




portfolio.

2013-14



Sigma Tau Delta
Rho Xi Chapter
2013-14

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2013-14 Officers

President
Zoë Lance

Vice President
Jill Walker

Treasurer and Public Relations Officer
Aaron Colerick

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Andrea Montoya

Historian
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Brittany Kemp

Grace Matias

Laura Razo

Katie Schorr

Paige Sundstrom

Advisors

Professor Alison Baker

Professor Aaron DeRosa

**10 Reasons To Join
Sigma Tau Delta**

You'd be joining the only English honor society at Cal Poly Pomona.

Your resume will thank you—an honor society membership looks great in job interviews.

You're invited to the club's annual induction ceremony and dinner.

You can join club leadership.

You're eligible for scholarships—valued at up to \$5,000 each.

The international honor society offers internship opportunities at companies like Penguin Books and Better World Books.

Your academic work and creative writing could be published in Portfolio, the club's annual publication.

You're also eligible to submit to The Rectangle and The Review, the international honor society's publications.

You can attend the annual convention.

Your membership never expires.

JOIN TODAY!

Join this quarter (January 6-March 21) and you're eligible for our opportunity drawing! One winner* will receive a Sigma Tau Delta stole to wear at Commencement.

To view membership requirements and download the form, visit stdcpp.weebly.com

Questions?
Email stdcpp@gmail.com

*Winner must be recognized at the International level.

Weekly Meetings

The club met every Thursday at U-Hour in Building 24, room 107.

Throughout the year, club members participated in a variety of icebreakers, workshops and shared numerous literary-related news items and features.

Some of our favorite meetings were:

Speed Dating

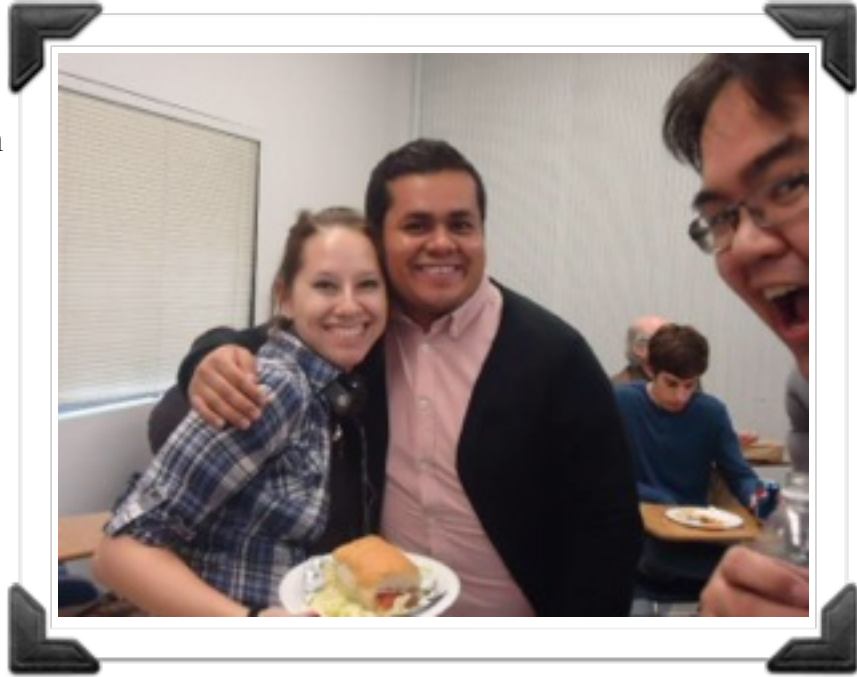
Game Days

Halloween Lunch and Trivia

Faculty, Staff and Student Mixer

Dr. Baker's Anglo-Saxon Riddles

Rose Garden Picnic



Sigma Saturdays

We hosted a Sigma Saturday event every quarter. In the fall, we visited Whimsic Alley, the Farmer's Market and the Grove. In the winter, Vice President Jill Walker hosted a Doctor Who viewing party and dystopian literature discussion. In the spring, we marveled at the Last Bookstore in Los Angeles. Sigma Saturdays not only gave us a chance to be the book geeks we are, but bond with fellow members.



year in review.

halloween contest winners.

Members were encouraged to submit their scariest poems and short stories.

The winners of the Halloween Contest each received a \$15 gift card.

The Phone Rang by Abigail Inman

The phone rang.

He picked it up, silence on the other end.

“Hello?”

Static.

“Hello?”

He shrugged and hung up.

...

The phone rang.

He picked it up, silence on the other end.

“Hello?”

Static.

“Hello?”

He shrugged and hung up.

...

The phone rang.

A feeling of deja vu came over him. Hadn't the phone just been ringing?

He picked it up, silence on the other end.

“Hello?”

Again, the strange feeling he had been through this before.

“Hello?”

He shrugged and hung up.

...

The phone rang.

He stared at it.

A nagging feeling he was forgetting something important. What was happening? He could almost remember, but it was like trying to hold onto a dream. The more he thought about it, the more it slipped away. Hadn't he just picked up the phone?

The phone was still ringing. He picked it up.

...

The phone rang.

He jumped. Something was wrong. He couldn't put his finger on it but something was terribly wrong.

He had a strong, unsettling feeling of deja vu.

He picked up the phone - silence on the other end, but somehow he was expecting that.

“Hello?” There was a desperate tone to his voice.

“Hello??”

He didn't know why he felt so panicked. He took a calming breath.

...

The phone rang.

“No!”

a

“NO!”

He yanked the phone off the receiver.

...

The phone rang.

He screamed, one long, shrill note splintering the air. He felt like his mind was tearing. He tried to

remember what he had just been doing. The phone seemed to have been ringing for eternity. His sanity warped under the impossibility of what was happening.

He had to stop it.

He picked up the phone and threw it against the wall, where it shattered into a million pieces.

...

The phone rang.

Collecting Molly by Andrea Montoya

I love the smell of summertime. All of the flowers are in bloom, the trees are full with green leaves, and birds are chirping next to my window. Waiting for Katelyn to come by, I grab a book to read on the way out to the patio.

“Hey nerd!” I glance up instantly and see Katelyn skipping over like she’s four years old. “You were supposed to be over an hour ago.” I point out as I bookmark my place in chapter 2 of *Heart of Darkness*. “OH! I’m sorry, am I interrupting a date night?” She grins. “I can dream, can’t I?” The truth is that I’ve never even been on a date, ever. I didn’t inherit that grateful gene, unlike my sister. Hailey only had to date two guys in order to catch and marry him. I wouldn’t say Stan is a complete asshole, but he’s not exactly on my “favorite person” list. I’ve only chatted with him a few times but it seems like every time he just has to one up me with his stories. Whatever makes my sister happy.

