Babette Pütz, "Entry on: A Griffin’s Feather [Drachenreiter: Die Feder eines Greifs] (Dragon Rider, 2) by Cornelia Funke", peer-reviewed by Elizabeth Hale and Daniel A. Nkemleke. Our Mythical Childhood Survey (Warsaw: University of Warsaw, 2018). Link: http://omc.obta.al.uw.edu.pl/myth-survey/item/100. Entry version as of October 31, 2026.

Cornelia Funke

A Griffin’s Feather [Drachenreiter: Die Feder eines Greifs] (Dragon Rider, 2)

Germany (2016)

TAGS: Cambyses Centaur(s) Charybdis Cyclops / Cyclopes Dragons Griffins / Gryphons Medusa Nymphs Ouranos / Uranus Pegasus Phoebe Phoenix (Bird) Scylla Sphinx





We are still trying to obtain permission for posting the original cover.

General information	
Title of the work	A Griffin’s Feather [Drachenreiter: Die Feder eines Greifs] (Dragon Rider, 2)
Country of the First Edition	Germany
Country/countries of popularity	English Speaking World, Germany
Original Language	German
First Edition Date	2016
First Edition Details	Cornelia Funke, *Die Feder eines Greifs*. Hamburg: Dressler Verlag, 2016, 414 pp.
ISBN	9783791500119
Genre	Fantasy fiction, Fiction, Novels
Target Audience	Crossover
Author of the Entry	Babette Pütz, Victoria University of Wellington, babette.puetz@vuw.ac.nz
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Creators



Cornelia Funke by Cruccone, 2008. Retrieved from Wikimedia Commons, licensed under CC BY 3.0 (accessed: December 16, 2021).

Cornelia Funke , b. 1958
(Author)

Cornelia Funke, born in Dorsten, North Rhine-Westphalia (Germany), is the most successful contemporary German author of children's and Young Adult literature, best known for her Inkworld trilogy. Her books have been translated into 37 languages and a number of her novels have been adapted for theatre productions and made into films or movies. Cornelia Funke has received numerous prizes for her work, in particular she was named the worldwide most influential German by *Times* magazine in 2005.

Before writing her own books, Cornelia Funke worked as a youth social worker and illustrator of children's books. She lived most of her grown-up life in Hamburg and moved to California in 2005. She writes her books in German. Since 2012, she has been one of the German ambassadors to the UN Decade on Biodiversity.

Source:

Official website (accessed: July 3, 2018).

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Bio prepared by Babette Pütz, Victoria University of Wellington,

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Additional information

Adaptations	*Die Feder eines Greifs*, read by Rainer Stecker, appeared as an audiobook with *Atmende Bücher*, Hamburg 2016. *Atmende Bücher* is Cornelia Funke's own Audiobook label.
Translation	English: *The Griffin's Feather*, trans. Anthea Bell, New York, NY: Chichen House, 2019, 432 pp.
Summary	*Die Feder eines Greifs* is the sequel to *Drachenreiter / Dragon Rider* (1997, Engl. transl. 2004). The main character of the novel is 14-year-old Ben who was also the protagonist of *Dragon Rider*. In the first book, he was rescued by the dragon Lung / Firedrake as an orphan in London and became his dragon rider. Now Ben has been adopted by the Wiesengrund / Greenbloom family and is living with them in Norway, where they run a sanctuary for mythical (and non-mythical) creatures, MÍMAMEIDR, as part of FREEFAB, an international organisation for the protection of mythical creatures. New arrival is A`nemos, the last pegasus, who also comes with three eggs in which his foals are growing. After the death of their mother, the eggshells cannot grow, while the foals inside get bigger by the day. Only the 'sun feather' of a griffin contains a substance which can make the eggshells expand, so the foals can survive. It is a race against time to find and acquire such a feather. Ben and his step-father Barnabas Wiesengrund, together with the troll Hothbrodd, Fliegenbein / Twigleg the Homunkulus (a very small human, created by an alchemist) and the fearless pilot-rat Lola Grauschwanz / Lola Graytail fly via Turkey and India to the Indonesian Island Pulau Bulu, where they find the griffins. Unwittingly, they get involved in a power struggle between the cruel griffin leader Kraa and the colourful griffin Shrii who rebels against Kraa's leadership. (The rumors are that Shrii is colourful because either his father was no griffin, but Garuda [the Hindu legendary bird who is the mount of Lord Vishnu], or a Pelangi bird from Sumatra [a colourful bird which only appears when a rainbow appears in the sky].) Each of these griffins has a following of various kinds of monkeys and Kraa is followed by a number of other griffins. Shrii and his monkeys are overcome and imprisoned by Kraa. The griffin leader's followers also capture Ben and his companions,

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intending to sell them to poachers.

Meanwhile, Ben's dragon Lung / Firedrake has left his dragon rider to return to his home, the Rim of Heaven, to be with dragon Maja who is also sitting on eggs, from which their young are expected to hatch soon. Ben had lied to Lung in order to protect him, concealing that they were going to find griffins who are the deadly arch-enemies of dragons. But when the dragon senses that Ben is in danger, he flies after Ben and finds him on Pulau Bulu. With him comes a young dragon, nicknamed Tattoo. On the island, Tattoo befriends another captured boy, named Winston, and takes him on as his dragon rider. Ben now realises that he should not have lied to Lung, even though he tried to protect him, but let him make his own decision. He also understands that they need the dragons to free them and get the sun feather. The two dragons and their riders fight and overcome Kraa, however, Tattoo loses control and turns the griffin into stone with his fire, so that his sun feathers are lost. But Shrii bribes another, very reluctant griffin, who also has sun feathers, to give them one. They bring the feather back to MÍMAMEIDR and use it on the pegasus eggs, giving the pegasus foals the space they need to grow before they can hatch and so saving the last of their kind.

