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FROM LEGENDS

TO HUMANITY: JOHN UPDIKE'S RELIGIOUS AND LITERARY IDEALS

DE LAS LEYENDAS A LA HUMANIDAD: LOS IDEALES RELIGIOSOS Y LITERARIOS DE JOHN UPDIKE

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ABSTRACT

This article explores how John Updike's novel The Centaur bridges ancient motifs with the social and religious-ethical challenges of the twentieth century—particularly identity crises and the erosion of moral values. It is highlighted the philosophical underpinnings of Updike's humanistic vision, his engagement with classical ideals, and his blending of mythic and everyday reality. The study situates the novel within a framework of "mythological humanism," addressing three intertwined dimensions: cultural, philosophical, and psychological. Drawing on Henri Bergson's reflections on social life, Carl Jung's archetypal theory, Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic research, and a variety of mythological methodologies, the analysis uncovers shared symbolic and philosophical patterns across diverse cultures, narratives, and characters. By synthesizing these methodological tools, the article opens new pathways for interpreting the resonances between myth and modern human experience.

Keywords: The Centaur, Postsecularism, Humanism, Mytho-psychology, "Wounded Healer" archetype.

RESUMEN

Este artículo explora cómo la novela El Centauro de John Updike conecta motivos antiguos con los desafíos sociales y ético-religiosos del siglo XX, en particular las crisis de identidad y la erosión de los valores morales. Se destacan los fundamentos filosóficos de la visión humanista de Updike, su compromiso con los ideales clásicos y su fusión de la realidad mítica y cotidiana. El estudio sitúa la novela en el marco del "humanismo mitológico", abordando tres dimensiones interrelacionadas: cultural, filosófica y psicológica. Basándose en las reflexiones de Henri Bergson sobre la vida social, la teoría arquetípica de Carl Jung, la investigación psicoanalítica de Sigmund Freud y diversas metodologías mitológicas, el análisis revela patrones simbólicos y filosóficos compartidos en diversas culturas, narrativas y personajes. Al sintetizar estas herramientas metodológicas, el artículo abre nuevas vías para interpretar las resonancias entre el mito y la experiencia humana moderna.

Palabras clave: El Centauro, Postsecularismo, Humanismo, Mitopsicología, Arquetipo del "sanador herido".

INTRODUCTION

American writer John Hoyer Updike (1932–2008) cultivated a profound aesthetic, inspired by the tapestry of his personal life experiences. He maintained a distinctive understanding of the concepts of the world, God, and human beings. In terms of worldview and ideological priorities, the writer's works were rooted in humanist concepts. Yet, distinct from conventional humanists, he did not place human beings at the center of the universe. This in no way reflects the writer's anti-humanist perspective or lack of empathy. Updike did not view humanity as the ultimate source of values. He believed that it was unwise to measure and interpret the world and history according to human-made rules, since those rules are created by humans themselves. From Updike's perspective, there was only one dimension that held true significance: the divine dimension.

Updike aimed to portray the psychological state of individuals and the turbulence of their inner worlds, exploring concepts like mercy, oppression, kindness, eternity, reality, and the nature of existence itself through the lens of his Christian worldview. Having experienced a crisis of religious belief at various points in his life, the writer independently embarked on a study of philosophy and theology. He greatly admired the Calvinist theologian Karl Barth, as well as Soren Kierkegaard's religious existentialism. In his autobiographical work Self-Consciousness: Memoirs (Updike, 1989), Updike openly admitted that he was influenced by the views of these philosophers. Inspired by them, the writer defined his religious beliefs and became known as a devout Christian throughout his life.

