

Ron Garmon

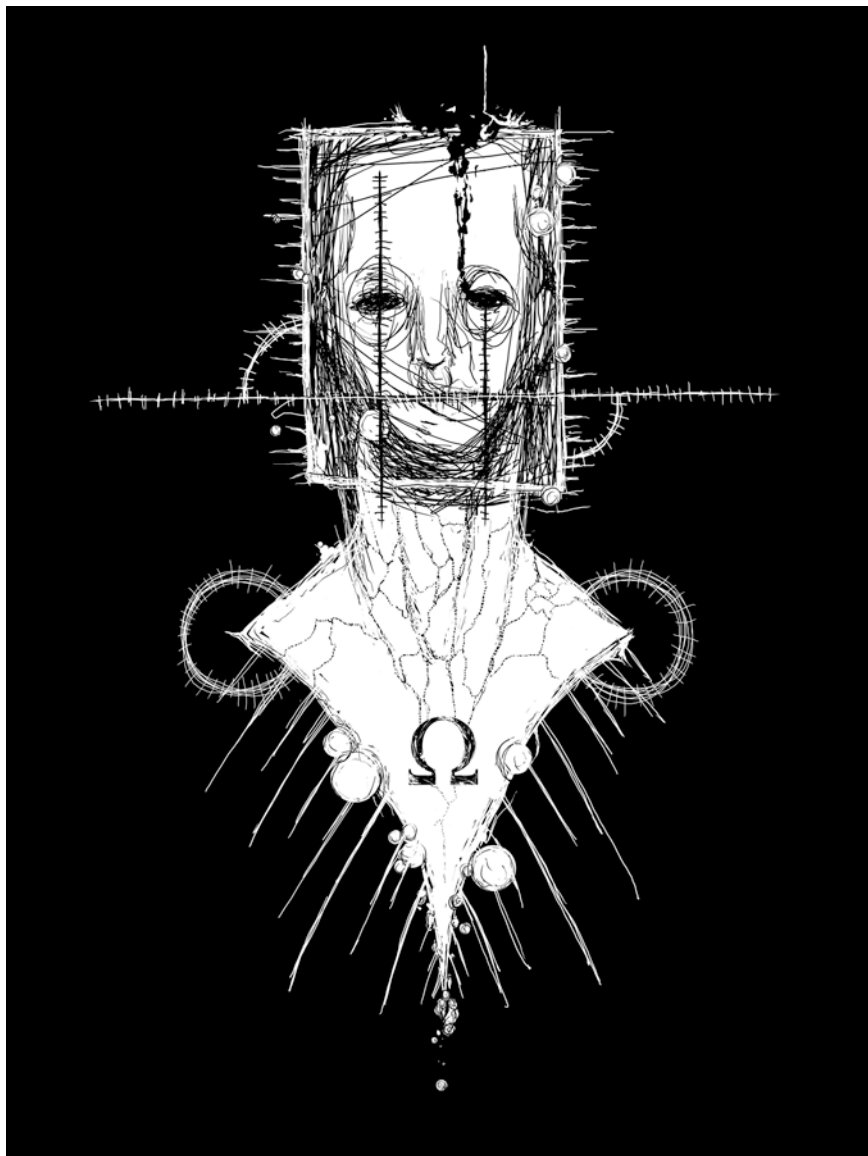
Bestiary Annex
Some Few Late Additions to
The Book of Imaginary Beings
by Jorge Luis Borges

