



INTERPRETATION OF THE MYTH OF THE CULTURAL HERO IN THE WORK OF A. DE SAINT-EXUPÉRY

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Abstract

The article explores how Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, the famous French writer and aviator, reinterprets the myth of the cultural hero in his famous work “The Little Prince”. The author analyzes how the image of the child hero, innocent and pure of heart, differs from the traditional archetypes of the powerful warrior or god. The article also examines how the Little Prince's journey through the planets of human souls turns into a metaphor for the search for the meaning of life and love. The author emphasizes how the “Little Prince” in the context of the 20th century becomes a symbol of hope for peace and spiritual awakening of mankind. Saint-Exupéry's masterpiece, *The Little Prince*, stands as a profound reinterpretation of the cultural hero myth in a modern world. The story champions the power of innocence, the importance of pursuing inner truth, and the ability of a pure heart to change the world. It embodies a timeless message that continues to inspire readers of all ages to embrace the beauty of life and believe in the potential for good within ourselves and others. *The Little Prince* transcends being merely a book. It embodies a powerful cultural symbol resonating with people across generations. It teaches us to value simple yet crucial things: love, friendship, beauty, and faith in humanity's inherent goodness.

Keywords: Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, “The Little Prince”, cultural hero, myth, reinterpretation, intellectual fairy tale, symbolism, spirituality.

Introduction

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, renowned for his poignant and philosophical works, offers a unique and poignant reinterpretation of the myth of the cultural hero through his timeless tale, *The Little Prince*. In the work of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, contrary to the first impression of a child's fairy tale, a deep mythopoetic basis can be traced, in which one can see a reinterpretation of the myth of the cultural hero. Saint-Exupéry does not invent a new myth, but in his works uses archetypes and plot lines inherent in the mythology of all times and peoples. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, French writer and aviator, in his famous work *The Little Prince*, created a profound and moving metaphor touching on the eternal values of human existence, such as love, kindness, wisdom and faith. The tale of *The Little Prince* has



been translated into many languages and has found its response and interpretation in different cultures [4, 53]. In this paper, we will examine how the artistic techniques of conveying Saint-Exupéry's mythopoetic ideas are reflected in Russian and Turkish literature. Saint-Exupéry, known for his philosophical and poetic style, used many mythopoetic techniques in his work. These techniques, especially in *The Little Prince*, had a deep resonance in different cultures.

The myth of the cultural hero is a universal motif that reflects deep human values and aspirations. It helps us to understand the origins of the world, its laws and morals, and inspires us to do heroic deeds and create a better future. The myth of the cultural hero is one of the most widespread and universal mythological motifs present in the cultures of different peoples. It tells of a heroic character who performs feats of heroism, changing the world for the better by bringing culture, knowledge, laws, or technology. For example, the characterization given by V.I. Dal: "The hero (heroine) - a knight, a brave warrior, a bogatyr, a miracle warrior; a valiant companion in general, in war and peace self-sacrificing. The hero of the story is the main, first person. Heroic - glorious, courageous, desperate, brave, valiant" [1, 170] Unlike traditional cultural heroes, often depicted as powerful warriors, gods, or demigods, Saint-Exupéry presents a child, the Little Prince, as the embodiment of innocence, purity, and a quest for truth and love. This shift in archetype reflects a transition in values from physical prowess to spiritual and emotional maturity. Instead of conquering geographical realms, the Little Prince journeys across planets representing different facets of the human soul. He encounters various characters embodying diverse personalities and value systems, mirroring humanity's diverse nature and its struggle to understand life's purpose. This journey becomes a metaphor for the quest for meaning, true love, and beauty in a world filled with complexities. The Little Prince, devoid of conventional heroic weapons, employs kindness, purity, and innocence as his tools for change. He awakens dormant feelings in individuals, revealing the true meaning of life and its inherent beauty. Exupéry lived through turbulent times, marked by war and conflict. His hero reflects humanity's yearning for peace and introspection, a desire to pause and ponder the meaning of life beyond material gains. The Little Prince represents a beacon of hope for a better future, demonstrating that true change can be achieved through kindness, understanding, and the rediscovery of innocence and wonder.

The main features of the cultural hero include the following: coming from an ordinary world - the cultural hero is often born into unusual circumstances, such as from divine parents, or has unusual abilities; Journey and trials - the hero goes on a journey during which he or she encounters various obstacles and challenges; Battle with evil - the hero often fights evil forces, monsters, or gods in order to free people from disasters and establish order; Acquisition of knowledge - during his journey, the hero gains knowledge of the world, of life and death, of crafts, of laws; Transformation of the world - the hero transforms the world for the better by introducing culture, laws, technology, and freeing people from suffering; Return and departure - often the cultural hero returns to his home world or leaves the world of men, leaving behind traces of his exploits.

The myth of the cultural hero has several functions, for example, it explains the origin of the world, its structure, laws, culture and traditions; it establishes moral norms, laws and rules of behavior in society; it explains natural phenomena (for example, the appearance of rain, thunderstorms, earthquakes) and



their impact on people's lives; also the myth of the cultural hero inspires people to do heroic deeds, to fight evil, to create a better world. Traditionally, the cultural hero was presented as a powerful warrior or god who brings civilization to people and teaches them laws. In the 20th century, due to changes in worldview and culture, this myth was reinterpreted. In literature and philosophy, the image of the “superfluous man” appeared, who finds no place in society and searches for the meaning of life. This image can also be seen as a reinterpretation of the myth of the cultural hero. Every nation has a cultural hero, acting as a national hero. In the literature devoted to the analysis of folk demonology the concept of “folk character” appears, having “a certain name and a set of functions”. [8, 29] If we are speaking about the Bylin epic, the concept of “bogatyř”, “typical” or “not typical” is used. Often mythologists mention “fairy tale hero”, “legendary hero”. The pagan cultural hero of magical fairy tales Baba Yaga is also studied. [6, 185].