“So what’s the game plan today?” she asks me. I go over how to answer before replying, “Okay, don’t freak out.” She suddenly stops tugging on her shoelace and slowly looks up. “Rebecca, what did you do?”

“Can I counter that question by saying we get \$40 out of it?” She ponders this. “...Alright, I’m listening.” I scan the front yard and tell her the assigned duty. “My dad wants us to clean out the barn.” Her face was stricken in horror. “Aw Becks! Do you realize that’s a total rip-off!? That place hasn’t been cleaned since 1952!”

“I know, but its \$40! Come on, how bad can it be?” Jumping off the steps, I start our journey up the stone path that leads up to the barn stables.

“You owe me big time for this. After all, it’s Saturday labor.” Beyond the stench smell, 400 cobwebs in the corners, and a giant haystack in the

middle, there’s still a hidden beauty to the place. The natural light of the sun shines through each of the sky lights? Of the barn streaming over each of the horse stables.

“Why don’t we start over here?” I suggest point towards the haystack. She looks around the large dusty space and glazes over the cobwebs. “How about these instead?” Widening my eyes, I scoff slightly, “So I can get bitten and have mutant powers in the morning? No, thank you.”

A minute passes. “Ugh, fine.”

I examine the stack of scarecrow hair deciding which side would be easier to clump up first. I choose the right since Katelyn unspeakably claimed the left by starting before me. “The sooner we start, the earlier we finish. So quit standing there and help yourself to a pitch fork.”

It’s only been half an hour and I can’t feel my hands. I’ve done my share of mentally stimulating homework (after all, I’m 16) but as far as manual labor goes, try zero. If I could, I sure wouldn’t—Katelyn shrieks as she throws down her fork. “What the--? Are you alright?” I stumble backwards when I see what she sees.

This would make more sense if it were a corpse, owl droppings, or even a dead rat, but no. This is the head of an exquisite porcelain doll.

Her blonde-streaked hair poked out through each strand of hay. Katelyn picked up her pitch fork and reached out to poke its head. “Stop, what are you doing?” She raised her eyebrow at me. “I’m trying to figure out what it is, duh.”

“What does it look like? Are you blind?” She rolls her eyes. “Honestly, it looks like a corroded Raggedy Ann.” I bend down to get a closer look. “Now you’re just being stupid.” As I reach in to grab it: “Ahh! It’s got me! Help!” Katelyn’s face shifts quickly as she gasps and leaps over. “HA! Just fooling,” I sputter. She looks down, “I knew that.” She’s too easy. “Sure ya did kid.”

I pick up the doll. She's dressed in a light blue plaid dress with shiny black buckled shoes. She has one of those 'Children of the Corn' smiles. It's eerily creepy, but at the same time it's mesmerizingly beautiful. "I think we should keep it." Katelyn furrows her brow. "Rebecca, are you crazy? What if it has rabies?"

"I'm not crazy, this could be from the 1600's or earlier!" Without a retort, I turned on my heel and head for the door. She hovers for a second. "Wait! What about cleaning the barn!?" Whoops, I forgot about that. "This is a little more important." I exclaim picking out the hay from Molly's hair. Yes, Molly suits you.

Once we get back to the house, I find a stool to sit Molly on. Katelyn looks flustered as she approaches me. "What about the \$20? Your dad's not going to pay us for moving a pound of hay."

"Would you relax? Yes he will if I explain what happened." She looks over at Molly. "You mean explain- who happened."

I stop breathing as my heart leaps into my throat. Katelyn suddenly looks as if she just saw a ghost. "What- was- that-?" she mouths. "I don't know..." Even though I will never be able to explain it, I swear I just heard the murmured cry of a baby.

As we both slowly stand up, I walk towards the kitchen door and without a second to lunge out of the way, Stan flings the door open. "Geezus lord! What are you doing here??" Stan eyes me up and down. "I'm taking your sister to Pilates- and Becca, don't take the lord's name in vain, you're better than that." It takes every ounce of me not to roll my eyes. "Did you hear a baby crying just now?" I asked as I knew what was coming. He stares at us and says, "Why? You didn't get knocked up while I was away did you?" I contemplate my next move as he's putting away groceries.

But then Katelyn starts walking towards where we placed Molly, and has a horror stricken look on her face. "Where did she go?" I look up instantly at her, "What do you mean, 'where did she go...?'" She starts shaking her head around panickingly, "I mean! She was sitting here, on this chair you call fashionable...and now, she's gone!"

I look at her quizzically. "If this is a joke, it's not Halloween for another week ya know." She really looks sincere. "Becks, I would come up with a better joke than this, and you know it."

At that, I start looking around myself and even open the cabinets to check to see if I can spot a lock of curls. I decide that the best plan would be to re-trace my steps. It works in Scooby Doo, right? (Oh wait, that's the ol' "Let's split up and look for clues gang!") –but still it's the same concept.

I check the porch, and that's where I find her. Molly's been placed on the first step of our porch and is just staring out into the open vastness of the crop fields. "Well," I say, "You gave us quite the scare, mostly Katelyn." I look at her as if she'll talk back. I've obviously been watching too many movies.

Katelyn comes rushing out. "OH! You found her!" I stare at her in disbelief. "Yea...and you weren't the one to put her out here to freak me out..."

"I swear I didn't! Come on, I was standing two feet away from you the whole time. How is that even mathematically possible?" She retorts. "I wouldn't know, I'm not a math major."

"Okay, well, where's your sister? Stan's bugging the crap out of me with his "guess what new phone's coming out this week?" spectacle. I cringe as I've been stuck in the conversation before. If you don't agree with Stan on which operating system is better, let's just say I'd rather be fighting in 'Nam. I'd have an easier chance of winning.

“I heard her in her room earlier, let me go see if she’s still there. After all, that was three hours ago.” I hand Molly off to Katelyn, and as I head up the stairs to Hailey’s room, I hear low music playing. Yup, she’s home alright. I love how she tries to drown out the sounds in her room with music; like music is going to cover that up.

I brace myself and knock on the door. “Hailey!? Are you two decent??” I step back as I hear shuffling and a loud boom! sound. What in the world? Hailey swings open the door, her hair looking like she just fell out of a tree.