Bewilderbeeste

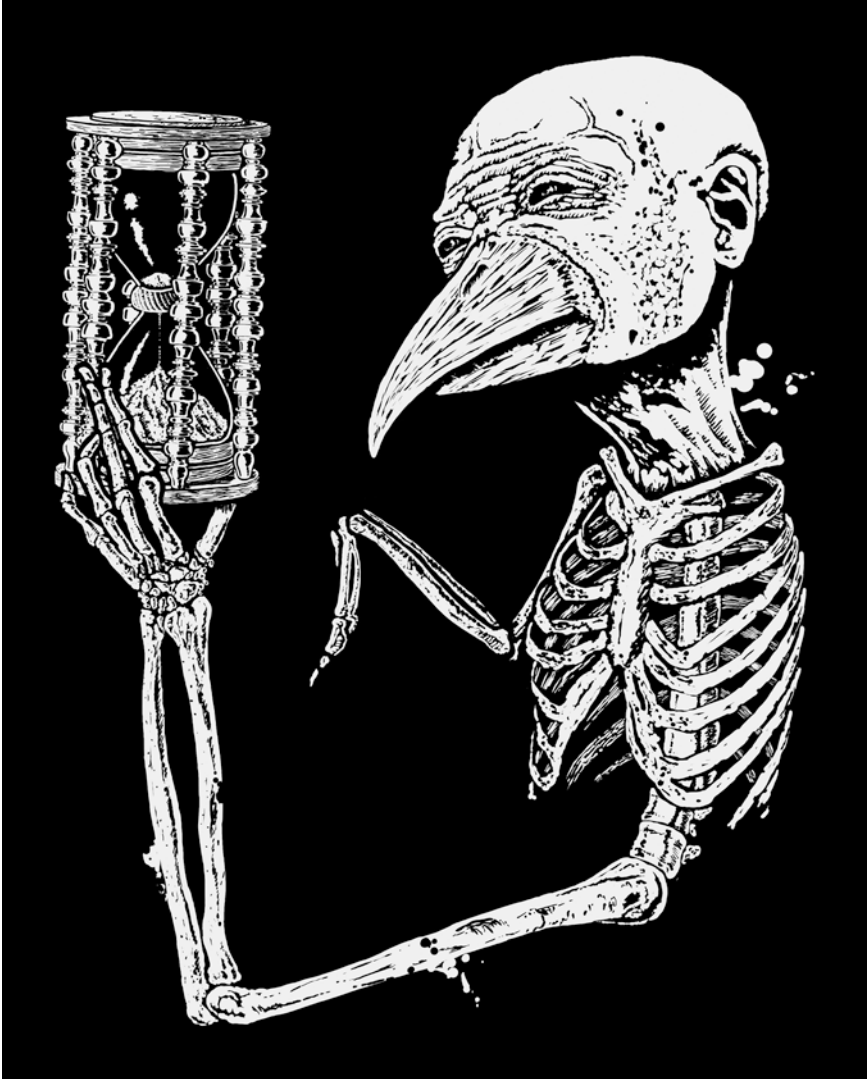
First sighted in 1983 on *Teddy Boys Don't Knit*, the next-to-last LP by ex-Bonzo Dog (and notable English eccentric) Vivian Stanshall, this creature has no definite shape and only a conjectural existence.

Chupacabra

The name literally translating from Spanish as “goat sucker,” these fierce, razor-toothed creatures began to turn up all over the planet after the first one was spotted in Puerto Rico in 1990. Such critters are well-known to us from a thousand gaudy paperbacks and tabloid news stories spreading the terrible, wonderful news about Bigfoot, hot-rodding aliens, the Loch Ness Monster; even the Dover Demon, a truly ugly piece of cryptozoology seen lumbering around Dover, Delaware by teenagers over two nights in 1977. A hairless, swollen-headed quadruped about the size of a large dog, this Demon bulks poodle-like alongside the Chupacabra. Though skeptics swear the thing is little more than a mangy- if steroid - coyote, the sum of what we know about this beast suggests something more ursine, with reptilian skin, sharp fangs, jagged spines along the length of the back, as well as an accompanying sulfurous odor and strength enough to bound up to six meters like a kangaroo. They're suspected of half the unexplained goat killings from Maine to the Pampas, though their tastes take in cattle, sheep and even turkeys, with each animal drained of blood through a triangle of neat puncture wounds found on the desiccated carcass. Dead chupacabra are on display in



two places in Texas and scholars on two continents continue to pour over scattered widely scattered chunks of the mutant predator's DNA. What little we do know suggests the creatures can die from poisoning or being struck by automobiles and that vultures will feast on their dead flesh with efficiency and ecumenical relish.



