

Thomas J. Sienkewicz. **Theories of Myth: An Annotated Bibliography.** Lanham: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1997. Pp. xi + 227, indices.. \$32.00 cloth.

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*Theories of Myth: An Annotated Bibliography* is a recent publication of The Magill Bibliographies, a series designed as a resource for a general reading public. This volume is a companion to Sienkewicz's 1996 Magill bibliographic survey of myth collections, *World Mythology*. As Sienkewicz notes, the present edition is intended for use by college undergraduates, high school students, and general readers embracing myth theory for the first time (1).

The bibliography is divided into well-organized sections. Sienkewicz lists 530 articles and books, citing only English sources and translations. He includes mainly contemporary works, but some citations reference publications from the late 1800s and early 1900s (e.g., Friedrich Müller, Andrew Lang, John Fiske), many of which are now regarded primarily as scholarly artifacts. Both technical and more popular works appear in this broad collection, spanning from Ernst Cassirer's *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* to Joseph Campbell and Bill Moyer's best-selling *The Power of Myth*. Sienkewicz's annotations are informative and thorough, the real virtue of this bibliography.

The reader surely will sympathize with the Herculean labor of compiling such a bibliography. Sienkewicz limits his reach with a focus on "material dealing with the interpretation of traditional myths and legends about gods, heroes, and the origin of the universe" (4). He provides a brief historical tour of myth interpretation, ranging from Xenophanes to the Renaissance to the Indo-Europeanists of the nineteenth century and the multiple theoretical approaches of the twentieth century.

The first selection, "General Studies," lists works which attempt to historicize myth and myth theory or to explain myth through a variety of transdisciplinary considerations. The second listing, "The Meaning of Myth," focuses primarily on studies which attempt to define myth. The third collection, "Comparative Mythology," bears a sizable number of entries (25% of the book, in fact) and lists both cross-cultural and universalizing studies. In the fourth, "Myth and Anthropology," Sienkewicz turns to what he calls ethnographies, works which attempt to link myth and culture in some intimate way. The next selection, "Myth and Psychology," enjoys the second largest investment of entries (17%) and essentially lists psychoanalytic and neo-

psychoanalytic interpretations of myth. Conversely, the fifth section, "Myth, Religion, and Cult," has the fewest entries (only 8%), despite its increasing importance and resurgence in the academy. Finally, in "The Structural Study of Myth," he lists studies inspired by or critical of Lévi-Strauss. Unfortunately, the rather inconsistent number of entries in each section makes the overall project seem slightly unbalanced.

Sienkewicz's choices rely heavily on the works of Joseph Campbell and Jungian-inspired interpretations; these suggest subtle sympathies to an archetypal approach to myth that is popular outside the academy. Equally well represented are classical Freudian-inspired studies, and a solid favoring of the corpus of Georges Dumézil and of Claude Lévi-Strauss—that is, theories of myth which are concerned with presumed relations between myth and the structure of the psyche. Generally absent are important case studies and ethnographies, performance and ethnopoeitic theories of myth, rhetorical theories, philosophical theories, and any references to myth and the visual arts.

Sienkewicz's bibliography is friendly to folkloristics, but in a peculiar way. His fondness for Aarne-Thompson is apparent, as it is for a select few additional studies in folklore: Jan Brunvand's *Readings in American Folklore*, Alan Dundes' edited volume on Cinderella, Max Lüthi's *Once Upon a Time*, James McGlathery's *The Brothers Grimm and Folktale*, Stith Thompson's *The Folktale*, and Jack Zipes' *Breaking the Spell*. This uneven selection (along with several other references to works in which myth theory appears only in passing or not at all) leaves the impression of a haphazard foray into folkloristics, and the reader is never quite certain what these contributions have to do with myth theory.

Sienkewicz's distinction between genres is unclear and often uninteresting; for him "myth" includes "traditional stories, legends, tales, and sagas" (7). Even if the reader is not concerned with strongly held genre boundaries, other imprecisions weaken the volume's effectiveness. He is inconsistent with his use of motif and tale type, which may present a problem for those who are inclined to a precise distinction between the two. He also seems unaware of the basic difference between the Aarne-Thompson type index (*The Types of the Folktale*) and Thompson's motif index, and suggests that Aarne-Thompson's study (i.e., the historic-geographic) of folktales accounts for recurrent narrative elements "not via geographic dissemination . . . but via the common experience of humankind" (6). These mistakes add up and make the volume appear regretfully uninformed at times. Moreover, the not-so-occasional references to other folklore genres distract the reader from the subject of myth theories.

Despite these imperfections, Sienkewicz's bibliography warrants applause for its far-reaching scope. It is serviceable for the intended audience as a reference resource, although the mistakes warrant some pause. For scholars who work in myth theory, the idiosyncracies and inconsistencies of this volume make it less useful. While no single bibliography can capture the Protean character of myth interpretation, *Theories of Myth* aims high but ultimately offers only an uneventfully safe overview.