cover show two selections of beasts from the bestiaries, a realistic wolf, and a unicorn from the Cluny tapestry.

The medieval bestiaries spawned spinoffs far beyond the original mandate of serious non-fiction. I do not have a copy of Richard de Fournival’s 13th-century *Bestiaire d’amour*, a sometimes wry application of the *Physiologus* to the complications of the courtly love protocols. But I do have Jeanette Beer’s scholarly *Beasts of Love: Richard de Fournival’s Bestiaire d’amour and a Woman’s Response* (University of Toronto Press, 2003), in which she analyzes Richard’s rant and the Lady’s response. The illustrations are murky greyscale reproductions of colour originals, but strong enough to convey the astonishment of a naked Adam challenged by a “Wivre,” a creature simultaneously woman/wolf/serpent.

Beer’s commentary clarifies some key aspects of the bestiary. Richard’s, she explains, is “expressly *intended* to be memorable. When each of the features of love that he described was symbolized as a familiar animal property, and each was reinforced by a visual representation of the animal in question, the finished

property would appeal both to the eye and to the ear through its ‘painture’ (depiction; lit. painting) and its ‘parole’ (depiction; lit. word).” She suggests the use of the bestiary format for a love treatise may have been the author’s outreach to readers of romance.

Accompanying some editions of Richard’s *Bestiare* is the feisty response by a Lady, who rejects not only Richard himself but also his symbolism. Offended by his equating women’s love with threatening beasts such as serpents, dragons and wolves, she “launches her own bestiary” and reorients the symbols in favour of her gender.

Anne Clark Amor’s *Beasts and Bawdy* (Taplinger, 1975), despite its title, is a non-titillating discussion of early writers’ curiosity about the bodily functions of exotic beasts. How, they wondered, did elephants copulate without squashing each other? The author, who has also written about Lewis Carroll, Holman Hunt and Mrs. Oscar Wilde, provides a useful timeline, from the classic Herodotus, Aristotle and Pliny to the *Physiologus* (which she considers more theological treatise than zoological handbook) to the early Renaissance Konrad von Gesner’s *Historica Animalium* (1551–58) and Edward Topsell’s *Historie of Four-footed Beasts* (1607). The book includes a few finely reproduced glossy black and white illustrations. Clark Amor makes the point that financial exigency may have forced some monasteries to choose line drawings instead of illuminations. Her cover is one of several in our collection to feature the Unicorn in Captivity, of whom more later.

#### MODERN ART

The American artist Hunter Clarke deliberately exploits the human/beast conflation in *Sublime Creatures: The Animal-Human Hybrids of Hunter Clarke*, a catalogue for a 2013 exhibition at the Delaware Center for the Contemporary Arts. In her oil paintings, splendidly pregnant or postpartum women wear equally splendid heads of lions, tigers and other beasts amid Renaissance hints and enigmatic titles such as *Neither defiled nor immaculate* and *The cord of interconnection has no beginning and no end*. Hunter Clarke makes the genre her own, as do the creators of many of these beast books.



Illustrations from Richard de Fournival’s *Bestiare d’amour* (13th century).

Top: *Wivre*—The wolf-serpent wivre;  
Middle: *Enlumini*—A variant on the chase of the unicorn;  
Bottom: *Licormouton*—A variant on the chase of the unicorn.

LA COLOMBE.



Colombe, l'amour et l'esprit  
Qui engendrées Jésus-Christ,  
Comme vous j'aime une Marie.  
Qu'avec elle je me marie.

LA MOUCHE.



Nos mouches savent des chansons  
Que leur apprirent en Norvège  
Les mouches ganiques qui sont  
Les divinités de la neige.

LE LION.



O lion, malheureuse image  
Des rois chus lamentablement,  
Tu ne nais maintenant qu'en cage  
A Hambourg, chez les Allemands.

LE POULPE.



Jetant son encre vers les cieux,  
Suçant le sang de ce qu'il aime  
Et le trouvant délicieux,  
Ce monstre inhumain, c'est moi-même.

