

2. The second case study gives an example of two narrators exchanging by telephone stories about experiences in their life concerning the Old and the New World. The stories indicate that “the creative individual can overcome unfavorable conditions, can survive and find ... means of expressions” (324).
3. The third case study shows how the jokes of an Irishman can help folklorists to discover the social context and the personality of the performer in a multiethnic urban environment and to learn about the significance of narration in any society.
4. The fourth case study shows that “legends are transmitted through a conduit composed of people of shared interest, distinct from those for other kinds of folklore expressions” (342). Conduits can emerge during daily life conversation in which “the broader social and cultural and the closer intertextual contexts, along with the speakers’ personalities and relationships to one another... reveal how legends emerge as the conduit is activated” (356).
5. The fifth case study shows that future formulation of a legend is influenced by the interaction of oral and nonoral communications (e.g., TV, newspapers, etc.), and in this way the process of legend conduit is established.

The book makes three important methodological points: 1) the performance by a specific narrator is the first step “towards a multidimensional folktale study”; 2) the “community repertoire composed of the materials of practicing bearers of tradition” should be determined by an interactional and intergenerational relationship; 3) the “comparative study of specific and general tendencies of dissemination will lead to concerns of origin, as well as variability, innovation, stabilization, oicotypification and so forth” (8).

Overall the book consists of essays that are rich in theory and grounded in fieldwork. It challenges many existing theoretical approaches to folklore studies, reads like a personal biography of folklore-oriented experience, and is a treasure of resource materials on the origin, development, and future of folklore studies.

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SIENKEWICZ, THOMAS J. *World Mythology: An Annotated Guide to Collections and Anthologies*. Magill Bibliographies. Landham MD: Scarecrow Press, 1996. ix + 469 pages. Indexes. Hardcover US\$49.50; ISBN 0-8108-3154-6.

A passage of Plato (*Republic*, 394) may serve as a keynote for introducing Thomas Sienkewicz’s valuable bibliography: “There is one kind of poetry and tale-telling [*mythologia*] which works wholly through imitation, as you remarked, tragedy and comedy; and another which employs the recital of the poet himself...; and there is again that which employs both, in epic poetry and in many other places.”¹

Time has proved how significant the idea of mythology as tale-telling is. The ancient, even pre-Platonic, opposition between Myth(os) (i.e., fictitious speech), and Logos (i.e., rational discourse) has always created difficulties. Even knowledge and information concerning the natural sciences tend to sound like science fiction whenever verbal, instead of numerical, language is used.² Mythology in the sense of the scientific study of myths is no exception: with the passage of time, scholarly knowledge about mythology itself becomes

mythological. In the era of the global village, the gathering and telling of myths are much more complex than ever before. Thus one cannot but appreciate the work that Sienkewicz has done in summarizing in a single volume the broad range of myth-related materials from all over the world. Only by restricting the vast bibliographical oceans to the large sea of English-language materials, has it been possible to produce a single volume.³ Because the book is intended for the general public, scholars will find many gaps in the bibliographical entries dealing with their research areas and many will not even find a single reference to their field of study. However, I for one, found that much could be learned from reading this book.

World Mythology mostly lists materials that offer retellings, translations, or summaries of myths, but it does include some scholarly works of analysis and interpretation, and provides a detailed description of each item. The bibliography does not draw borderlines between myths proper, legends, folktales, and fairy tales. Individual chapters for each inhabited continent are further divided according to geographical and cultural boundaries, except for chapter one, which deals with general collections and anthologies. The treatment of the different areas shows a satisfactory balance overall (except for Oceania and Southeast Asia, whose broad geographical range, cultural significance, and mythological ties with other lands probably deserved more than the space allowed to them). Indexes make it easy to find authors, editors, and subjects contained in the bibliographical guide.

