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When drama and myth connect...

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Abstract

Eugene O'Neill, considered by many scholars the founder of modern American drama, made abundant use of myth in several of his dramas. This paper focuses on *Desire Under the Elms*, a play about the desire to possess and be possessed in a common American family of the year 1850. It aims to identify O'Neill's dramatic characters in the light of ancient myths in order to fully understand the nature of human relationships, feelings of love, hatred and guilt. Furthermore, it takes into consideration the uncontroversial fact that when symbols, techniques and myths connect, not only does the creation become powerful and influential, but it does also connect two completely different worlds integrating them into the modern American human being tortured in search of the American dream. The use of Greek mythology among other symbols does not imply that Eugene O'Neill is rewriting the histories of Greek myths, but on the contrary, that he is able to show his own authenticity as a playwright who exploited mythology to describe the tragic inner world of an American family in the 1850 in New England.

Key words: *Eugene O'Neill, drama, mythology, characters, authenticity*