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From Guillaume Apollinaire's *Le Bestiaire ou Cortège d'Orphée*,  
illustrated with woodcuts by Raoul Dufy: Clockwise from top left: "La Colombe"; "La Mouche";  
"Le Poulpe"; and "Le Lion." (Gautier Poupeau photo)

Guillaume Apollinaire, *Le bestiaire ou cortège d'Orphée*, illustrated with woodcuts by Raoul Dufy and translated by Lauren Shakely (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1977), is a facsimile of the original 1911 edition with new English translations and foreword. T.H. White's *Book of Beasts* may be my sentimental favourite, but the crowning jewel of the collection is this gem by a couple of early modernist masters, with a little help from their friends. Woodcuts in Picasso's studio inspired Apollinaire's idea of a collaboration between poet and artist that brought together 30 poems and 30 pictures. When Picasso became involved in other projects, Dufy took over. As the foreword to this edition comments of the woodcuts, "It was Dufy who truly brought the ancient medium back to life." The foreword continues:

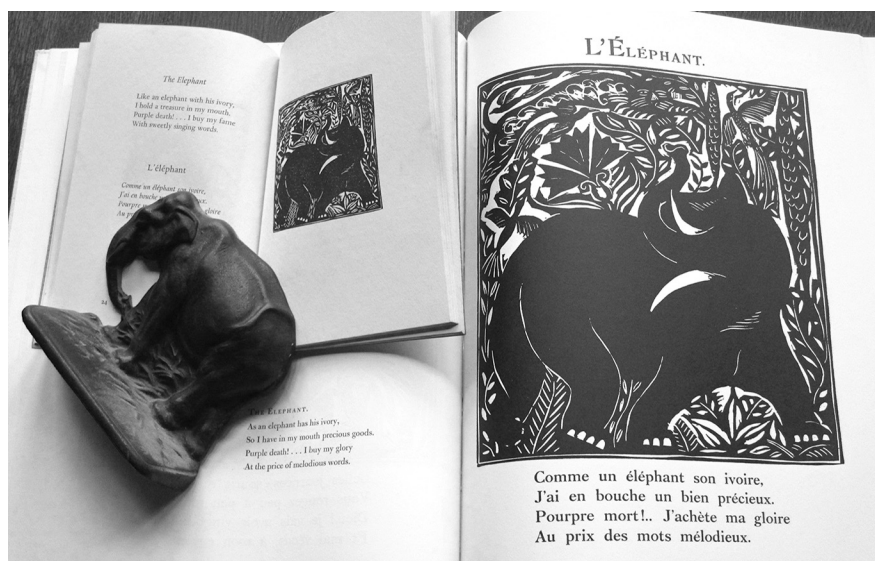
The woodcuts . . . are lively and humorous, with large rough areas of black boldly contrasting with the white paper. The application of knife and gouge directly to the wood produces an effect that is both primitive and refined, the ideal complement to Apollinaire's quatrains. In fact, the collaboration is so successful that it is impossible to tell whether the poet was describing the illustrations or the artist illustrating the poems. Later,

Dufy explained his woodcut technique as one of balancing the light centers of objects so that they appear to come alive.

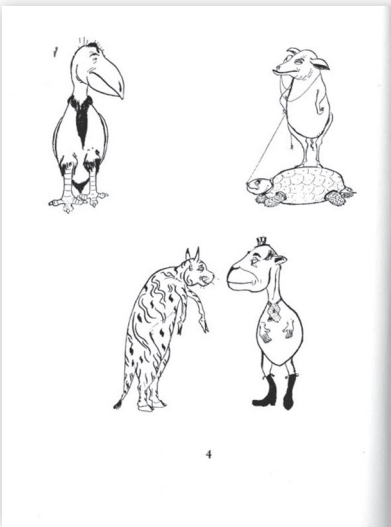
The large page and black print put image and poem in exact relation to each other. The translated verse is printed in light and small but legible type on the otherwise blank facing page, unobtrusive but there as needed.

The book makes me happy, as does the background gossip about the artistic community: Apollinaire infecting his friends with his enthusiasm, Dufy pursuing the willing but prudent publisher Deplanche until he caught him, Apollinaire dedicating the work to a mentor, the novelist Elemir Bourges, and a year after the poet died in the 1918 flu epidemic, Francis Poulenc setting the *Bestiaire* to music.

