

Summary of Thesis

While Yeats makes frequent and diverse use of mythological aspects in his writing, there are only thirteen poems which are narrative retellings of Irish myths. These poems serve to familiarize his audiences with Irish mythology, yet they also challenge and subvert traditional discourses reinforced by the myths such as those related to gender roles, socio-political expectations and responsibilities, and the idealization of heroism. Principally using the theories of Saussure, Jakobson and Barthes, this thesis undertakes a structural analysis of a sample of three poems – 'Cuchulain's Fight with the Sea', 'The Song of Wandering Aengus', and 'The Two Kings' – and demonstrates the ways in which the poetic revision of the myth transforms the meaning and significance of its discourse.