“What is it dorkface?” I hate it when she calls me that. I’m not 12. “Did an atomic bomb go off in here or something?” She’s too confused to come up with a comeback. “I don’t know what you’re talking about, but what is so important that you had to see me right this second?”

“I just wanted to make sure you were still here cause Stan just got here. And look at that, he found you, from the floor.” Stan peers up at me from the side of the bed, after hitting his head.

“Yes, he did, so moveee along!” She slams the door in my face as I’m astonished at how my sister can attract a man into her life, but I can’t. I just will never get it. Walking back downstairs I see Molly back in her chair by the door. I pick her up. Where the hell did Katelyn go now? “Katelyn!? You know perfectly well that we’re not finished cleaning out the barn!” No response. “Hide and go seek is more of a 4th grader game!” I start checking closets, but she is nowhere to be found. “What if I pitched in \$10 of my half??”

She wouldn’t seriously leave me hanging like this. Where is she?? I look through the kitchen and outside on the porch. Nothing. I decide to check the attic since that is usually where we hang out. It’s the quietest place in the whole house.

I start walking up the creaky stairs up the attic

and pull down the door to take me to the third floor.

“Katie? You up here?” No response. “Ugh! What is that smell??” I start looking around for anything unusual like a dead rat, because that’s exactly what it smells like. As soon as I step around a huge box in the corner covered with dust, I see a pile of blood seeping through the bottom.

“Wow, was the rat on its menstrual cycle or something? That’s a lot of blood.” My sister’s cat has a thing for mice, rats, and strangely enough, iguanas. As I lift up the box, I feel a twinge on my side. “What the—“ I look down to where Molly is sitting on my hip staring at the box. Must be a muscle spasm. I reach down to lift the box and what I see sends me flailing backwards and drop Molly on the floor.

Gasping, I close my eyes tight and cover them with my hands. This is not happening. I am in a horrible nightmare, Wake up...Wake up...Wake UP!!!

I squint my eyes open, as I try not to throw up. I see two arms and legs broken at the bones, pieces of flesh are surrounding the tiny pools of blood, surrounding the giant pool of black blood of the torso which has been stripped and scratched by what looks like shards of glass.

I look over and notice that an old antique mirror has been broken into tiny piece fragments. How is this even possible?? I try to remain calm, as I can’t distinguish who this is from the head being missing entirely.

I get the nerve to stand up barely without falling head first into the bloody box. I know I shouldn’t, but I just can’t seem to help myself. I need to know, and open the flaps of the box without looking. I stop myself from shaking, but the tears start streaming down my face uncontrollably. Katelyn is staring up at me from the box. Her head has been placed at an angle to look questioning.

Staring back in disbelief, I drop to my knees and cry harder than I ever have in my entire life. WHO

WOULD DO THIS???

I look down at Molly, and she has that same eery smile, except this time, it's not beautiful.

I gain control of my motor functions and immediately sprint back downstairs to Hailey's room. "HAILEY!!" Pounding on her door, there's no music playing and no response. I bust open the door, but there's no one inside. I slam it shut and run downstairs towards the kitchen.

Stan and Hailey are in the kitchen, "Hey dorkface, what's with all the racket?" she says. I nearly bulrush her to the ground, "HAILEY, THIS IS IMPORTANT!"

"Geezz, calm down! We just got back from Pilates. What's the 411?" she says bewildered. I collect myself as grief spreads over me like a plague settling in. "... Katelyn's dead."

"What did you say?" she looks worried. "I said, Katelyn's dead. She's in the attic." I start crying again on my sleeve. Stan just looks from her to me and back to her. "What's happened?" he asks. Hailey runs from the kitchen to the attic and a faint shrilling scream echoes throughout the house.

As she comes back downstairs, she grabs the phone and calls an ambulance. "Yes...I need you to get someone to come here straight away! There's been a murder! ...No I'm not prank calling!"

I look at her in disgust. She continues, "Okay, my address is 415 Brookstine Street. Please hurry!" As she hangs up her hands are shaking and I go over to hug her. We're not exactly the Brady Bunch with these family moments every five minutes, so in this moment I feel like I finally have a sister, even in this most unfortunate scenario.

As she starts to calm down, I explain, "Hailey, don't send me to a mental institution, but...I think the doll did it." She jerks her head up, "What do you mean...

you 'think the doll did it?'"

"I mean I've seen enough horror movies in my day to come to this conclusion, as improbable as it seems." Hailey clearly isn't a horror movie buff like myself. "How on EARTH could this scarred-ass doll be responsible??"

I don't bother arguing about it any longer and pull out my laptop. I Google search for anyone in the area that may know something to help. I place my cursor over the link for Ghost/Doll Possessions. This sounds right up our alley.

I look up the contact info and give it a call.

"Hello? This is Jeremy Abrams."

"Hi, Mr. Abrams? (I try to keep my voice from shaking.) I was wondering if you knew anything about doll possessions?"

"Yes, I do. In fact, I am a specialist in it. You see, I have my own mini-museum of different dolls that are not to be trifled with."

This stops me. "What do you mean 'trifled with?'"

"Well, let's just say that bothering it would...cause bad things to happen."

Oh no. Too late, guy.

"...what if something bad already happened?"

An hour later, Mr. Abrams arrived at my house ready to witness what we already had. I took him up straight to the attic where he could see Katie.

"What in the world... This is unusual, even for this type of situation." I don't linger as the smell has gotten ten times worse and I just can't bear to look any longer. We walk back downstairs as the ambulance finally arrives. The paramedics rush upstairs with bags and a stretcher.

I show Mr. Abrams Molly, and explained that Katie and I just found her in the barn as we were cleaning it. “I didn’t think it was such a big deal. She was in close to perfect condition.” He showed sympathy as he was looking into the doll’s eyes, almost looking through them to see if there was a soul inside.

The stretcher was hobbling it’s way down the stairs and the black bags weren’t empty. Hailey talked to them by the door, and thanked them for their assistance. They both said that they were terribly sorry for our loss and headed out the door.

Hailey closed the door and came over to where Mr. Abrams and I were sitting on the couch in the living room. “So, is she possessed?” I asked. “She definitely has a strange aura about her, but I can’t conclude that she’s possessed,” he said.

I hand over my laptop to him as he requests it so that he could contact his partner, Richard. While he’s dialing his number into Skype, Stan joins us from the kitchen saying that he needed some air after seeing the ambulance pack up. He actually looks genuinely concerned. Maybe he’s less of an asshole than I give him credit for.

Mr. Abrams gets a hold of Richard.