Here I think of a more recent bestiary in three arts—Christopher Butterfield's setting of Jacques Prévert's *Contes pour enfants sages*, with projected images by Sandra Meigs; my favourite is the sea elephant. The Metropolitan edition measures 10 by 13 inches, with images and verses occupying almost the entire page, large enough for a bibliophile to feel enveloped. I have another version, much smaller (4½ by 7 inches): *Bestiary or The Parade of Orpheus*, by Guillaume Apollinaire,



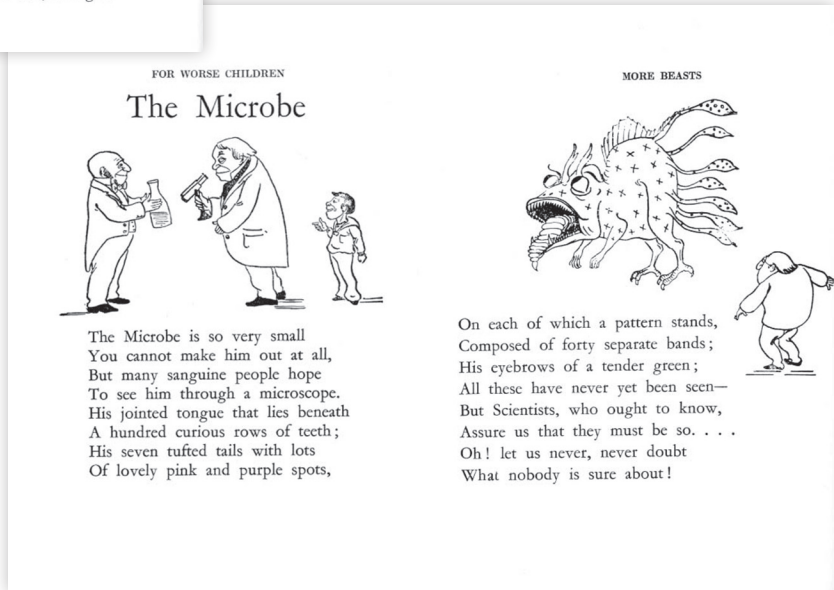
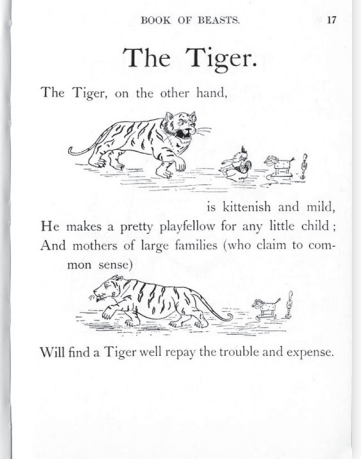
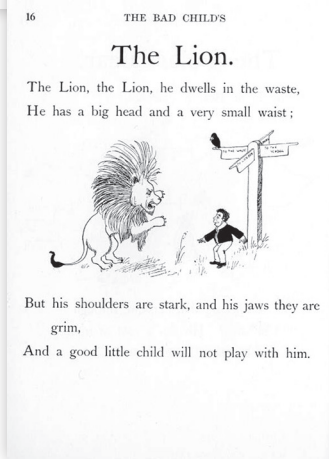
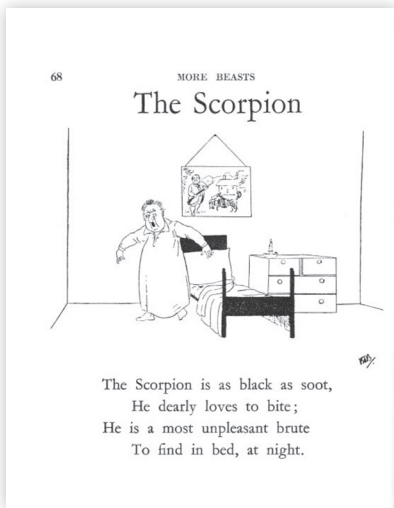
"L'Éléphant," from Guillaume Apollinaire, *Le Bestiaire ou Cortège d'Orphée*, illustrated with woodcuts by Raoul Dufy.



INTRODUCTION.

I call you bad, my little child,  
Upon the title page,  
Because a manner rude and wild  
Is common at your age.