The book seems to confirm that myth-making is a constant human activity, defying the efforts with which some cultures tried to codify an orthodox mythological tradition. Old and new stories continue to be told and retold, travelling through time and space, by means of different verbal languages and other media. The vitality of myth-making is ensured in many ways. Reshaping is one of them, largely represented in Sienkewicz's book. Myths and traditional folktales from many geographical areas of the world have been retold for children by Joanna Troughton (92–93, 130, 201, 232, 290). Roberto Calasso, who more recently has devoted himself to re-creation of ancient India's sources, is among the noteworthy rewriters of Greek mythological traditions (335). The omnipresence of some folkloric leitmotifs is underlined by collections of tales and essays. One example is the book by Jack Zipes that translates and comments on thirty-one versions of the story known as "Little Red Riding Hood," from Perrault's 1697 French version to a Chinese one by Jiang Mi of 1979 (46). Or the work about Cinderella edited by Alan Dundes that also contains translations, summaries, and retelling of various versions of the tale from all over the world, including Basile's 1635 Italian version and the Grimm brothers' 1812 German version (22, 389–90).

Why is there an urgency to update the perspective on things destined to become increasingly difficult to comprehend as they fade into the distance? Mythopocia has been likened to music, and indeed many composers would probably be no less perplexed than myth-tellers if asked to explain the meaning of their creations. Of course myth-makers can be helped to produce more and more mythological material, as happens, for example, in psychoanalysis.

Interpretations of myths have changed greatly in the course of time, but I am not sure if it is possible to judge which are obsolete. Sienkewicz inserts in his bibliography many venerable publications, including a few from the middle of the nineteenth century that are not completely outdated. Some of these old works have been reprinted in, for example, the retellings, compilations, and discussions of myths and tales by Thomas Bulfinch (17–18, 312, 334, 386) and Andrew Lang (27–28). Others, like Marian Cox's pioneering collection of 345 variants of the Cinderella story, have not (19–20). Some useful materials that were hard to obtain have been published after many decades (81).⁴ Among the readily available materials today, such as those collected and interpreted by Jan Brunvand in his works (210–11), we find

very stimulating data about current myth-making processes.⁵

Sienkewicz's Introduction is a good synthesis of a number of fundamental facts concerning mythology and the study of myths. The general public and students may learn much from reading it, while some scholars may sympathize with Sisyphus (the character of Greek mythology), evoked by Sienkewicz to give an idea of what the whole project involves. Endless, slippery, intangible, unrealistic, and self-contradictory, but at the same time truth-revealing, ubiquitous, intersecting with history and affecting historiography, almost without boundaries of any kind, these are among the distinctive traits of that tale-telling that Plato named *mythologia*.

I just want to add a short comment to the fact that, as Sienkewicz says in his Introduction, variation in orthography is occasionally part of the process of myth-making. Even after the arrival of writing systems in many cultures, some variations were made while copying manuscripts, thus providing one pre-text for textual collation and philological criticism. The invention of printing did nothing but change, first in the Sino-centric literary world, then in Europe where the technology has had many unintended variations. One might expect that the advent of computer technology would eliminate misprints. Yet this does not seem to be the case. Surely it is due to a technical oversight that the name of a famous Indian epic appears in the following interesting spelling variant: R3m3yana (280). Are computers opening the way for high-tech philologists to come?

NOTES

1. This quote is taken from Paul Story's translation of *The Republic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1937) pp. 230-31.
2. Mythological storytelling surely affects scientific disclosures in, for example, contemporary cosmogonic explanations.
3. The uniformity of the English-language material collected in the bibliography is not maintained when the reference for the original texts is given with an English translation, and when Latin words or passages are used for sexual references in old translations.
4. For example, *African Folktales with Foreign Analogues* (New York: Garland Press, 1992) was originally written in 1938 as May Augusta Klippe's doctoral dissertation.
5. The data is relevant mostly to American urban legends, like that of "The Choking Doberman" and "The Vanishing Hitchhiker."

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JAPAN

HARDACRE, HELEN. *Marketing the Menacing Fetus in Japan*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997. xx + 310 pages. Plans, maps, figures, tables, bibliography, character list, index. Cloth US\$35.00; ISBN 0-520-20553-7.

Mizuko kuyō—ritual services for those that die in the womb—is a controversial Japanese phenomenon that impinges on such issues as abortion, reproduction, sexual relations, gender issues, ritual performance, religious entrepreneurship, exploitation, and moral ambiguities.