“Hello, Richard?”

“Ah, hello Jeremy! How are you?”

“I’ve been better to be honest.”

“What is it, Jeremy?”

“Richard, I am going to show you a doll, and I need you to tell me if you recognize it, okay?”

“Okay, I’ll try.”

As Mr. Abrams picks Molly up, his whole arm is shaking. He shows her to Richard who immediately drops his jaw.

“Molly, Richard.”

“Jeremy! Put her down this instant!”

Jeremy does as he’s told and looks taken aback.

“Jeremy, do you know what that is?? THAT is the cowgirl wrangler!”

What the heck is the cowgirl wrangler, I ponder to myself.

“The what--?” Jeremy says.

“The cowgirl wrangler was a doll dating back to 1863 when a mother came across her and gave it to her daughter as a birthday present in a box. She, “Molly,” hated being stuffed in a box, so to get back at the mother, she ended up slaughtering her daughter one afternoon, and stuffed her limbs into that same box! It was one of the bloodiest massacres that town had ever seen.”

Oh my god, I can’t believe this is actually happening. This doll has murdered my best friend, and it turns out it’s possessed!

Jeremy looks over at me. “Okay, well, thank you Richard for identifying this doll. I better go. Thanks again, old friend. Goodbye.”

“Sure thing, Jeremy. Goodbye as well.”

With that, Jeremy hung up and stood up abruptly. “I must take this doll and confine it so that this never happens again. I am truly sorry for your loss, Rebecca.”

“I’ll be alright, eventually. I’m just more in shock than anything at the moment. Thank you very much for clearing this up though, Mr. Abrams.”

Hailey stood up also and said, “Yes, thank you very much Mr. Abrams. Make sure that thing is locked behind bars so that it can’t find a way out.” Mr. Abrams looked at her, and replied, “Of course, you all have a good night.” And with that, turned on his heel with

Molly hanging off his arm and left.

I looked over at Hailey who said, “Don’t worry about the smell kiddo, I’m having cleaners come tomorrow morning.” Cha, that’s the least of my worries at the moment.

Stan came up and grabbed my hands. “Becca, I know we haven’t had the best friendship, but know that I will always be here for you, as will your sister.” She came up next to him. As shocking as that entire sentence was to my ears, that was exactly what I needed to hear.

I know I will be alright. I have to be.



halloween contest winners.

love poetry contest winners.

In honor of Valentine's Day, members were encouraged to submit poems about love and passion. The winners of the Love Poetry Contest each received a \$10 gift card.

To Live for Love by Hanna Wallace

I died for you.

I shared a life with you.

It may have been short lived,

Not a year to its name,

But it was the fullest I ever felt.

I died with the letter that set you free.

I died and have yet to return.

I died and am only half alive.

Sensations dulled, the making of love pained

Guilt, insecurity, and anxiety, my new life.

I hope you enjoy your freedom.



Seven Meters by Hope Guzman

She turned away from him
And he knew she held that smile
that she held when she made
a clever remark and was
quite pleased with herself.
She turned away from him
And she began down the road
that diverged from his. And once
she was a good seven meters
down that road, she and he
would no longer discuss the
frivolities and the folly of
those around them—who took
their coffees with one sugar,
two creams, and three stirs
while they checked their
vogue watches.
She turned away from him
And was a good two meters away.
Three meters.
Four.
'That's quite far enough,' He thought.
Anxiously, his mind flitted ahead of
her; down this road he saw nothing
of him and her. Nothing of the life
he envisioned. Their two bedroom flat
reflected in her brown eyes. Their
child, a boy, that lived on her
freckles. The smile, much like
the one she held now, as
she whispered the two words
that he dreamed every night that
she would say.
Five meters.
"I love you," He blurted before

she was able to get any
farther away.
The words were imposing and too
much for the silence that had
fallen between them. He winced
at the sudden sound and the
subsequent silence that followed.
She turned back to him with a
calm expression that betrayed
nothing of her reaction to his
words.
Six meters.
She placed her hand gently on his
cheek.
And he on her's.
She gazed into his hopeful blue
eyes and responded in a
mild American accent, that was
not altogether unpleasant,
"Forget me."
Seven.
And he never did.

The Truth About [True] Love
by Michael Johnson

I

Ladies, gentlemen, someone's and no ones,
There is one luxury all hope to know,
True Love: the flower that blooms everywhere.
Sadly, it's merged with what fools require,
As the perverse new pretensions it bears,
Now languish Love's name with matters of want.

II

And there's little more the desperate want,
Than to gain importance in the life of someone.
But, stalking their affairs like some digital bear,
Seeking details in dirt that they don't need to know,
Just prompts restraining orders (clearly required),
For Love does not prowl in the dark somewhere.

III

Nor does it spark from affluence elsewhere.
Like Rappers, Hiltons, and the past symbols of want,
Who spawned from ether, claiming fame they
required,
All vanished, were forgotten, and loved by no one.
And as the fall of Bieber's brought our youths to
know,
Love is not granted by the gifts one bears.

IV

Or from shining knights astride horseback bare,
Gallantly racing to damsels distressed somewhere,
High on beguiling myths that at first sight they'll
know,

The warmth of True Love's First Kiss™ to satiate their
wants.

Yet, happily ever after's don't greet these ones,
For meeting our lips is not required.

V

And eyes and parts may claim they require,
The consummate consummation of flesh. Soft. Bare.
Regrettably, moving in and out of someone,
Whilst exclaiming the name of another elsewhere,
Creates awkward pillow talk that nobody wants,
For Love is not bound to people we've known.

VI

To grasp true love there's but five things to know:
Love is free; there are no strings required.
Love's roots dig deeper than earth's concrete wants.
Love's fire burns hotter than any hate we bear.
Love's current flows endlessly everywhere.
True Love can be given to all by one.

VII

So with care, hold tight your special someones,
For there is no greater gift on this earth or elsewhere,
As the serene caress of a heart laid bare.

love poetry contest winners.

submissions.