Protestant Updike was a proponent of Calvinist ideas. The writer considered these ideas as the main tool in the philosophical solution of human existential problems. In his artistic, philosophical, and socially significant works, it is possible to feel the influence of the worldviews of philosophers such as Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Albert Camus. Like all existentialists, he thought that this world was alien and absurd. However, unlike these philosophers, Updike didn't think that the world wanted man's tragedy; he didn't consider life as cruel and meaningless. Existing events and signs are planned in advance, and their significance may be unknown to man, but this is only at first glance. Galloway (2021), who approached Updike's work from an existential point of view, described his protagonists as "absurd heroes" seeking meaning in an infinite universe. Galloway noted in his book "The Absurd Hero in American Fiction" that Updike describes his heroes as holy tragic personalities who go in search of love.

Updike, in a certain sense, succeeded in creating the image of an absurd hero. However, his absurd heroes are unaware of philosophical-anthropological problems and concepts of the essence of human existence. They do not even protest against religious moral norms. Updike's absurdity is connected with the problem of personality, which is drowning in the clutches of everyday life and limitations. However, the writer himself thinks of these problems as something unrelated to the existing reality, related to a different world – a transcendent reality. Updike sees real life as a means available to humans to get rid of imperfection and to reunite with God. The writer believes that the existential completeness of the individual can be realized at this time. This is the only way to be in harmony not only with metaphysical beings, but also with ordinary people and with the world itself as a whole.

Scott Dill's book (2018) "A Theology of Sense: John Updike, Embodiment, and Late Twentieth-Century American Literature" analyzes the writer's work not only within the framework of formal religion, but also through the prism of the unity of physical existence, aesthetics, and theology. The researcher presents religion, physicality, and spirituality as the central theme of the doctrine of Creation. He considers Updike's works to be a suitable platform for discussing such problems and considers him to be one of the pioneers of post-secular change. However, in a rapidly changing world, Updike's heroes are caught between secular (Harry Angstrom) and post-secular (George Caldwell) realities. The author proposes an alternative religion that includes psychological and philosophical theories of search. This is not a return to traditional religious aesthetics, but rather a reworking of religion that can be expressed through images, symbols (archetypes), and metaphors that emerge from consciousness and unconsciousness, taking into account the challenges of modernity and globalization. It helps to bring back mythological and sacred themes to culture, developed in the context of new religious structures and philosophical and cultural challenges. Myth is an ideal tool for the writer to compare the present with the past, sometimes to equate them and sometimes to refute them.

In Updike's work, myth is formed a priori on the basis of cultural-historical reality and religious ideas. There are certain ideas suggesting that the source of myth is taken from religious and cultural heritage. The claim of H. Bergson, who had an apologetic attitude towards myth, "religion is what accounts for the myth-making function," provides grounds to support this assertion (Bergson, 1932, p. 98). Artistic thinking had not yet arisen, but mankind already had religious ideas. Moreover, the principle of perfecting religious ideas formed the mind's ability to

create myths, which in turn led to the development of artistic imagination (in the relationship of cause and effect). In Updike's case, artistic imagination also emerged as an ability based on religion. However, it would be wrong to "dress up" the writer's works with religion, although most of his main characters are devout Catholics. Updike is a skilled illustrator of human characters, moral problems, conflicts, and intra-social and political conflicts, not religious ideas. It is impossible to find religious symbols, themes, or saints in any of his works (except for George Caldwell-Chiron-Jesus Christ).

According to Ulvydienė (2018, p. 108), Caldwell-Chiron-Christ serves as a model of behavior striving for a higher level of existence. David Myers, on the other hand, explains that Updike, with the bequest of this "triad," creates an allegory of the ancient myth adapted to Christianity. In practice, these parallels represent a desire to awaken past memory, to reinterpret the ideas of ancient humanism, and to revive moral consciousness in an era assessed as the "decline of the American spirit." It is also an attempt to place humanism not only as a condition that existed in the past, but also as a moral imperative (requirement) for modern societies. His attempt aims to create a bridge between ancient and modern worldviews, to show the universality of human nature and values, and to demonstrate that the development of culture and spirituality is possible only by complementing each other. He points to mythological humanism as evidence that humans are inherently good and not devoid of spirituality. It becomes clear that mythological consciousness is an ironic form of thinking in Updike aimed at restoring cultural-historical memory and calling for spiritual revival.