The Moral of this priceless work  
(If rightly understood)  
Will make you—from a little Turk—  
Unnaturally good.



From Hilaire Belloc's Bad Child's Book of Beasts. Top to bottom: The introduction; The lion and the tiger; The scorpion; and The microbe.

with woodcuts by Raoul Dufy, translated by art historian Pepe Karmel (David R. Godine, 1980). Here the images are set in the middle of the page, surrounded by much emptiness. But it is not a mass-market paperback. Design, cover, paper and typeface claim to preserve “the liveliness, personality, and dignity of the original” and perhaps I would have thought they succeeded—had I not seen the Metropolitan edition first.

Also from the Met comes *Beasts of Earth and Air*, an engagement calendar for 1973. In his foreword, curator emeritus A. Hyatt Major comments: “Selecting animals . . . has not been easy, for the collections of the Metropolitan Museum swarm with as many creatures as the American forests did when the first white settlers could not decide which way to shoot.” This little calendar directs us to look at details: a 19th-century Japanese cat eyeing a beetle, a 15th-century Italian Christ child spurning a fly (we know who is Lord of the flies), a 4,000-year-old wooden cow barn from Thebes, a lindenwood Christ riding a donkey on wheels for a 15th-century Bavarian Palm Sunday. Seventeenth-century mice on a Japanese box top by Ogawa Ritsuo come accompanied by Apollinaire’s verse to the *souris du temps*. Ritsuo’s mice boldly destroy a fan, while Dufy’s mouse is almost hidden, gnawing “peu à peu” at the poet’s life. We recognize Mme Charpentier’s Newfoundland dog in her family portrait by Renoir, and Edward Hicks’s *Peaceable Kingdom*, which is a bestiary in one painting. Oh, and there is St. Jerome with his pet lion, circa 1515.

#### FOR CHILDREN ET AL.

I can’t find our copy of Belloc’s beastly little classic, *The Bad Child’s Book of Beasts and More Beasts for Worse Children* (Grosset & Dunlap, 1966), and have to suspect that one of our own bad children took it with them when they grew up and moved away. Another bestiary that seems to be gone but not begrudged is *Creatures Great and Small* (Dennis Dobson, 1964), by Michael Flanders (of Flanders and Swann fame), with illustrations by Marcello Minale.

In *The Zoo of Zeus: A Handbook of Mythological Beasts and Creatures with Comments by the Artist* (Grossman, 1964), Bernarda Bryson pretends to explain the beasts from classical mythology

in a series of light-hearted and disarming paintings and calligraphied verses, not necessarily adhering to traditional descriptions. Her chimera breathes smoke if not fire because

The Chimaera, as you will note  
Was partly Lion, partly goat  
His breath was hot by reason of  
The furs he wore around his throat.

Breaking most rules and conventions of the genre, but absolutely essential is *The Book of Imaginary Beings* [*El libro de los seres imaginarios*], by Jorge Luis Borges, with Margaritta Guerro (Discus/Avon, 1970). The yellowing paperback lacks physical beauty, although the clear type and spacing of the individual chapters do contribute to the stated intention that the reader “dip into the pages at random, just as one plays with the shifting patterns of a kaleidoscope.” Borges had no scruples about including deliberately fictitious creatures, from C.S. Lewis or Kafka, Poe, Swedenborg or H.G. Wells, along with those described by the *Physiologus*. Morlock and Squonk share space with several manifestations of the dragon (“a necessary monster, not an ephemeral or accidental one, such as the three-headed chimera or the catoblepas”).