Pretty Ugly

by Rachel Lynn Walker

I HAVE BEEN CALLED PRETTY
SO OFTEN IN MY LIFE
THAT EVERY ESSENCE OF ME
DEPENDS UPON THE LIGHT.
MY TONGUE TRIPS OFTEN
STRUGGLING TO VOICE THE
DEPTH. WHAT IS INSIDE OF ME?—
NOT A PERSON CARES.
KINDNESS—HUMOR—INTELLECT—
ALL ARE USELESS FACTORS.
IT CREATES A LONGING,
SOMETHING NAMELESS (FEAR OF NAMING),
A DARK AND UGLY THING.
FEELINGS HARSH AND HATEFUL
ABOUND INSIDE OUR MIND.
TRAPPED. TRAPPED. TRAPPED?—
INSIDE A PORCELAIN MIND—
NO FANCY PLASTIC HERE.
RAGE AND DESOLATION— EVERY DAY
GROW LARGER AND LARGER.
SENTENCES STRIPPED LIKE CLOTHES.
I AM AN IMMOBILE CREATURE.
BEAUTY BEGETS THE BEAST.

Demasked
by Amanda Riggle

His bouquet of oaths fades
to withered branches
waning as time passes
into dried sticks
and potpourri.
Decay perfumes the air
while his promises lie forgotten.

Fairytales
by Amanda Riggle

Once upon a time,
I danced in your arms all night,
that was but a dream.



Fetch
by Bonnie Yang



Dark Forest
by Bonnie Yang

Rowling's Use of Mythical Creatures

by Aaron Colerick

People have been fascinated for centuries by the concept of the existence of magical/mythological creatures, and by the idea that everyday animals could have fantastic qualities/powers. The existence of the fantastic beasts that we see in our culture today, are represented as far back as in the hieroglyphics of the Ancient Egyptians. This fascination can be seen in all aspects of our society including religion, literature, and more recently through the use of their portrayal in movies and television. All of these areas of our culture have tried to come up with their own depiction of these mythological creatures, as well as reasoning for the existence of “normal” animals; one of the best examples of this can be seen in the mediaeval Bestiaries. The mediaeval bestiary can best be described as “a compilation of pseudo-science in which fantastic descriptions of real and imaginary animals, birds, and even stones were used to illustrate points of Christian dogma and morals” (Fugelso, 141). In the mediaeval bestiaries, animals and creatures were described both in their physical appearance, as well as in the purpose they served in God's plan. The traditional bestiary is where many of today's modern mythological creatures find their origins; in fact, many authors have a deep knowledge of these bestiaries, which is evident through the way in which they use and depict fantastic creatures in their works. An author who is a great example of this would be J. K. Rowling; throughout the Harry Potter series, several of the mythological creatures Rowling presents can be seen in the traditional bestiaries, and her descriptions of them also closely follow their depictions in the bestiaries.

It is evident that J. K. Rowling is knowledgeable of the tradition of the mediaeval bestiaries in the fact that she develops a modern bestiary that lists the beasts that are present in the Harry Potter series. J. K. Rowling's companion book to the Harry Potter series *Fantastic Beasts & Where to Find Them* is a modern bestiary that presents her mythological creatures, including several creatures that are traditional to bestiaries; it is in the creation of this modern bestiary that Rowling shows her knowledge of the tradition of the bestiary. This claim can be exemplified by Kar Fugelso's statement on Rowling's use of the bestiary: “From the beginning,

it has been clear that Rowling is conversant with the most important elements of the bestiary tradition but not bound to it where it does not suit her artistic purpose . . . the variations she introduces often serve to ground the books' magic to the human world" (151). These variations that Fugelso mentions are important; while it is evident that the style and function of Rowling's Bestiary is derived straight from the mediaeval tradition, there are many key ways in which she varies from this tradition; however these variations in the way in which Rowling describes these creatures are often central to Rowling's use of them throughout the Harry Potter series. The goal of this paper will be to first look at *Fantastic Beasts & Where to Find Them* in order to see in what ways it is similar to, and in what ways it varies from, the traditional mediaeval bestiaries in order to analyze why Rowling may have made these changes. Next I will look at two mythological creatures: Phoenixes and Dragons; these two creatures exist in almost every bestiary and exist in many cultures throughout history. The goal will be to see how J. K. Rowling's depiction of these two magical creatures in her bestiary, as well as throughout the Harry Potter series, differs from how these two creatures are used and portrayed in the mediaeval context, which is important as it will help to demonstrate what purpose the changes Rowling made serves in her series.

Throughout the Harry Potter series, J. K. Rowling demonstrates an excellent knowledge of the tradition of mythical creatures, specifically those represented in the medieval bestiaries; this is best seen in *Fantastic Beasts & Where to Find Them*, the companion bestiary to the Harry Potter series. While *Fantastic Beasts* does a good job of executing the stylistic tradition of what the mediaeval bestiaries were meant to be, there are some key elements that are drastically different in this bestiary than in the mediaeval ones. These changes however often serve an important purpose by adding to J.K. Rowling's series and to her bestiary as a whole. One of the biggest changes in *Fantastic Beasts* is that J. K. Rowling gives her bestiary an author, the fictitious Newt Scamander. Contrarily, the traditional bestiaries had no author; however, the unnamed narrator will often mention other scholars in order to give credibility to his statements. According to Antje vom Lehn, the addition of an author to Rowling's Bestiary

serves an important purpose to its credibility; in his article “Harry Potter, Spiderwick, and the Tradition of the Bestiary” he states,

“The medieval bestiaries have no known author. The anonymous narrator, however, refers back to authorities such as the Physiologus to give weight to his writings. Fantastic Beasts is written by the naturalist himself, Newt Scamander is the authority. This is a good example of how the concept of authorship and authority has changed over time: in the Middle Ages it was not important who had written something as long as references were made to authorities in the past. Nowadays people want to know who the author is” (73).

In the 12th century, when many bestiaries were composed, it was not necessary for the narrator of the work to be named, as long as their points were supported by the works of renowned scholars; contrarily, in today’s society Rowling had to give a name to her narrator in order to bring ethos to her bestiary so that it would be accepted by modern audiences. Another notable difference between Fantastic Beasts and medieval bestiaries is in the types of animals that are included. In the traditional bestiaries, most of the animals described were “normal” animals; this is to say that most of the animals they contain actually exist. In comparison, Fantastic Beasts only contains magical, mythological, and fictional creatures, many of which originate from mythology, world cultures, and several creatures that are of Rowling’s own invention. Only the following beasts were taken directly from the traditional bestiaries:

“Out of the 75 beasts mentioned in Fantastic Beasts, only ten (Basilisk, Dragon, Griffin, Manticore, Merepeople, Phoenix, Salamander, Sea Serpent, Sphinx and unicorn) are taken more or less directly from the repertoire of the bestiaries, which have entries for all of these ten animals. This small number is not surprising as most of the bestiaries’ animals are real, whereas Fantastic Beasts deals exclusively with magical ones” (Antje vom Lehn, 69).

