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Briefly Noted: *Encyclopedia of Mythical Objects* by Theresa Bane

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Online Winter Seminar

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Additional Keywords

Mythlore; briefly noted; Encyclopedia of Mythical Objects by Theresa Bane; John Zacharias

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MYTHICAL OBJECTS. Theresa Bane. Jefferson NC: McFarland, 2020. 227 p. ISBN 9781476676883. \$13.21 (e-book edition).

Theresa Bane's *Encyclopedia of Mythical Objects* provides an introductory text to mythical objects from various and diverse mythologies. The encyclopedia includes over 1,000 objects from numerous traditions/mythologies. The introduction sets out Ms. Bane's scope for her project which does not include "items that are modern literary and intellectual creations" but rather "items that were considered real and taken from real texts" (Bane 1). In other words, you will not find entries on the One Ring, the Silmarils, Lucy's healing cordial, or anything from other modern fantasy/mythopoetic authors such as Ursula K. Le Guin's or George R.R. Martin's worlds. Despite this criteria, I curiously could not find an entry on Tarot Cards.

What we do find in the encyclopedia are "the amazing and powerful items utilized by the gods of the world's various religions" (Bane 1). Many of the entries are recognizable mythical objects that will be familiar to many readers such as Excalibur, the Holy Grail or Thor's Hammer. Perhaps most interesting is the diverse range of entries from Chinese, Norse, Icelandic, Islamic, Zoroastrian, Irish, Japanese, Greek and other mythologies. Each entry is relatively brief and contains references to a bibliography that provides additional information for more in-depth research and further reading, if so desired. Given the sizeable range of topics and relatively brevity of entries, the encyclopedia serves as a starting point to mythical objects rather than a deep-dive reference work.

As a lay reader and not a specialist, the encyclopedia captivated my interest in reading about the many mythical objects such as Thor's Hammer that have seen popularity in recent years. It is also interesting to see how the original tale differs from what many are now familiar with (i.e. Thor's hammer, Mjlonir, would be used with a set of iron gloves known as Jarngreipr). Overall, I found myself enjoying the many diverse entries, in particular, the ones I was least familiar with such as the Vel from Hindu mythology (an invisible javelin of the god of war, Karthikeya) or the Ochain from Celtic mythology (the magical shield of Conchobar) or my personal favorite, the beer of oblivion from Finnish mythology (the drink given to individuals who entered the underworld, Tuonela).

—John Zacharias