The Fouke Monster

First heard from as “The Jonesville Monster,” later as the “Southern Sasquatch,” this hairy terror of southwest Arkansas was appropriated by Z-grade impresario Charles B. Pierce for his supremely awful 1972 movie *The Legend of Boggy Creek*. Despite claims of the beast towering over ten feet tall and weighing 800 lbs, this shy and grubby cousin to Bigfoot and the yeti is likely a common skunk ape. Seldom ranging over seven feet in height, skunk apes have been sighted for decades ranging over the more desolate reaches of the U.S. South in search of garbage and animal carcasses. Some say this is part of the creature’s inherently antisocial nature, while others posit an entire species might well be living in the swamps and far back hills of Dixie; a cryptozoological libel on the region’s noted hospitality, but a positive boon to little roadside stands that sell coffee mugs and whatnots. Whatever the truth of skunk apes or of their social organization (if any), these monsters await but the coming of razors and television to fit them for Glenn Beck or the United Daughters of the Confederacy.

The Hanged Man

Also known as “The Traitor” and a longtime horror-movie portent of doom and passivity, the Twelfth Arcana found in most Tarot decks is typically bad news for the object of the exercise. A.E. Waite, designer of the Rider-Waite deck (the one most commonly used by English-speaking mystics), begs us note that “... the tree is living wood, with leaves thereon... the figure as a whole suggests life in suspension and not death.” Cold comfort indeed to any placed in this precarious situation, but a boon to clerics, hangmen, gibbet birds and anyone else living by the consolations of philosophy. Since the universality of his situation parallels humanity’s common fate as wormfood, the Hanged Man is everyman in his own imperially imperiled self and no man in particular. For context (and the God rumored to lurk in the details), we must look to judges, lawyers, executioners, and journalists once the subject is in the hands of the embalmer. It seems plain enough that for every Haymarket rioter or Mom ‘n’ Pop espionage team capitally put to death, thousands of plain and extraordinary villains likewise dance the Nuremberg Boogaloo. Neck-stretched outlaws like Ned Kelly are often celebrated in song and tale, but few care to dwell upon the fate of William Joyce, remembered to history as Nazi propagandist “Lord Haw Haw”. Dispatched by Albert Pierrepoint, celebrated “chief hangman” of the United Kingdom and a jovial bureaucratic monster in his own right, this runaway American and lifelong turncoat used the great man’s scaffold for a last nasally ac-

cented endorsement of fascism before the trap sprang. Alas, Joyce's bound weight burst his face along the seam of an old brawling scar, scarcely the best possible advertisement for Pierrepont's much-lauded professional skill. Indeed, the practice of hanging human beings is of such ancient origin that one is surprised by the paltry attention given to questions of aesthetics and showmanship. H.L. Mencken, writing in his memoirs, admits to being a fan of hangings from his earliest days as cub reporter at the city jail in Baltimore, treating this free municipal jollification put on for the press with the same superb lightness of heart he lent to leg-shows and speeches by stewed politicians. One imagines the stoutish young German-American, blue eyes brightened and cheeks pinked by beer, attending to every last detail of the terminal shock and involuntary heavings of the (mostly African-American) condemned, the delicacy of critical perception honed by civic-minded repetition. The reporter had nothing but praise for the humane jailhouse quack that shot one hysterical prisoner with a horse-killing dose of morphine just before execution, but this fierce opponent of lynching gave his highest marks for the performance of four "blackamoors" municipally strung up in a daring coup de theatre. He was then eighteen years old and it was his first such show, but memory of the horribly twitching face of one man who'd lost his black hood going through the trap was delicious enough for him to remember in old age. Such a quick-witted connoisseur of the rope might've left something at least as substantial as Ambrose Bierce's evil ditty "Arbor Day"-

*Hasten, children, black and white,
Celebrate the yearly rite,
Every child plant a tree.
It will one day grow to be,
Tall and strong enough to bear,
A school superintendant hanging there.*

Man from Mars

Namechecked in a thousand bits of popular culture starting from Orson Welles' radio chronicle of the 1936 invasion, The Man from Mars has lived large in North American pop lyrics. "Flying Saucer Rock 'n' Roll" saw rockabilly pioneer Billy Lee Riley crediting the music's entire invention to "little green men" from the Red Planet. Though scarcely a meter tall, these "real hepcats" made a vivid first impression on first contact, rolling out sax, drums and a will-to-party impressive to a bon vivant like Billy Lee, who cut several platters and even briefly toured with them. Riley himself scarcely needed a boost in the charisma department and one might well imagine the