

An A to Z of Dragonlore (*fifth instalment*)

GERYON, the three-headed giant slain by Hercules.

GNOME, the nature spirit of the element Earth, in Paracelsus' system, thus on a par with Undines, Sylphs and Salamanders, but more properly consigned to Fairyland than to the realm of fabulous beasts.

GOBLIN, a mischievous demon, a denizen of Fairyland.

GORGON, a female monster in Greek myth, there were three hideous sisters, Euryale, Medusa and Stheno.

GREMLIN, a goblin with a particular interest in sabotaging machinery.

GRENDEL, a monster in Anglo-Saxon myth, slain by Beowulf.

GRIFFIN or GRYPHON, a compound of two Kings, eagle and lion, of very great antiquity, earlier examples had a lion's body and legs with eagle's head and wings, but in later versions the eagle has taken over the front legs as well, and has grown ears. It may have had cosmic as well as Imperial significance, combining two signs of the zodiac, but has come to be seen as the guardian of treasure. In heraldry there is a variant known as the Male Griffin, with spikes sticking out of its body and no wings, but this name does not imply that winged griffins are female, as they are typically shown as fully equipped males.

GULON, a ravenous Swedish monster of the snowy north with a cat-like head on bear- or dog-like body.

HARPY, a fierce creature from Greek mythology like an eagle or vulture with the head and breasts of a woman and a sharp beak.

HIPPOCAMPUS, a Greek sea-horse, front half of horse, back half of fish, the preferred mount of Poseidon, the God of the Sea.

HIPPOGRIFF, a compound of griffin's foreparts and horse's rear, not known to the ancients, but described by Ariosto as the mount tamed by Rogero to ride to the rescue of Angelica, a story exactly parallel to that of Perseus and Andromeda.

HOBGOBLIN, a mischievous sprite often known as Robin Goodfellow,

HYDRA, a many-headed water-serpent from Greek mythology, the offspring of Typhon and Echidna, and eventually killed by Hercules.

IPOTANE, a creature mentioned by Sir John Mandeville in 1499, somewhat similar to a centaur but with the upper part of a man attached directly to the horse's rear part without the intervention of the horse's forelegs and chest.

JABBERWOCK, the invention of Lewis Carroll and John Tenniel in their re-creation of the Anglo-Saxon attitude to monsters.

JINN, the plural of Genie, from Middle Eastern tales of magic, these monstrous spirits should be assigned to Fairyland.

JORMUNGANDRA, the huge serpent in Norse myth, wrapped around the World.

To be continued...

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The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame...drawn by John Tenniel

The College of Dracology for the Study of Fabulous Beasts

Ten more years have passed and there has been a lull in our efforts, and time for reflection. Looking back over the history of art, there was a period at the end of the 15th century when great invention was evident in the depiction of the devil and demons of all sorts. Bosch comes especially to mind, as do both Breughels, while Dürer, Schongauer and Grünewald all showed vivid imaginative images of these horrors. Most of them are based on distorted and deformed human models, with added horns, claws, beaks, scales, spikes and tails, and they must be intended to show in a pictorial way the inner torments, lusts, fears and evil thoughts that tempted men to leave the path of righteousness. In more recent times many artists have drawn demonic figures, from Blake who still had a strong spiritual message to impart, to Beardsley who was teasingly decadent; others, such as Dali, di Chirico, Magritte, Ernst, Escher and Miró, have used their imagination to show strange beings from the dream world. Most of their odd creatures stand singly and have not been widely adopted. One wonders to what extent the anonymous artists of the ancient world used their individual sense of invention, or whether they largely followed traditional forms—and if so, where did those come from?

Turning from art to literature, it is hard to believe that all the strange creatures reported by travellers were based on poor observation or exaggerated hearsay. Though one can understand Marco Polo's sense of disappointment when shown a Unicorn that had the feet of an elephant, the body of a monstrous boar, and one horn on his forehead, "nothing like the elegant creatures with which we were familiar," and suppose he had actually seen a rhinoceros, other travellers described things that have never been seen since, and it is not unlikely that they had used their powers of invention. In later years there have been a few authors who have used their imagination to create a world of strange beings, particularly when writing for children. Edward Lear had a lively sense of fantasy and his Quangle-Wangle is an understated masterpiece, though more familiar creatures such as the Jumblies, the Pobble and the Dong are too touchingly human to be regarded as beasts. Lewis Carroll, however, has some far more sinister inventions, such as those described in his narrative poem "The Hunting of the Snark" (1876) and in his delightful re-creation of the Anglo-Saxon attitude to monsters in Jabberwocky, from "Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There" (1871) illustrated by John Tenniel who also drew the toves, borogoves and raths, as well as a splendid Griffin and Mock Turtle, and Gladstone and Disraeli in the guise of the Lion and the Unicorn.

REVIEWS

This Wonderful World: Fabulous Beasts by Gallus, illustrated by Judith Bledsoe (Harrap, London, 1961) 3/6—a children's book with fine coloured pictures of Dragons, Phoenix, Chimaera, Sphinx, Siren and Unicorn, and well-told stories translated from the French.

Unnatural History, an illustrated bestiary by Colin Clair (London 1967)—some 50 species described, many fabulous but including also fables told about real animals.

JABBERWOCKY

*'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.*

*"Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!"*

*He took his vorpal sword in hand:
Long time the manxome foe he sought —
So rested he by the Tumtum tree
And stood awhile in thought.*

*And, as in uffish thought he stood,
The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood
And burred as it came!*

*One, two! One, two! And through and through
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!
He left it dead, and with its head
He went gallumphing back.*

*"And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!"
He chortled in his joy.*

*'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.*