

Encyclopedia of Demons in World Religions and Cultures

Teresa Bane. *Encyclopedia of Demons in World Religions and Cultures*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2012. 416 pp. \$75.00. Hardcover. ISBN: 9780786463602.

Demonology comprises a rather unwieldy study, and the paucity of reference materials that deal with the subject welcomes the approach of scholars. Bane's previous work (*Encyclopedia of Vampires*) suggests this broader subject, and she proceeds warily. As she intends to produce an encyclopedia and not a handbook, guidance on either cultus or magic related to her subjects is excluded. Her work eschews data from demonic possession narratives, New Age writings newer than the 1980s, and both literary or pop cultural sources, possibly in conscious contrast to Rosemary Guiley's 2009 *Encyclopedia of Demons and Demonology*. On account of their being prone to "opinion and also unverifiable," Bane handles religious texts suspiciously (2). She singles out, from a fat (though not annotated) bibliography, a handful of works especially contributing to her subject and approach, including Davidson's *Dictionary of Angels Including the Fallen Angels*, Guazzo's *Compendium Maleficarum*, James I's *Demonologie*, Getting's *Dictionary of Demons*, the Mack's *Field Guide to Demons*, and Baskin's *Satanism* (2-3). At the last, she settles for a one-volume alphabetical compilation of about 3,000 "named demons... from various cultures and religions" (2). Aspiring to "contribute to the academic studies of anthropology, folklore, mythology, and religion" (1), she clearly finds the first-mentioned fields most applicable, as she affects a tone toward believers or adherents alternating between the skeptical (the beings' activity is described as "possible but may be equally improbable") and the patronizing ("Without them [demons] there can be no morals to our stories, not even a plot") (8).

Some of the work's blemishes might be mitigated by an electronic edition (not reviewed here), for oversights exist in the index. Entry cross referencing is adequate, and though the index is of good size, it is strangely lacking in sufficiently broad categories (contrast this lack with the ample coordinating appendixes of Manfred Lurker's more specialized 2004 *Routledge Dictionary of Gods, Goddesses, Devils, and Demons*). In Bane's work, subject headings by nation or group of origin are omitted. (The Hebrew demon "Hez" has an entry, but there is no index entry compiling other entities from this source; neither is there one coordinating Japanese, Mayan, or Roman demons). This fault is matched by a corresponding lack of indexing by religion ("Meresin" is named an evil spirit from Christian demonology, but no index entry exists for Christianity, nor other belief systems like Buddhism, Islam, or Vodou). Given that other clusters of beings are grouped by shared traits (i.e., "Cacodemon" and "Demonic Gods"), this omission seems unnecessarily careless.

Other faults are less acceptable. Among apparent factual errors, the Apostle Paul is stated to have made out his angelic hierarchy in the fourth century, making him the contemporary of Augustine (6); the ascription of the correlation of evil and ugliness as a Christian innovation ignores evidence predating that belief system (6); and the *Testament of Solomon* is offered as an "Old Testament catalog" of demons, though it appears in the canons of neither Judaism nor Christianity (302). Despite a professed interest in concision (2), the comparative length of the entry for the demon "Lillith" dwarfs those of most others, as it is appreciably larger than even those given individually for "Lucifer," the "Devil," and even "Satan." Indeed, the very brevity sought by the author makes it

difficult to appreciate the complexity of some of the figures mentioned above, as they may have an interdependent web of sources that could inform their depiction. As an example, Jewish, Christian, Islamic, and western occultist tradition portraits of Satan can, and probably ought, to be distinguished, both chronologically and by content. A brief approach, like that adopted for a more singular entity from an extinct religion (the entry for “Lamia,” for example), might be Bane’s ideal, however it is not infrequently unhelpful, shallow, or merely simplistic.

Like other reference titles on its subject, this volume is an attempt at a worthwhile goal; the world is waiting for a compendious but critical reference work compassing the varied sources of demonology, explicating the content of its terms, sifting the pedigrees of its authorities, and evaluating the relevance and importance of its multifarious parts. Bane has not supplied that waited-for work; however, with its stout bibliography and broad gleaning from earlier reference works, it may aid that eventual endeavor. Academic libraries might be best served by Lurker’s *Dictionary*, and Guiley’s *Encyclopedia* may prove more attractive to popular audiences through its illustrations. But Bane’s *Encyclopedia of Demons in World Religions and Cultures* is recommended for larger collections, particularly in its electronic format, as this is a notoriously theft-prone subject area in libraries.

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