

Twitter Thread by Erik Wade



Erik Wade

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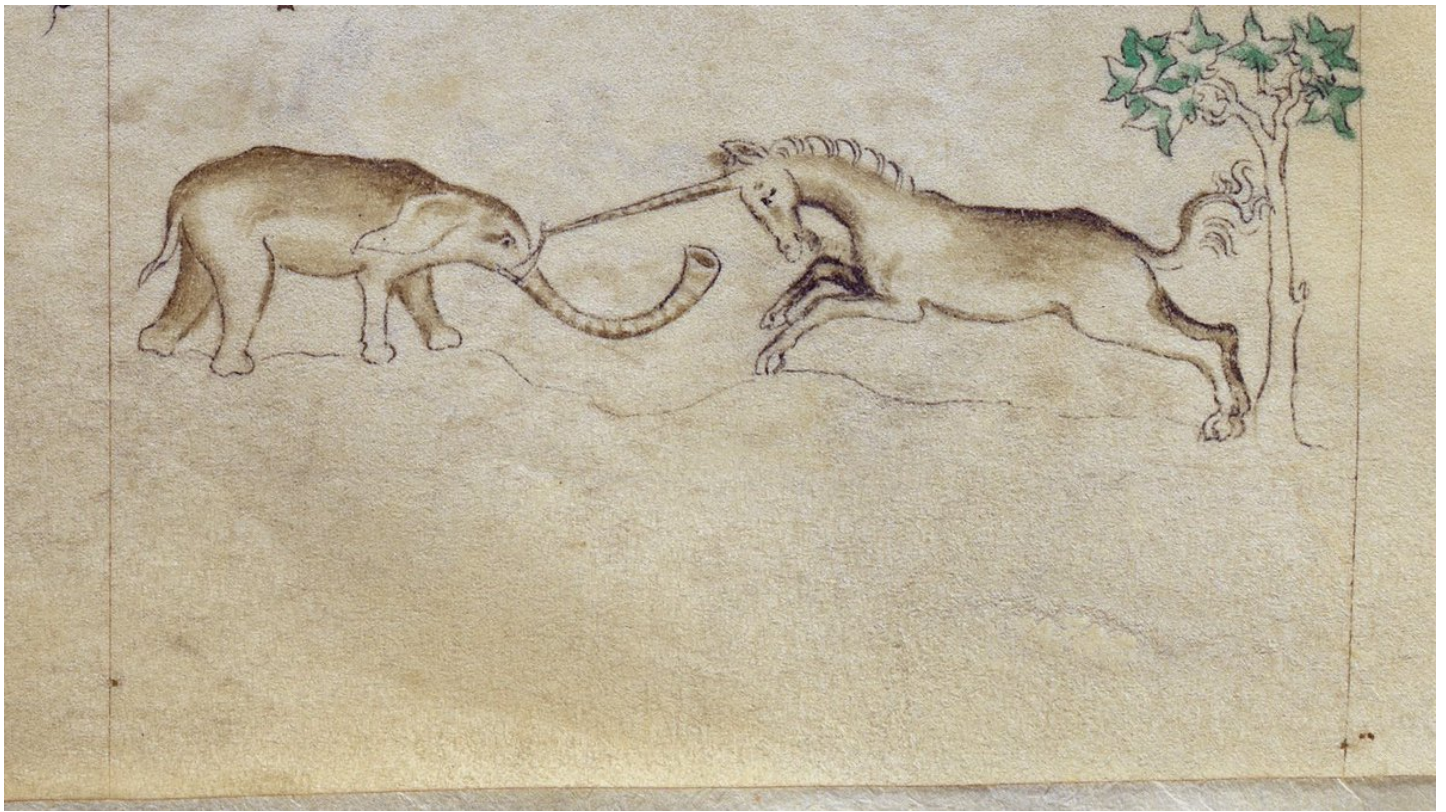
Modern viewers may be horrified by medieval images of people hunting unicorns, but--to judge by medieval images of unicorns--medieval people may have seen unicorns as a little....murderous.

(BL, MS Sloane 3544, f. 4) #MedievalTwitter



When not being hunted, medieval unicorns mostly seem to be attacking other creatures, like this poor elephant.

(BL, MS Royal 2 B VII, f. 100v)



Or these bears.

(BL, MS Royal 10 E IV, f. 157)



Or this lion.

(BL, MS Royal 2 B VII, f. 190v)



Here's a whole troop of them fighting Alexander the Great.

(BL, MS Royal 15 E VI, f. 21)



Fighting this man.

(Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 828, f. 7v)



Here's a common allegorical image, where the tree represents a person's life and the unicorn represents.....death.

(Morgan, MS M.729, f. 354v)



Here's another version of the same image.

(BL, MS Additional 37049, f. 19v)

Behold here as you may se
 A man standing in a tree
 And me vnycorne fast fast pkyss hy
 I caused hy i pe tre to rym
 And be netye hy was a dragon fell
 Gapyng hy redy for to gylt
 And delyte molise t a blak y tre gnallyng
 Besly hy doone for to bryng
 And hese vndyr pe rote of yre tre
 fforne spent lokte onte sakes ho
 ye tre stode opou a sodde al grene
 And a dghadde myre a bolste it seene
 itt for al pe pels he y he stand m
 A gony drop he hasted hy for to dym
 And lytel hede of al m pels dos he take
 ffor dym drop he purpos meny to make
 yis man betokene both man t wyfe
 And ye tre betokene of paine y lyfe
 ye vnycorne y hasty ma for to kyll
 Betokene deth pat fla hy d pll
~~ye dghadde is to be vndyr stand~~
 ye dghadde myre is to be vndyr stande
 yis dghadde pat vi is fyle t flakad
 ye tyme y opou dghill grobe pe tre
 ffor ye fforne souper as zemya se
 Betokene man's body i yis dghadde here
 t is made of foure elymet sere
 ye dghill t ye blak molise is y ungetty day
 yis man's lyfe fast dghast a day
 And ye gapyng dragon as y zode telle
 Is vndyr stand y mounte of helle
 En man's saule besh to dym
 yat her dos dye in dely hy
 And ye hony drop vndyr stand may be
 ye dghill dghast t vanyte
 for y dghill men labos both day t nyght
 And for to gyt it dghat alle yam myght
 And y paine selfe yai for gylt
 And al pe pels yat yai an t lott
 yis yis coonfol man
 yis zode lyfyn
 yis ffor yis
 yis y



"You've got to come down sometime, dude!"

(Morgan, MS M.763, f. 251r)



Here's St Anthony being tormented by demons, including one in the shape of a very threatening unicorn.

(BnF, MS Français 313, f. 298)



"I've got you cornered, buddy."

(Morgan, MS M.1093, f. 154r)



They even attack marginal decorations!

(Morgan, MS W.82, f 205v)



More marginal carnage.

(BL, MS Additional 42130 f. 15)



A unicorn gleefully menaces a terrified lion.

(Bodleian Library, MS Douce 48, f. 221v)



In conclusion, medieval unicorns woke up every day and chose violence.