In addition to the pegasi and griffins, a number of other creatures from Greek and Roman mythology are mentioned in passing: Charybdis, Cyclops, Medusa, Nymph, Phoenix, Skylla, Sphinx, as part of a general mythological ambiance common to many fantasy novels. We also encounter fabulous creatures from other mythologies, such as Scandinavian, Dutch, English, and Scottish types of kobolds, Indonesian and Norwegian kraken, various Scandinavian water creatures, kelpies, dwarfs, and numerous fabulous creatures of the author's own invention.

Analysis

Die Feder eines Greifs is the long-awaited sequel to Dragon Rider, which, after its translation into English in 2004, stayed on the New York Times bestseller list for 78 weeks. Together with the English translation of *The Thief Lord / Herr der Diebe*, this book was the author's breakthrough in the English-speaking world.

Die Feder eines Greifs deals with the topic of the protection of endangered species, poaching/animal trading and environmentalism in general, which is a much-debated topic worldwide and one that is

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close to the author's heart. Besides that, the novel deals with typical children's and Young Adult literature topics, such as friendship, family, loyalty, dealing with "the other", standing up for what is right, truth, and hope. Its focus and settings are international.

Mythical creatures from various mythical traditions are incorporated in this book to fit with and add to the general mythical context of this fantasy novel about a boy and his special relationship with a dragon. While several mythical creatures are just names as part of this general background, griffins, pegasi, and (briefly) a centaur play larger roles.

Pegasi are employed as a species that is much loved and well-known to the young readers of this book. Pegasi here are depicted as an almost extinct species, and it will be obvious to readers of any age why these rare and beautiful flying horses must be saved from extinction, so they are part of the ecological message of the novel and serve as the catalyst that sets the action of the book in motion. The pegasi themselves are depicted here as vulnerable creatures and have a rather inactive role. The three foals are still confined to their eggs and are in great danger and their father is devastated by grief for the death of their mother and with worry for the foals' safety. In order to distract him from his grief, he is given a job in the border patrol of MÍMAMEIDR, which he fulfills dutifully and efficiently. When Ben's step-sister runs to him to give him the good news that they have the "sun-feather," he allows her to ride on his back, when he flies to his eggs. He differs from the more active Pegasus of Greek myth with his divine connections, who serves as a carrier of Zeus' thunderbolts and as the mount of Bellerophon, especially when he fought the Chimaera. However, the reader is aware that A`nemos is somewhat paralyzed by his grief and worry and wonders what he and his foals will do when all has ended well. Pegasi in this novel mostly stand for creatures threatened by extinction and for their great beauty.

The griffins are depicted as awe-inspiring, intelligent, and beautiful, but also very cruel, proud, gold-loving, and corrupt creatures. They are immensely strong and dangerous with their enormous bird beaks, lion-body, and biting snake tails. They are the arch-enemy of dragons because of a legend that says that griffins who drink dragon's blood will become immortal. On the island where much of the plot of this book is set, the griffins have a strict hierarchy with a leader, Kraa, who does not tolerate any opposition. They build highly decorated nests, use language, and have monkey servants, who depict the griffins' great deeds in paintings and do their bidding. They trade with

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poachers, providing them with rare animals in exchange for the gold that griffins love so much. On the other hand, there is Shrii who is openly opposed to Kraa, willing to hear out Ben and his friends, is concerned about the safety of his followers, is brave, but prefers to avoid violence. He is also disinterested in gold or riches and not corrupt. Funke's griffins are exaggerated versions of ancient depictions of griffins. Ancient griffins are said to dig up gold and guard it, but we do not hear about them being corrupted by gold. They also are known for their great strength, one source even mentioning that they are stronger than dragons (Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* 3.48).

One centaur appears in *Die Feder eines Greifs*: Tyra Raskerwint, a female centaur. She is very old (but looks ageless) and extremely knowledgeable. She is an old friend of Ben's step-mother Vita Wiesengrund, with whom she has had many adventures. Vita asks her to come to MÍMAMEIDR to talk to A`nemos, as she also lost a partner and so might be able to help him cope with his grief. She confirms that obtaining a griffin's 'sun feather' is the only way to rescue the pegasus foals but also the great danger of this quest. In her age and wisdom, Raskerwint is like Centaurs in Greek myth, but Funke has made her female. She only has a very short appearance in this book.

Furthermore, a scene in which Twigleg dreams of Ben being ripped limb from limb and him trying to puzzle the pieces together may possibly refer to that at the end of Euripides, *Hippolytus* and to Pentheus' fate in Euripides' *Bacchai*.

Classical, Mythological, Traditional Motifs, Characters, and Concepts	Cambyses Centaur(s) Charybdis Cyclops / Cyclopes Dragons Griffins / Gryphons Medusa Nymphs Ouranos / Uranus Pegasus Phoebe Phoenix (Bird) Scylla Sphinx
Other Motifs, Figures, and Concepts Relevant for Children and Youth Culture	Adventure Animals Character traits Environment Family Friendship Good vs evil Humanity Travel Truth and lies Values

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