Thus, this study aims to investigate how John Updike's novel ***The Centaur*** articulates classical motifs with the ethical, religious, and social dilemmas of the 20th century, such as the crisis of identity and the decline of moral values. To this end, it adopts a "mythological humanism" approach that combines culturological analysis, philosophical reflection, and psychological interpretation: first, it reviews Henri Bergson's contributions to social life; then, it employs Carl Jung's archetypal categories and Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic findings; finally, it integrates various methods for studying myths and symbolism. This methodological approach reveals symbolic and conceptual links between different cultural traditions, narrative realities, and characters, and offers new interpretive keys for the fusion of the mythical and the everyday.

DEVELOPMENT

The Role of Mythology in the Structure of the Novel "The Centaur": Christian Imagination and the Power of Fiction

Updike's religious and philosophical views strongly influenced not only the ideological and aesthetic features of his works, but also the poetics and literary language of his novels. Critics attribute the complex structure of the author's novels to the existence of three main, dominant elements: real, mythological and religious. In the foreword to the Soviet edition of ***The Centaur***, Shimon Markish, a literary critic and translator, expressed his admiration for Updike's writing technique: "All these elements intertwine and permeate each other and, in particular, the fineness of such transitions can't but delight" (McTavish, 2016, p. 10). In reality, Updike's prose demonstrates how myth and reality complement each other. The author himself has repeatedly stressed that "I still would not have written the book without the myths. They are important to me and I think give the book its proper tone of eccentricity, or surprisingly – the sense that everybody comes to us in guises" (Campbell, 1994, p. 96).

Some researchers have thought that mythology in Updike's novels is not the core of the book, but an external reception. Various critics have found his work to be allegorical and others even emphasized the characteristics inherent in an allegorical poem (Macnaughton, 1982). It is this allegory in Updike's works that draws the reader toward the Christian Gospel, the Bible. Literary theologian John McTavish wrote in the foreword to his monograph ***Myth and Gospel in the Fiction of John Updike*** about the function of mythical motives in Updike's novels: "Myth plays a critical role in Updike's fiction, giving his stories much greater moral and theological gravitas than may first meet the eye" (McTavish, 2016, p. 7).

As we can see, Updike, more than any other of his contemporaries, effectively provides us with steady and honest contemplation, affirming the continued relevance of the Gospel for the hopelessly fallen modern world. In the words of Michael Novak: "John Updike is beginning to make religion intelligible in America, and to fashion symbols whereby it can be understood" (Novak, 1979, p. 191). According to Updike, the mythic mode is attractive not only because it offers "a counterpoint of ideality to the drab real level" and presents "an excuse for a number of jokes," but because it demonstrates the "sensation that the people we meet are guises, do conceal something mythic, perhaps prototypes or longings in our minds" (Samuels, 1976, p. 442).

Using religious-symbolic elements against the backdrop of mythological and realistic parallels, the writer not only touches on art, family, and social relations, but also puts the Christian worldview into a new framework that will help facilitate a person's spiritual and moral evolution. To a certain extent, mythology fulfills this function in the novel ***The***

Centaur. In the novel, the writer presents American reality as a decline of the Christian spirit. America, drowning in social injustice, is brought face to face with antiquity.

Updike witnesses the invasion and destruction of the human soul, belief and life by modern society, and shows us all kinds of repression and control, people's spiritual confusion and various forms of resistance. While describing the predicament of survival, Updike also explores the methods and strategies of salvation for the whole society. (Liu, 2023).

Due to socio-economic conditions, Updike is unable to fully achieve the depiction of complex problems in the novel using traditional methods, and therefore finds it appropriate to influence mass consciousness through myths. In this sense, the use of classical mythology combined with realistic details reflects the symbolic meaning of the novel. The Greek myth of the centaur Chiron, who became the embodiment of high humanity, serves as the main leitmotif of the novel.

