



Mythological Elements in John Updike's "The Centaur"

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Mythological Elements in John Updike's "The Centaur" Andreas Reinbott, Torsten Scharmacher Seminar paper from the year 2004 in the subject American Studies - Literature, grade: 1,0, University of Münster (Anglistik), course: John Updike, 18 entries in the bibliography, language: English, abstract: For many readers of *The Centaur* by John Updike the novel may seem a little unorthodox or even confusing, especially for students learning English as a second language in the German "Oberstufe". The reason for this problem is connected with the use of mythological elements and its arbitrariness concerning aspects of narration. According to critics, they "were suspicious and uneasy with the mythological elements, asserting that they added nothing essential to the novel" (Markle 61). Right from the beginning we are confronted with Updike's wit, his introduction of the first character, George Caldwell, who is hit by an ominous arrow. Burchard comments on this scene as follows: "Wondering if the author is really serious, the reader hurries on, hoping that the school teacher will wake soon and be released from his nightmare. The nightmare continues" (58). Sometimes it is very difficult to distinguish between what is real and what is not. The author himself admits that his book poses "difficulties" for readers and says that "the book as well as the hero is a Centaur" (Updike, In: Greiner 105), rephrasing the before-mentioned arbitrariness of the levels of narration.

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