While this is a major variation from tradition, it is more important for the series, as well as for the modern reader, that Fantastic Beasts is solely comprised of magical beasts. Many modern

audiences will be educated if not on the symbolism of traditional animals then they will most likely have knowledge of the descriptions and traditional uses (in literature and mythology) of many of the animals present in the mediaeval bestiaries. In opposition, audiences will know little or nothing about many of the creatures that Rowling presents in her books, thusly making it more important for her to provide information to her audience about the traits and uses of these magical creatures; this change in the substance of her bestiary is thus key in aiding her readers in understanding the world she has created. The next key difference in *Fantastic Beasts* that has been criticized when comparing *Fantastic Beasts* to other bestiaries is its lack of illustrations, the mediaeval bestiaries heavily relied on depictions of the animals they were describing; however, only “A few illustrations are included in *Fantastic Beasts*, there are noticeably fewer of them than in mediaeval bestiaries. Out of the 75 creatures, only nine are illustrated. Many illustrations are included in the mediaeval bestiaries. The source of Barber’s *Bestiary*, for example, has a total of 136 illustrations for 124 entries” (Antje vom Lehn, 70). While this number, only 9 drawings in Rowling’s entire book of beasts, is low compared to tradition, there is arguably a logical reasoning behind this omission; part of what draws readers into the *Harry Potter* series is how Rowling’s depictions of the world she has created sends the readers imagination into overdrive. If Rowling had included images for every creature in her bestiary, it could have taken away from what readers imagined the beasts should look like. When determining what should be included in *Fantastic Beasts*, cutting back the amount of images was an important variation to make from traditional bestiaries, in order to prevent taking away from what readers had imagined Rowling’s beasts should look like. The final important variation to mention in *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, is that there is no Hierarchy present in it; “the traditional bestiaries place creatures they describe into a hierarchy (the lion as king of all animals etc), thus pointing towards the divine order mirrored in the creation. No such hierarchy can be found in fantastic beats other than their ministry classifications according to dangerousness” (Antje vom Lehn, 74). In the traditional mediaeval bestiaries, one of the main focus points is that each animal/creature is explained in relation to all the other animals in the bestiary; in each entry the animal is described in terms of who it is predator to, and who its predators are, thus establishing a hierarchy in the animal kingdom,

which demonstrates where everything fits into God's plan. Contrarily, there is no such hierarchy present in *Fantastic Beasts*; while there are a couple instances where the narrator will say what creatures a beast eats, there is no true hierarchy that is established. The reason this hierarchy is not present in *Fantastic Beasts*, is that it is not necessary; the main reason for this is that since all the beasts in *Fantastic Beasts* are magical, many of them are at the top of their respective food chains, thus making it hard to put them in a hierarchy. Secondly, the mediaeval bestiaries needed a hierarchy in order to put all the creatures in their place in comparison to God; since Rowling's book does not serve this purpose, there is no need for a hierarchy. Unlike the traditional bestiaries, it is not Rowling's purpose to demonstrate the hierarchy of the Christian faith. While there may be several differences between *Fantastic Beasts & Where to Find Them* and the traditional mediaeval bestiaries, there is specific and essential reasoning behind each alteration that J.K. Rowling made. Either way, it is apparent both in *Fantastic Beasts*, as well as throughout the *Harry Potter* series that J. K. Rowling has an in depth knowledge of mythological creatures, as well as their representations in the medieval bestiaries; this is particularly noticeable in the way in which Rowling uses Phoenixes throughout the *Harry Potter* series.

In the *Harry Potter* Series, J. K. Rowling uses the phoenix in a similar way to how it has been portrayed throughout mythology; however, while she introduces variations to the way in which they are traditionally portrayed, the characteristics she adds serve to support the already accepted characteristics of the phoenix, as well as aiding certain aspects of the plotline of her novels. In traditional bestiaries, as well as in mythology, the phoenix is described as, "a bird of Arabia, so called either because its colouring is Phoenician purple, or because there is only one of its kind in the whole world. It lives for upwards of five hundred years, and when it observes that it has grown old, it erects a funeral pyre for itself from small branches of aromatic plants, and having turned to face the rays of the sun, beating its wings, it deliberately fans the flames for itself and is consumed in the fire" (*The Aberdeen Bestiary*). There are also several variations in the way it is described; for instance, in T. H. White's *The Book of Beasts*, he describes the phoenix as being a mix of colors including red and gold. Other than variations in its coloring

though, most bestiaries give a similar description to the one from the Aberdeen Bestiary when describing the phoenix; all of the origin stories agree that the phoenix is Arabic in nature; some sources claim more specifically that it originates in Egyptian culture (The Magical Worlds of Harry Potter). Also, most sources do specify that there is only ever one phoenix that is in existence at a time in the world; this is the main deviation that Rowling makes with phoenixes in the Harry Potter world, as it is implied that there are many of them in existence at the same time.

In order to compare the tradition of the phoenix to how Rowling portrays Phoenixes, one must look at how she depicts the phoenix in *Fantastic Beasts*, so that conclusions can be made on what variations exist, and what purpose these variations serve. In *Fantastic Beasts & Where to Find Them*, the section on phoenixes states:

The phoenix is a magnificent, swan-sized, scarlet bird with a long golden tail, beak, and talons. It nests on mountain peaks and is found in Egypt, India, and China. The phoenix lives to an immense age as it can regenerate, bursting into flames when its body begins to fail and rising again from the ashes as a chick. The phoenix is a gentle creature that has never been known to kill and eats only herbs... it can disappear and reappear at will. Phoenix song is magical; it is reputed to increase the courage of the pure of heart and to strike fear into the hearts of the impure. Phoenix tears have powerful healing properties” (Scamander, 32).