Saint-Exupéry's work can be seen as a reinterpretation of the myth of the cultural hero in the modern world. He uses archetypes and plot lines of mythology, but gives them a new meaning, reflecting the problems of modern man, his search and aspirations for spiritual values. Thus the little prince as a cultural hero personifies innocence, spirituality and the quest for truth and beauty. His journey is a search for the meaning of life through encounters with different planets and people. Unlike traditional heroes who travel through geographical territories, the Little Prince travels through planets of human souls. He meets different people who symbolize different personality types and value systems. This journey is a metaphor for the search for the meaning of life, the search for true love and beauty in the world. Like the cultural characters, the Little Prince gains wisdom and knowledge through wandering and meeting different people. He learns the value of love, friendship, and responsibility. At the end of his journey, the Little Prince finds spiritual transformation, he realizes the meaning of life, and his return home is not just a physical return, but a return to spiritual values.

The Little Prince is not a traditional warrior or god, but a child who personifies innocence, purity of soul and the pursuit of truth. He travels not through geographical territories, but through the planets of human souls, revealing the deeper meanings of life. The Little Prince gains wisdom not as a result of physical feats, but through encounters with different planets and people. He learns about love, friendship, responsibility and the meaning of life. Russian literature, like the fairy tale *The Little Prince*, often explores the theme of loneliness, the search for meaning, power, and social justice, which echoes the works of Saint-Exupéry. For example, Dostoevsky's protagonist is also searching for meaning in life, much like the Little Prince. Dostoevsky does not give an unambiguous answer to the question of the meaning of life. He shows the complexity of human existence, and each hero finds his own way to the truth. In his works, meaning is not given in advance, but is sought through constant confrontation with life, doubts, fears, and ultimately through the search for meaning in love, compassion, and loyalty. Stavrogin from *The Bes* is immersed in a deep nihilism, believing that all values are meaningless and life is meaningless. He seeks answers in mysticism, but his search leads him to increasing despair and hopelessness. In Russian literature, the theme of searching for the meaning of life and self-discovery is often intertwined with images of wandering and wandering. “*The Little Prince*” also goes on a journey, which becomes a metaphor for his search for love, friendship and understanding. The Little Prince finds



his happiness in home, in the love of a rose. This symbolizes that happiness is not just about traveling the world, but about searching for and finding a place where you feel at home. Overall, homesickness in *The Little Prince* is a metaphor for the search for meaning in life, love, and belonging. The Little Prince longs for his childhood, for his rose, for his planet, and for a world where beauty and innocence still exists.

As in the myths of cultural heroes, the theme of paradise lost - innocence, beauty and love that are lost as a result of “growing up” - is evident in the works of Saint-Exupéry. Adults are “blinded” by material values and selfishness, they do not see the beauty of the world and do not realize the importance of spiritual values. Saint-Exupéry presents the hero's temptation by the material world in the image of the King, who is fixated on power, or in the image of the Vain, who is concerned only with external beauty. The Little Prince does not change the world around him by force, but simply demonstrates to adults the importance of spiritual values, love and beauty. He awakens their forgotten feelings and shows them the true meaning of life.

Saint-Exupéry reinterprets the myth of the cultural hero in the context of the modern world. He shows that a true hero is not a warrior, but a man who retains purity of soul, innocence and the pursuit of spiritual values. He teaches us to see the beauty of the world and not to lose faith in the good.

Unlike traditional heroes who change the world around them by force, the Little Prince changes people by his purity and spiritual power. He awakens their forgotten feelings and shows them the true meaning of life. “*The Little Prince*” is not just a book, but an important cultural symbol that resonates in the hearts of people all over the world. It teaches us to appreciate simple and important things - love, friendship, beauty, and not to lose faith in humanity.

St. Exupéry's work is not just children's literature, but a deep philosophical idea that reflects the problems of the modern world and shows us the way to spiritual enlightenment. *The Little Prince* is a symbol of hope and faith in humanity, in its ability to preserve its soul and not lose its true essence. If in the work “*The Little Prince*” we can see the search for the meaning of life, inner beauty, love, responsibility, then in other works, for example in “*Planet of Men*” - the theme of alienation and loss of connection with nature, artificial environment and lack of spirituality, in “*Night Flight*” we see the theme of the human spirit and the desire for higher ideals, courage, self-sacrifice.

Contemporary authors often reinterpret the myth of the cultural hero, giving it new meanings and reflecting contemporary issues and values. The modern interpretation of the myth of the cultural hero is an entertaining and multifaceted phenomenon that reflects changes in our world and way of thinking. In today's world, there is often not just one hero, but a whole group of people or a movement who fight together for ideals and values. In today's culture, there are more and more female heroes who are fighting for equality, justice and freedom. Superheroes are a prime example of modern heroes. They have unusual powers and fight for justice and the safety of the world. The modern interpretation of the cultural hero myth is a reflection of the present. It shows that a hero is not only a mythical image, but also a real person who inspires others with their actions and aspirations for a better future. The discussion about the cultural hero is not only a scientific dispute, but also a reflection of changes in



worldview and culture. This topic will be relevant in the future, because the question of the meaning of life, heroism and values will always concern humanity.

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