

Abstract

This thesis deals with how a myth is approached and treated by two different literary movements, namely the classicism and the symbolism. The main aim of this thesis is to compare the shift of meaning and function of the myth in its literary renditions. The works on which we will try to demonstrate these differences are *Phèdre* by Jean Racine as for the classical movement, and *Thésée* by André Gide as for the symbolist movement. The thesis poses questions regarding the purpose of these respective literary interpretations and centres around the hypothesis that the classical work focuses on inspiring terror and pity, while the myth as treated by the symbolists seems to serve rather as a dialogue with oneself. Moreover, symbolists perceive the myth's archetypal content to be more suitable in expressing the essential, in accordance with the philosophy of Arthur Schopenhauer, while the classical period is much more preoccupied with Antiquity and follows strictly the rules as established in Aristotle's *Poetics*. The theoretical part of the thesis concentrates on the definition and delimitation of the keywords, as well as describing the different kinds of myths. It also gives a brief outline of the respective literary movements. The analytical part deals with what the authors wanted to express through the myth, why and how they did so, and with how the myth in their interpretations differs from its original form. It also analyses selected examples of symbols, allegories, metaphors and archetypes in the works of Racine and Gide.

KEYWORDS

myth, symbol, allegory, metaphor, archetype, classicism, symbolism, Jean Racine, André Gide, *Thésée*, *Phèdre*