The largest variation that Rowling makes in her magical world is that it is assumed that there are many phoenixes (other than Dumbledore’s phoenix Fawkes) in Harry’s world; while in tradition it is often suggested that only one phoenix is in existence at a time, and when it dies in the fire it has created, a new phoenix is reborn from the ashes (Stouffer, 31). Though the only phoenix that we directly come in contact with in the series is Fawkes, we can assume that there are more phoenixes because of the use of phoenix feathers in wand cores. In *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* the wand maker Ollivander states, “Every Ollivander wand has a core of a magical substance, Mr. Potter. We use unicorn hairs, phoenix tail feathers, and the heartstrings

of dragons. No two Ollivander wands are the same, just as no two unicorns, phoenixes or dragons are quite the same” (Rowling, 84). It is said that only these three items from magical animals are of high enough quality to provide the magical cores necessary to make wands for wizards. Since phoenix feathers are so widely used for wand cores by Ollivander, and since Ollivander uses phoenix in the plural himself, it is easy to assume that there are many phoenixes. This can also be assumed because of the rare phenomena that exists in the Harry Potter series “Priori Incantatem”, which is when two wands that share a core from the same animal are used against each other in combat (in the case of Priori Incantatem appearing in Harry Potter and The Goblet of Fire, the phoenix feather cores in both Harry and Voldemort’s wands come from Dumbledore’s phoenix Fawkes), when this happens the two wands will be unable to fight each-other, but if forced to fight, one wand will force the other to expel its most recent spells, in reverse order, (Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire, 697). Dumbledore also states that this is a very rare phenomena in the wizarding world. This can lead us to the conclusion that if there are only three wand cores, and it is rare that a wand comes in contact with its brother, then there must be many phoenixes in the Harry Potter universe for the phoenix feather wand cores to come from. This artistic deviation of having a large number of phoenixes rather than a single phoenix is significant, as it allows phoenixes to be more prevalent in the novels.

By choosing to make phoenixes a breed of magical bird, rather than the mythological tradition of the phoenix as a solitary creature, was an important stylistic choice for the series as it allowed J. K. Rowling to use phoenixes more prevalently in the series in order to convey another traditional characteristic of the phoenix as a Christ-like figure. Rowling does this in order to aid the representation of Harry as being a Christ-like figure in the series. In traditional literature, mythology, and bestiaries, the phoenix has been represented as a Christ-like figure; it is seen this way, because it is a bird that is not only nearly immortal, but like Christ, it can overcome death and resurrect itself. The Aberdeen Bestiary points out this connection in its discussion on phoenixes:

“Our Lord Jesus Christ displays the features of this bird, saying: 'I have the power to lay down my life and to take it again' (see John, 10:18). If, therefore, the phoenix has the power to destroy and revive itself, why do fools grow angry at the word of God, who is the true son of God, who says: 'I have the power to lay down my life and to take it again'? For it is a fact that our Saviour descended from heaven; he filled his wings with the fragrance of the Old and New Testaments; he offered himself to God his father for our sake on the altar of the cross; and on the third he day he rose again.”

In her series, Rowling adds to this concept of phoenixes as symbolic of the savior, by giving them the power to heal with their tears. Just as Christ had the power to heal those who were in need and deserved his aid, phoenixes in Rowling's series have the power to heal those who are true of heart and deserving. In *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, Harry stays true to his values and continues to be loyal to Dumbledore when facing Tom Riddle (Voldemort), and so Fawkes comes to his aid by healing the fatal bite he had received from the basilisk by crying on his wound. This helps to aid the traditional idea that phoenixes symbolically represent Christ, as is stated in “J. K. Rowling's *Mediaeval Bestiary*”, “To the standard accounts of the phoenix, which emphasize its symbolic representation of Christ's resurrection, Rowling has added the power of its song and the healing property of its tears” (Fugelso, 144). This article points out another characteristic of the phoenix that Rowling adds in variation to mythological depictions of the phoenix that works to help to support the idea of the phoenix as a symbol of God/ Christ. In *Fantastic Beasts*, as was stated previously, Rowling depicts the song of the phoenix as instilling hope in the mighty, and fear in those who are impure of heart. This helps to show that while at times Rowling's interpretation of the phoenix varies from tradition, you can see she has a strong knowledge of how they were represented in the bestiaries since the changes she makes serves the purposes of adding to another traditional aspect ascribed to phoenixes, that they show God's power in the universe. Just as it was said that the presence of Angels (who are messengers of God) could instill terror in those who were impure, Rowling adds to the idea that phoenixes are a symbol of God by allowing its song to aid or diminish the power of those in its presence. Rowling also makes these changes to the tradition of the

Phoenix in order to convey the idea that Harry himself is like a phoenix, and thus, Christ-like. In an interview, J. K. Rowling compared Harry to a phoenix through his breakdown in *Harry Potter and The Order of the Phoenix*, she stated “and now he will rise from the ashes strengthened” (qtd. In Antje vom Lehn, 70). Taking Rowling’s admittance into account of Harry being similar to a phoenix, it is easy to extend this idea to Harry being a Christ-like figure. In the final scenes of the series in *Harry Potter and The Deathly Hallows*, Harry must sacrifice himself to Voldemort and die in order to save the rest of the wizarding world. He then rises again, and is able to save wizard-kind by confronting Voldemort; this is similar to the way that it is said Jesus sacrificed himself in order to save humanity from sin, but then rose again three days later. While there are variations in the way Rowling depicts the phoenix in the *Harry Potter* series, compared to how they have traditionally been depicted throughout mythology and in the medieval bestiaries, the changes she made served to add to the plot of her novels, and in their own way, added to support other characteristics of the phoenix that they have traditionally been ascribed with. Either way, the way in which Rowling depicts and uses phoenixes in her novels shows her in-depth knowledge of literature and mythology.

Another mythological creature that can be seen throughout the *Harry Potter* series, as well as in literature, mythology, and bestiaries from around the world is the dragon. While the depiction of the dragon varies from culture to culture, Rowling’s use of the dragon in her series, as well as in her bestiary, again demonstrates her knowledge of how mythological creatures have traditionally been portrayed in western culture. The traditional western depiction of the dragon describes it as:

“The dragon is the largest of all serpents and of all living things upon earth. It has a small face and narrow blow-holes through which it draws its breath and thrusts out its tongue. Being dragged from caves it rushes into the air, and the air is thrown into commotion on account of it. And it has its strength not in its teeth but in its tail, and it is dangerous for its stroke, rather than for its jaws. It is harmless in the way of poison, but poison is not necessary for it to cause death, because it kills whatever it has entangled in its folds. They are bred in Ethiopia and India, in places where there is perpetual heat” (qtd. In Colbert, 48)