The Centaur symbolically represents the struggle between animal instinct and human reason in Greek myths. Updike uses this archetype to reflect the clash between the spiritual and physical sides of man. Chiron, who is described as a tutor in ancient myth, is presented in the novel ***The Centaur*** in the person of the teacher George Caldwell. By identifying his hero with a mythical image, the writer literally raises his daily problems to the level of eternal themes. As an artist, Updike creates a book where the idea of the eternal cyclical repetition of primary mythological prototypes under different "masks" comes to the fore, along with a kind of substitutability of literary and mythological heroes. Attempts are made to mythologize everyday prose and reveal the hidden mythological foundations of realism. He treats the mythical world as freely as he does the real world. To achieve this effect, he first creates a time without history, eliminating the boundaries between time and space.

In the novel, Updike uses a multifaceted approach, incorporating myth into the real scene of the story through a unique writing style that incorporates elements of magical realism. In this case, both Centaur Chiron and Zeus transcend mythology and come to America in the twentieth century. These figures, which form the basis of the myth and create a unified meaning, live an American life in the novel and are confronted with the well-known ***American Way of Life***. The author even shows the social status of the heroes, demonstrating that there is a real connection between them. Thus, in the novel, Caldwell's antagonist Zimmerman (the mythological tyrannical Zeus) occupies a high position in the Olinger School. Zimmerman's observation of Caldwell's behavior at school can be taken figuratively as God watching people from the sky. If in the myth the death of Chiron occurs at the order of Zeus, then Caldwell's "figurative death" can only take place in the presence of a powerful force represented by Zimmerman. The post of director was given to Zimmerman for the right to observe and manage Caldwell. Throughout the novel, Caldwell is stressed because of Zimmerman, but he is unable to change anything. The hero is doomed to experience all this because he is helpless and miserable.

According to the mythical narrative, it was decided that Prometheus should be executed for stealing fire from Mount Olympus and sharing it with people. The immortal Centaur, wounded by a poisoned arrow and tired of his life of suffering, wants to die instead of Prometheus. This element represents the tragic endings found in Greek mythology, where people must face tragic death, though not necessarily their own. In the real world, however, this element can be interpreted as the concept of "sacrifice" in Christianity. Chiron, like Jesus Christ, renounces his immortality and deliberately chooses to suffer and die. Chiron, Jesus Christ, and Caldwell are all ready to sacrifice themselves for the sake of posterity.

Drawing parallels between mythological and religious elements, it becomes clear once again that in both mythological and realistic approaches, the writer consistently maintains the same idea: when a person is involved in the divine idea, and moreover, only by being a part of this idea can he realize everything, even realize his own end. God is the source of the idea, and man is part of this idea. The author here, to some extent, takes the side of impersonality. Moreover, the writer's "absurd" protagonist will often be confused, not looking for meaning in life, because he is convinced that the meaning of life is known only to God.

According to Astvatsaturov, who analyzes the problem in this way, man "is not the master of the Idea, not a wise sage able to unravel the Idea, but only the instrument of the Idea, the object of the application of its strength" (Astvatsaturov, 2020). And here lies the human mind—very penetrating and rebellious—that doesn't want to recognize anything. If so, what is the reason for our existence? According to Updike, we live for the sake of the continuation of our family, for the sake of our children! That is, children are part of a chain. For George Caldwell, family ties are important. He wishes for the continuation of the genealogy from his grandfather to father, to son, and to future grandson.

Kinship ties, considered an element of archaism, are one of the forms of manifestation of the past. Updike realizes the risk of distorting the past by "pulling" it into the present.