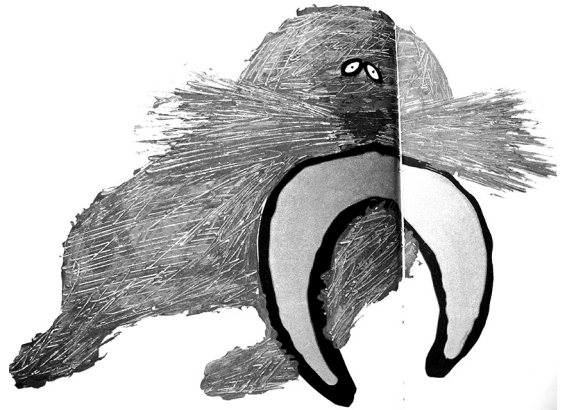
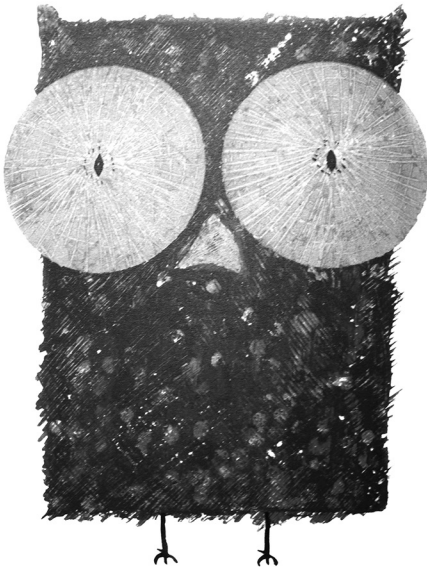
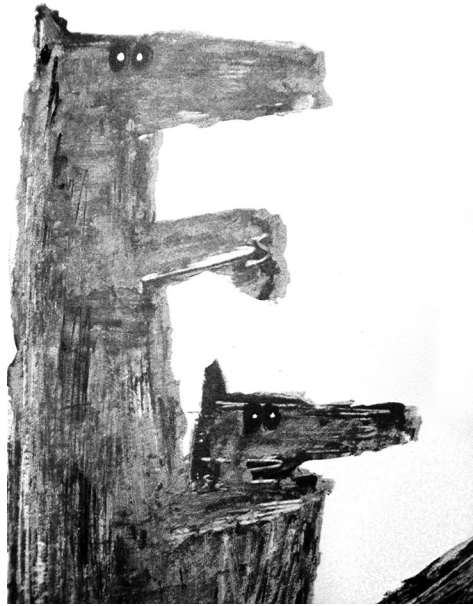
In *A Barnyard Bestiary* (Orca, 1999), written by David Bouchard and illustrated by Kimball Allen, boldly coloured endangered species explain their plight to a younger generation of environmentalists. I would expect the Schwarzhals goat and the blonde Mangalitza pig to be at risk, but—the turkey? On the island where I live, drivers brake for turkeys and line up beside them at the convenience store; apparently this is not the situation everywhere.

Purchased at Montreal’s Librairie Bonheur d’occasion in summer 2017, *Dictionnaire du symbolisme animal: bestiaire fabuleux* (Éditions Albin Michel, 1971), by Jean-Paul Clebert, is the most recent addition to the collection, the most inclusive and the one I would most like to have written myself. Learned, eclectic and opinionated, Clebert consults the usual sources from the ancient and medieval authorities but delves also into byways of secret beliefs and peasant lore, psychoanalysis and literature, giving





THE GIRAFFE—  
The Giraffe is tall.  
Looks down on us all.  
Lofty, stiff-necked.  
Lap curled, erect.  
With humousless eye  
Looks down from on high.  
Gives a cut little nod.  
Says, "I'm nearer to God."  
He's his own High Horse.  
Can't get down, of course.



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*Illustrations by Marcello Minale in  
Michael Flanders' Creatures Great and Small  
(1964). Clockwise from top left: The Giraffe;  
The Kangaroo; The Walrus; and The Owl.  
(Hazel Terry photos)*

each respectful credence and the appropriate grain of salt. He laments the lack of a complete catalogue of gargoyles, pities the toad as “without doubt the most unhappy of all the animals of the Bestiary,” and in his lengthy article on the Dragon, laments Pope John XXIII’s erasure of St. George from the calendar of saints.

A Romanticist drawing of the Behemoth reminds him of the Hindu Ganesha but also of “un bon gros Babar.” He cites Dickens on the cricket, Hemingway on the hyena, Kipling and Red Riding Hood on the wolf, Poe on the raven (of course) but also on the butterfly, and *Hamlet* on the cock. The black and white illustrations serve well for the drawings and engravings, but are less satisfactory for the paintings by his friend André Masson, to whom the book is dedicated. A rival of Picasso, Masson portrays animals in angst: a butterfly chrysalis devoured by a rooster, a praying mantis preying, a bull impregnating Pasiphae and, most horrifying of all and full-page, the skinning of a butchered unicorn. This is a post-*Guernica* bestiary.

