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Flying Snakes and Griffin Claws: And Other Classical Myths, Historical Oddities, and Scientific Curiosities by Adrienne Mayor

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FLYING SNAKES AND GRIFFIN CLAWS: AND OTHER CLASSICAL MYTHS, HISTORICAL ODDITIES, AND SCIENTIFIC CURIOSITIES.

Adrienne Mayor. Princeton University Press, 2022. 978-0-691-21118-3. 420 pp. \$19.95.

ADRIENNE MAYOR, ONE OF THE 2021 FINALISTS for the Mythopoeic Scholarship Award in Myth and Fantasy Studies for *Gods and Robots: Myths, Machines, and Ancient Dreams of Technology*, describes herself as a “classical folklorist and historian of ancient science,” exploring “the borderlands of myth, history, and science” (1)—“ancient popular culture,” as she calls it in a later essay (133). This volume collects fifty widely assorted essays spanning several decades of her career. Topics of potential interest to *Mythlore’s* readers abound: lore about dolphin/human friendships in antiquity and Siegfried’s dragon, Amazon queens and ghost ships, poison honey and foot fetishes, early tourists and urban legends, tattooing in antiquity and panic about the smallpox vaccine. A standout is her long essay “Hunting Griffins”; in the form of an imaginary letter to a paleontologist, she collects and ruminates on griffin lore and related “unclassified residua” (119) across cultures and centuries. Fans of Lois McMaster Bujold may experience a jolt of recognition reading the story of Chiomara (184). And as a former ferret owner myself, I appreciated Mayor’s two essays on small mustelids and the humans who attempt to live with them. A good bedstand book, for dipping into at will for a bite-sized diversion.

—Janet Brennan Croft

