



**UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI ROMA
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DOTTORATO DI RICERCA

IN

ANTICHITÀ CLASSICHE E LORO FORTUNA

XX CICLO

**MITI TERIOMORFICI
NELLA LETTERATURA GRECA**

ABSTRACT

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ABSTRACT

Subject of the thesis is the study of some categories of teriomorphic myths as animals which have Zeus (the highest member of the Greek pantheon) as main character on one side and, on the other, human women, belonging to royal or aristocratic families, or simple nymphs, or even female divinities part of the so-called "Olympics" or to some representative of the "pre-Olympics" generation. Special attention has been given to the erotic-etiological theme, common background to the various tales. The study of the myths has brought to re-examine, like in a labyrinth, the philological hermeneutic, when the tale itself was getting enriched of many sources of interpretation, stemming from different literary types and historical ages.

With the support of different review lectures, the work moves along some significant nodes, and, within them some in-deep philosophical, anthropological, religious and artistic analyses have been developed. In this direction the study of selected stories, in which Zeus excels, has led to the discovery of a reality which embraced other means and many links with the study of the institutions in that age as the marriage and the family.

If some myths, in which divinities had roles and anthropomorphic characteristic, could have appeared rich of interpretative elements, all parts of the etiology or the religious sense, in opposition some others, less known and rich of fantastic elements, have supported an interpretation which highlighted the misteriosofic or philosophic-neoplatonic aspects.

Hence, heroes and divinities taking the scene, and, with animal features, generate other divinities with whom to engage in a wedding: in this way it has been tried to move along the story of some pre-Hellenic myths survived to the rationalistic entities and to the Christian apologetics.

This myths have been revitalised after having abandoned cleaned-up of an interpretation according to which they were considered as a materialisation of abstract, philosophic concepts, during an age strongly affected by a religious syncretism as the neo-Platonism.

One of the most charming aspects, stemming from this myth, is found in the symbolism in which transformation to animal are often linked, involving the main actors of the histories, being them either heroes, or divinities or even mortal human beings.

This is the reason why in the degradation to animals a hidden way is sometime found, similar to the one of the divinity, owner of the initiation process to her own mysterious rituals. It has been noted also how the stereotype of the young girl being desired by Zeus has become the prototype of a new female model, protagonist of a new vision of the marriage institution.

A reflection has been devoted also to the study of the single element which underlies the multiplicity of metamorphosis myths, and to the investigation of what can be defined an identification of divinities in the area of the Mediterranean sea, reminding to pre-Hellenic and egean-cretean religious sense of the various Mediterranean regions where it was used to refer to the Mother-Dea primordial and vivificatrix entity, with many attributes.