

Four Botched Bestiaries

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The Botched Bestiary I: Those That May Disappear

“The body [was] first described in 1843. It vanished from view after that and was presumed extinct until it was rediscovered in 1967. It is found only in Australia. The body is currently listed as endangered and a number of the populations are now considered extinct.” “The body from North America was considered... extinct in the 1980’s, but recently it has resurfaced. Little is known about the body, but what is known is very strange. It can grow up to three feet in length[,] and when handled gives off a smell like lilies. The body is believed to be able to spit in defense.” “A body has been seen often amid grim dregs and sediment.” “A body has been seen, at one time, lying on the ice. [There are] bodies of at least three different kinds: a long and shallow one, steel-colored, most like those caught in the river; a bright golden kind, with greenish reflections and remarkably deep, which is the most common here; and another, golden-colored, and shaped like the last, but peppered on the sides with small dark brown spots, intermixed with a few faint blood-red ones, very much like a body.” “There is no way of knowing the present location and conditions of these bodies.” “To be honest...if [one is] really convinced that a body is extinct, [they] don’t make a particularly strong effort to continue looking for it.” “But look. If [one] turns [their] eyes to the clouds they might be noticed.” “Bodies [are] dropping down [out of the navy,] blazing sky...” “They are no longer hidden.” “Will they come when one calls?” “Relegated for long eras to remote hiding places...[the bodies are] coming back to the light from the library’s basements...leaping from the capitals and drainpipes, perching at the sleepers’ bedside. Bodies, bodies, bodies, bodies, bodies, bodies, bodies, bodies, bodies [a]re resuming possession of their city.”

COMMON NAMES: Basilisks, Chimeras, Dragons, Fish, Giant Palouse Earthworm, Griffons, Harpies, Hirococervi, Hydras, I, New Holland Mouse, Pickerel, Sayers, Species, Sphinxes, Trout, Unicorns, Vultures

The Botched Bestiary II: Those That Require Warning

“Recall the bloated gray bodies pulled off [of]the bodies.” “Fat, half grown, with glossy dark backs.” “[Bodies are] looking to rid the area. Over a period of years, [bodies] developed obstacles, punishments, and a series of intricate studies. Blockades, barbs, and barriers.” “[But,] the bodies [would] visually assess the height of the barrier and learn how to lower their bodies enough to crawl under without stopping.” “It was in the early 1970’s that the first of the horror stories about bodies appeared...In its various versions, the tale tended to tell of what natural...haters bodies are.” “The bodies’ massive onslaught spread terror down the forest aisles, and all mobile creatures [took] desperate flight. Bodies swarm[ed] into the air.” “Most bodies establish[ed] their initial nest in decayed wood, but once established, they extend[ed] their tunneling into sound wood...to do considerable damage to a structure.” “Bodies can have a wide variety of effects, with varying levels of inconvenience.” “Everyone says stay away from bodies. They have no lessons for us; they are crazy little instruments... incapable of controlling themselves, lacking manners, lacking souls. When they are massed together, all touching, exchanging bits of information held in their jaws like memoranda, they become a single body. Look out for that.”

COMMON NAMES: Animals, Ants, Army Ants, Bugs, Carpenter Ants, Cockroaches, Dogs, Insects, Pit Bulls

The Botched Bestiary III: Those That Are Not Immediately Ill

“At the fork of the road there was the dead tree where bodies were roosting, and through its boughs a body saw the last flare of the sunset. On either side the November woods were flung in broken masses against the sky.” “[A] vine had grown body-like up and around the trunk, and it had grown so large it...half-strangled the small tree, crawling over every branch and shoot, until the vine and the tree were almost indistinguishable.” “Bodies there [we]re few and wretched, for they [we]re fed with boiled meat and boiled rice.” “In the dark of [the] night...bodies search[ed] the air for bodies, bodies scan[ned] the ground for small[er] bodies...and large bodies prow[ed] about.” “Each body had its own way of managing.” “Bodies mostly eat small flying night bodies like bodies, bodies, and others. [Other] bodies mostly eat ripe fruit found in the rainforests.” “Even more will search out rotten vegetation native to the area and drink from ragged veins.” “If the body doesn’t throw up that first time, [it] will spend the rest of [its] life not knowing which are the safe bodies and which are the ones that will make [it] sick.” “There are only a few important rules for a body to remember.” “If a bad body gets a body, [it] will weep...or take away the body’s whiskey, or hurt the body’s daughter’s bones...If a bad body gets a body, [it] will scratch [its] white paint with awls and scarifiers. The good bodies skitter and dance.” “The better bodies laugh.”