There is no end to bestiaries. I continue to find them in unexpected places, coming from unexpected sources: from comic books to ancient Egypt, from lumberjacks and other classic Americana to Harry Potter, from poetry and nursery rhymes to prayer books and visions of paradise. There’s even a 21st-century bestiary for *Game of Thrones* and graphic novel fans: *Beasts! A Pictorial Schedule of Traditional Hidden Creatures*, curated by Jacob Covey (Fantagraphics, 2009). The lavish collection presents garish full-page images from 90 artists, an astonishing feat of cryptozoology that documents hidden creatures that should exist (even if they don’t).

#### BEASTLY ANTHOLOGIES

For *The Broken Ark: A Book of Beasts* (Oberon, 1973), Michael Ondaatje chose 21 samples of 20th-century Canadian angst from the work of his contemporaries and gathered them in this lovely volume, affectionately illustrated with drawings by Tony Urquhart.

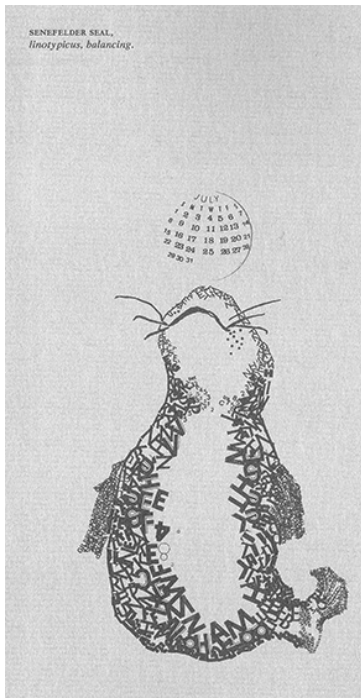
Two desert-island collections: *The Penguin Book of Animal Verse* (1965), introduced and edited by George MacBeth, who discusses three approaches to animals: “the neutral, the moral,

and the emotional,” all of which he deems valid. This seems to me a useful approach to bestiaries. The alphabetical arrangement introduces each section with a letter from an 18th-century book of wood engravings. The cover image is Edward Hicks’s beast painting, *The Peaceable Kingdom*. Second, *The Faber Book of Beasts* (1997) is handsomely printed but lacks illustrations. The editor, Paul Muldoon, claims to “present a selection of the best animal poems in the English speaking tradition,” modestly omitting any of his own, although surely “Hedgehog” (“The snail moves like a/Hovercraft”) deserves consideration. The jacket illustration is Henri Rousseau’s *Tiger in a Tropical Storm* (or, *Surprised!*).

Spike Milligan and Jack Hobbs of the BBC’s *Goon Show* edited *Milligan’s Ark* (Sphere, 1971), a compilation of drawings and poems by celebrities in support of the World Wildlife Fund. Yehudi Menuhin’s Fiddle-beetle faces Barabara Cartland’s Pekinese, Elizabeth Taylor listens for sea animals, and everyone has a lot of fun. In his foreword, Prince Philip suggests, “It would be only fair to compose a companion collection of drawings of their favourite people by the animals.” A later benefit for the WWF, *It’s Our World Too*, compiled by Victoria Wells and Mike Nicholas (Collins, 1978), gathers a collection of cartoons. Although the cartoons are mostly funny, the book as a whole is much less fun—perhaps because these are professional cartoonists at work, rather than non-cartoonists at play. Philip is more subdued, too; perhaps they hoped a less frivolous approach would be more effective at raising funds.

From Canadian novelist Graeme Gibson come two “miscellanies”—*The Bedside Book of Birds: An Avian Miscellany* (Doubleday, 2005) and *The Bedside Book of Beasts: A Wildlife Miscellany* (Doubleday, 2009). Both boast eclectic contents and lavish illustrations, and both include something by Gibson’s partner, Margaret Atwood.