This description from a 7th century bestiary demonstrates the idea of how terrifying dragons are depicted to be in western society. They are often described as the king of all beasts, and are dreaded by humans. This is a sharp contrast from how dragons have traditionally been portrayed in Asian cultures; according to “The Magical Worlds of Harry Potter”, “Dragons are not always the enemies of humans. Especially in Asia, the dragon is benevolent. Most important it is a symbol of leadership . . . people born in the Year of the Dragon are said to be the best leaders, combining a strong will with a generous nature” (Colbert, 49). While still possessing many of the same physical attributes, the Asian dragon is generally harmless to humans, and is used as a symbol of strength and integrity. Before we can look at how Rowling’s use of dragons compares to their traditional function in mythology, we must look at how Rowling describes them in *Fantastic Beasts*: “Probably the most famous of all magical beasts, dragons are among the most difficult to hide. The female is generally larger and more aggressive than the male, though neither should be approached by any but highly skilled and trained wizards. Dragon hide, blood, heart, liver, and horn all have highly magical properties, but dragon eggs are defined as Class A Non-Tradeable Goods. There are ten breeds of dragon, though these have been known to interbreed on occasion, producing rare hybrids” (Scamander, 10). Rowling’s portrayal of dragons in *Fantastic Beasts* is similar to its traditional interpretation in its powerful strength and ferocity. However, she does add magical qualities to the dragon that are not usually seen in them. In Rowling’s novels, many different parts of the dragon have magical qualities, which wizards often use in spells and potions, as well as to make clothing. While this is a variation from tradition, it is not that large of a variation; every description of dragons describes their strength and power, so it is easy to see how in a magical world dragons would possess many magical qualities. Furthermore, this is one of those instances in which Karl Fugelso was referring when he stated that the changes Rowling made served her artistic purpose; the magical properties that she gives to dragons become central to certain aspects of the story line, as well as everyday wizarding life in the world she has created. An example of this is the two key dragon parts that are used by wizards in the series: dragon heartstring and

dragon hide. Dragon heartstring, which is a muscle that protects the heart (Stouffer, 50), is one of the only three objects powerful enough to create an Ollivander wand core. It seems fitting that such a traditionally powerful beast, would be one of the only animals strong enough to produce the type of magic wielded in the world Rowling has created. Secondly, the strength of dragon hide, while central to wizarding life, reflects the traditional mythological depiction of the dragon's strength; only the skin of dragons is powerful enough to make protective clothing for wizards to wear when dealing with certain dangerous spells, potions and creatures. While J.K. Rowling adds certain magical properties to the dragons that are present in the Harry Potter series, she does this in a way that not only facilitates certain aspects of her story, but also adds to the traditional characteristics of the dragon that are present throughout mythology.

Though Rowling makes a few changes in the way dragons have traditionally been depicted, the way she uses them symbolically in her novels is accurate to the way they have been historically used. One of the traditional ways that dragons have been used in literature is to help the protagonist prove him/herself as a true hero; "dragons are probably the best-known magical creatures in literature. Usually dangerous and terrifying, they are often the most challenging foe a hero can face" (Colbert, 48). Since the dragon is such a powerful beast, it has often been the final task a hero must face in literature; this has been seen as far back as in "Beowulf" and Arthurian Literature, and can be seen as recently as in modern novels such as "The Hobbit"; in these tales, dragons are used at the climax of the story as a vehicle for the hero/protagonist to prove himself. Rowling exhibits this same tradition in a slightly different way in the first task of the triwizard tournament in Harry Potter and The Goblet of Fire. Many of those around Harry, including his closest friend Ron, doubted not only the truthfulness of his claim that he did not enter the triwizard tournament, but they also believed he was not prepared for a test of that great a magnitude being only 14 years of age at the time. It is for this reason that Rowling uses a Dragon for the first task the champions must get past; using such a traditionally challenging foe shows those around Harry, as well as Rowling's readers, that he is more than capable of competing in the tournament even at his young age since he is able to "defeat" his dragon. In addition, it is upon seeing how difficult and dangerous the tournament

is that finally causes many of those close to Harry to realize that he could not have wanted to compete in the tournament. Aside from using a dragon to show that Harry is a worthy competitor in the triwizard tournament, Rowling also uses dragons in a traditional way by making them the guarders of treasure. In mythology, dragons are often described as loving, hoarding, and guarding treasure; in fact, David Colbert describes dragons as a “reptilian creature whose love of shiny objects leads it to plunder treasure, especially brilliant jewels and gold” (Colbert, 48). One of the most classic depictions of this characteristic of dragons, would be in the epic “Beowulf”; at the end of this epic, Beowulf’s last stand is against a dragon who has a huge stash of treasure, which Beowulf wants to steal in order to secure the financial future of his people. Rowling depicts dragons in a similar way, except instead of making them hoarders of treasure; she uses them as the guarders of treasure in the wizarding bank Gringotts. According to “The Idiots Guide To Harry Potter” dragons are essential in the wizarding banking system due to their love of gold, and due the fact that it generally takes over a dozen wizards to overcome a dragon, so no one person could get to treasure guarded by a dragon (Stouffer, 33). This is another great example of the way Rowling exemplifies her knowledge of literary tradition, but adds her own twist to tradition to serve her artistic purpose by having dragons be controlled by wizard-kind, so that their traditional skills can be used for the benefit of the wizarding world she has created.

By analyzing the way in which J.K. Rowling uses phoenixes and dragons throughout her novels, as well as in her bestiary, it becomes obvious that Rowling has an in depth knowledge of literature and mythological tradition. Her symbolic uses of phoenixes and dragons in the Harry Potter series is nearly parallel to the way in which they were traditionally portrayed in the mediaeval bestiaries. While there are slight variations in the way she presents these creatures when compared to tradition, the changes she makes serves the purpose of supporting her storyline, or extending another of the creature’s symbolic representations. One of the greatest examples of this is through the way in which she alters the phoenix; while in most descriptions of the phoenix both in mythology and the bestiaries only one phoenix is in existence at a time, making the phoenix a breed of birds allows Rowling to not only use them more prevalently in

her novel, but also helps her to convey the traditional symbolic representation of the phoenix as a Christ-like figure. The existence of Rowling's modern Bestiary "Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them" is another great example of Rowling's fantastic knowledge of the tradition of the Bestiary. Upon inspection of Fantastic Beasts, it is obvious that it was modeled after the mediaeval bestiaries. Even though Rowling made a few key changes to its construction, these changes allowed for its acceptance in a modern market, and helped serve the purpose of being a companion to the Harry Potter series. After an in depth analysis of several of the key beasts that are present in the Harry Potter series, and comparing Rowling's portrayal of these mythological creatures to their traditional use in mythology and in the mediaeval bestiaries, it becomes apparent that J.K. Rowling has a thorough understanding of the tradition of the bestiary, how mythological creatures have been symbolically used in literature throughout history, and is adept at artistically changing these traditional beasts in a way that at the same time furthers her novels, and supports their traditional symbolic use.

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