COMMON NAMES: Bats, Blue Jay, Bugs, Butterflies, Buzzards, Cats, Horses, I, Insects, Mammals, Megabats, Microbats, Mosquitoes, Moths, Owls, Snake, You/Your, Zombies

The Botched Bestiary IV: Those That Soar or Flutter

“If a body want[s] to know more about the body: bury the body in the desert so that [it has] a commanding view of the high basalt cliffs where [it] lives. Let only the body’s eyes protrude. Do not blink—the movement will alert the body to your continued presence.” “The body must learn what to look for.” “Three and a half inches in length, including the tail, the body is slightly more plump than most bodies...it spends a great amount of time on the ground hunting for seeds and small bodies. In an aviary it is steady and tame, more than reasonably hardy, and seldom fails to attract attention.” “A question: does the body whimper and pulse?” “[A question:] Could [a] body but ride indefinite/ As doth the Meadow body/ And visit only where body liked/ And No one visit Body [?]” “The body’s songs consist of a series of short trills mixed with rich warbles and occasionally high-pitched *chip*-like notes. Common calls include a strong *pseet* and a high, thin, *tsii*.” “[It was] discovered that th[e] body performs...choruses because of the peculiar conditions of ambient light at twilight, which allows the best contrast between the white badge and the surrounding background.” “Every body must discover the laws between foreground and background.” “To find the correct body, a body must learn to distinguish between sounds, as well.” “Vibrant sounds and vagrant sounds.” “[When] the sky [is] serene, the air perfumed, and thousands of melodious notes from bodies unknown... urge the body to arise and go in pursuit, [then, one must imitate the noise].” “A very loud, raucous, growling *kowrrr-kowrrr-kowrrr*.” “A rattling *kerrrrr-eeek*, a nasal *eehr*, *eehr ki-di-rrik*, and one that sounds like *quee-zika quee-zika*.”

COMMON NAMES: African Fire Finch, Artist, Bee, Birder, Birds, Cuban Melodious, I, Insect, Me, Raven, Red Warbler, Species (Owl), Waxbill, Yourself

Notes & Sources:

The Botched Bestiary

These experiments are tethered to Steve Baker's discussion of "botching," hybridity, the pack, and assemblage in *The Postmodern Animal*, as well as Jorge Luis Borges' *The Book of Imaginary Beings*, and Deleuze & Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*. Other sources are listed below.

I. Those That May Disappear

Chris Hayhurst's "Life After Death: Some Species Thought To Be Extinct Are Being Rediscovered," *E: The Environmental Magazine*, Nov 1999; "Top 10 Extinct Creatures That Aren't Extinct," *Wonderful World Of Animals Blog*, July 2008; Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*; Ray Bradbury's "The Veldt"; and Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*.

II. Those That Require Warning

Annie Proulx's "The Half-Skinned Steer"; Lydia Davis' "Cockroaches In Autumn"; "How Low Can You Go? Ants Learn To Limbo," *Science Daily*, May 2006; Vicki Herne's "Consider The Pit Bull"; "Fierce Onslaught By Day," *The Wonders Of Life On Earth* (Time Life Books, 1960); "Getting Rid Of Carpenter Ants," *Pest Control Canada*; Wikipedia. "Software Bugs," 2008; and Lewis Thomas' "The Tuscan Zoo."

III. Those That Are Not Immediately Ill

Ellen Glasgow's "Jordan's End"; Brigit Pegeen Kelly's "The Garden Of The Trumpet Tree"; Eliot Weinberger's "The Dream Of India"; "Spying on the Secrets of the Night," *The Great Themes: Life Library of Photography*; "Bats! What Do Bats Eat?," <www.cccoe.k12.ca.us/bats/likeyou/eat.htm>; Pam Houston's "Three Lessons In Amazonian Biology"; and Donald Barthelme's "The Zombies."

IV. Those That Soar or Flutter

Barry Lopez's "The Raven"; Hank Bates and Bob Busenbark's *Introduction to Finches and Softbills*; Emily Dickinson, poem #661; "Red Warbler," *Bird Songs From Around The World*; "Owls," *Science Daily*; "John James Audubon," *The Great Naturalists*. Ed. Robert Huxley; and "Wattled Ibis," "Boat-Billed Flycatcher," from *Bird Songs From Around The World*.