*A Typographical Bestiary* (*Amphora* 11, 1972, and later a chapbook in its own right) grew from an assignment to students of the Fine Arts department of Vancouver City College (now Langara). Using only Letraset press-on type and standard systems, students produced the Bold-faced Buzzard (serif-taloned), the Goudy Giraffe, the Bodoni Bird and others.



From "A Typographical Bestiary," Amphora 11 (1972). Left: "Senefelder Seal." Right: "Mardersteg Moose."

In *Alphabeasties and Other Amazing Types* (Blue Apple Books, 2009), graphic designers Sharon Werner and Sarah Forss meld alphabet book, bestiary and typefaces into a witty and very colourful introduction to printing. Each animal's body is formed from its own initial—camel is all *c*, dog all *d*, and so forth.

#### MONSTERS & BALEFUL BEASTS

Christopher Dell's *Monsters: A Bestiary of the Bizarre* (Thames & Hudson, 2010) is too gorgeous for its own good. Professing to show the origins of belief, the book illustrates the point with images too wonderful to be dismissed and simultaneously too grotesque to be believed. With a range far beyond the European bounds of most of these bestiaries, Dell reminds us the monsters are our own creations, and "this book is a testament to humankind's incredible, fevered, indestructible imagination."

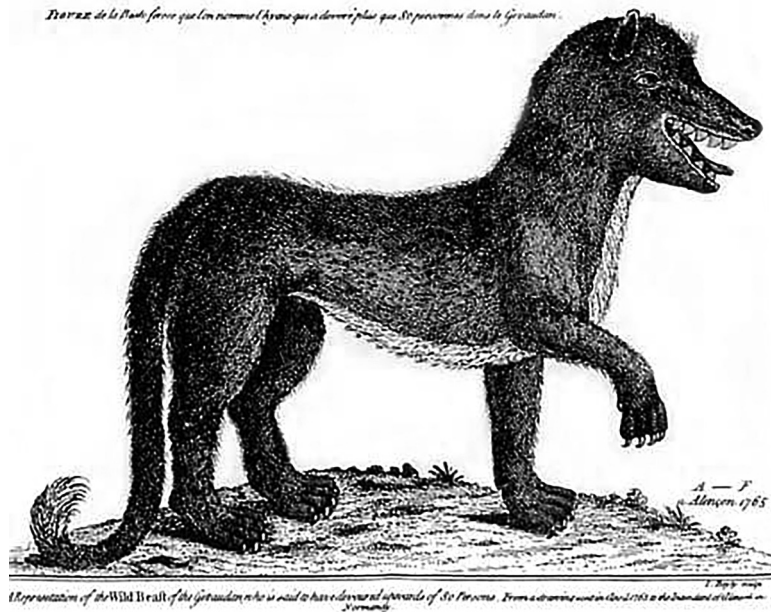
The noted folklorist Sabine Baring-Gould, in *The Book of Were-Wolves: Being an Account of a Terrible Superstition* (Causeway, 1973), advanced a theory of innate bloodlust. First published in 1865, it quickly became the "classic work on this

dreadful subject." In 1933, Montague Summers, in *The Werewolf* (Bell, 1966), cited Baring-Gould and went on to delve into "primeval sexual symbolism." While vampires are often mentioned in the same breath as werewolves, it is even less clear that they belong in a bestiary. (You can learn more than you need to know in a companion volume to the Baring-Gould, *The Book of Vampires*, which Dudley Wright produced in 1914.)

*Baleful Beasts: Great Supernatural Stories of the Animal Kingdom*, compiled by Seon Manley and Gogo Lewis and creepily illustrated by Emanuel Schongut (Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1974), brings together short fiction by the likes of Edith Wharton, Hugh Walpole and Arthur Conan Doyle. The introduction warns, "Anyone who has looked deeply into the eyes of any animal knows it to be a curiously haunting experience."

#### AND FINALLY, THE UNICORN

One may question whether monographs on werewolves, vampires and other nightmares are truly bestiaries. But I have to include the unicorn, a dream rather than a nightmare, and the ultimate rule-breaker.



The gevaudanwolf, reprinted in *Montague Summers, The Werewolf*. (Wikipedia photo)

Margaret B. Freeman, in *The Unicorn Tapestries* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1976), describes the late Gothic set of seven tapestries known as The Hunt of the Unicorn, but the book is not the bestiary. The tapestries are the bestiary: the forest, fields and garden. The unicorn is the central figure and the reason for everything else. Freeman was curator for 30 years at the Metropolitan's Cloisters, specially designed and built as a home for the tapestry. In her chapter "The Birds and the Beasts of the Tapestries," she connects the creatures to the historical and traditional contexts such as the *Physiologus*, and decorates her prose with medieval morals and poems, including a lament by Alcuin for his lost nightingale.

Of all the creatures, Freeman says, only one is not to be found in the "real world"—the Unicorn himself. Despite his non-existence, he is everywhere. The final tapestry, "The Unicorn in Captivity," appears on the dustjacket of this book, of course, but also on that of Clark Amor's *Beast and Bawdy*. In a small line drawing, he graces Anne Morrow Lindbergh's *The Unicorn and Other Poems, 1935–1955* (Pantheon, 1956). The title poem of Lindbergh's collection is quoted in Freeman's "Envoi." Frank Newfeld drew him at rest for the cover of his own collection, *Creatures:*

*An Alphabet for Adults and Worldly Children* (Groundwood, 1998). He has also been on a framed poster in our house for at least 50 years.

In other guises, the Unicorn has been in my life since 1940, when he and a scruffy bully of a Lion fought for the Crown in my beloved copy of Anne Anderson's *Old Mother Goose* (Thomas Nelson, n.d.). *A Book of Unicorns* (Green Tiger Press, 1978), compiled by Welleran Poltarnees [Harold Darling], has New Age tendencies, but presents good tipped-in reproductions of Unicorn images from various times and places. The Cloisters Unicorn is absent, but his frequent associate from Paris, the Cluny Museum's *Lady and the Unicorn*, is here, as well as Leonard Baskin's "Invisible Unicorn" and a drawing by Leonardo. I also have two small paperback novels: *The Last Unicorn* (Ballantyne, 1968), by Peter Beagle, and Janice Elliott's *Birthday Unicorn* (Puffin, 1973).

In his poem, "True and False Unicorn" (Botteghe Oscure XVI, Rome, 1956), James Broughton puts the following lines into the mouth of a character suspiciously named St. Sigmund of Vienna, who does not appear in any of my liturgical calendars, but may explain why I collect bestiaries:

Unnatural beasts abide in every natural history.  
In the anatomy of Unreason  
man's nature thrives.

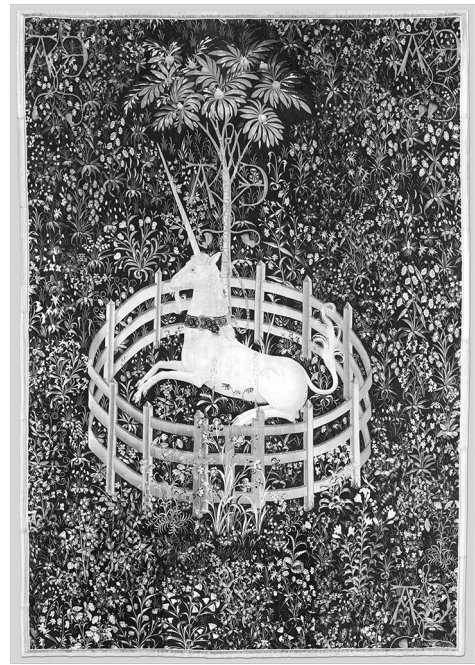
We all are hunters of the unicorn.  
Heaven's bestialities are a quarry uncatalogued.  
To capture the fabulous is our secret prayer.

We all are hunters of the unicorn.  
And if we should trap him,  
would he verify our dreams?  
Or would we be saddled with his own *bête noire*?

We all are hunters of the unicorn.  
And the unicorn hunts for himself.

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~ Phyllis Reeve is a frequent contributor to *Amphora*. She and her husband, Dr. Ted Reeve, began collecting bestiaries in 1960. After his death in 2016 she decided it was time to document the collection, so their children can understand why their legacy includes so many beastly books. She is celebrating her 80th birthday by going to New York to see the Unicorn.



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*From the Unicorn Tapestries at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Top: "The Unicorn in Captivity." Bottom: "The Unicorn Found."*