Therefore, he addresses the past not retrospectively, but through retro-orientation. This approach represents a tendency to revive the lost elements of social and cultural life, facilitating the processes of emotional connection between the past and the present or the return to certain forms of life activity. In modern societies consisting of social groupings, a person loses contact with his family or relatives. During this time, the need for communication, emotional contacts, and expressions of friendship and love increases. According to Updike, blood and kinship ties act as carriers of genetic information for the entire generation, which serves as a means of helping a person achieve self-identification.

Even in ancient times, intergenerational kinship ties were of great importance in legitimizing social status, forming conservative thinking, and strengthening social order. Attachment to family roots was considered an element of "perpetuation" and self-identification in ancient communities that understood the importance of their historical and cultural heritage. The Centaur Chiron conveyed this wisdom in his advice to his student.

Nevertheless, Christian criticism repeatedly accused ancient ideals of undermining the foundations of the family and of being non-conservative toward future generations. The fact that the Greeks raised their children outside the family and gave them a Spartan education was not welcomed unequivocally by the Christian community, which did not see itself outside family and kinship relations. According to Updike, Christian culture had a more idealistic experience of humane attitudes toward future generations, which was considered unusual for other archaic cultures. The Centaur Chiron is rejected by his mother because he was born in a strange shape. The mother, who treats her baby with disgust, prefers to turn into a tree rather than breastfeed him. The morally shaken Chiron understands and forgives his mother.

The action of this mythical image, which expresses the author's ethical and aesthetic ideal, serves as an allegory for Christian ethics. Updike revives religious and ethical values in the context of mythological humanism. In his letter to the Ephesians, the Apostle Paul noted the attachment of family members to each other as a characteristic of Christian ethics: "As Christ also attached himself to the church, so you also attach yourselves to one another!" Attachment means wholeness, giving up one's individuality. A person who sees himself in harmonious unity with others can never be evil or anti-humanist. According to Updike, a person becomes human when he begins to think about himself, his role in the world, his essence and purpose, and the meaning of his existence. For George Caldwell, the main character of the novel, the meaning of life is built on caring for his child and family. In this case, he feels whole and believes that he is not lonely or useless. According to Updike, this is the true intention of God. The main mission placed on human shoulders is to take care of each other, to participate in the continuation of the human race, and to "stretch and lengthen" time.

In an attempt to achieve "this beautiful and useful truth," Caldwell's father and grandfather believed in metaphorical perspectives. For them, continuity implies the preservation of the past. The greatest happiness for Updike's protagonist is the continuation of the family tree. However, Peter Caldwell decided to subordinate himself to nature, giving up metaphorical perspective. For Peter, the relevance and value of the past lies not in permanence, but in eternity. And eternity comes only from art. From the very beginning, he believed that only with the help of art can one record time and retain victory over nature: "It was this firmness, I think, this potential fixing of a few passing seconds, that attracted me, at the age of five, to art" (Updike, 1963, p. 62).

Peter Caldwell prefers to be an object of nature rather than interpret it. He forms his new philosophy of life, hoping that through art he "will reach the truth." Peter wants to immortalize his father by likening him to Chiron. This can also be understood as the author's attempt to transfer ancient ideals to modern reality. S. Uphaus noted:

Peter Caldwell is Updike's mock-hero caught between the need for mythical ideal and twentieth century commitment to realism. Updike has described an artist as being 'in some way a middleman between the ideal world and this, even though our sense of the ideal. (Uphaus, 1977).

Updike combines the cultural development that will help facilitate the spiritual and moral evolution of man with the ideals of humanism from both the Christian and ancient systems, thereby trying to achieve a solution to spiritual problems in twentieth-century American reality. Thanks to his artistic fantasy, he tries to create an alternative, a mythical model of existing American reality. More precisely, he descends into the substantial depths of modern reality through mythical imagination. By adding myth to the main plot of the novel, Updike combines literary texts that are distant in time and content but close in ideas, gives new, additional meanings to both the ancient and modern eras, and changes empirical reality at the associative level. At this point, mythical ideas move away from the concept of imagination and are perceived as actual reality. This demonstrates the writer's ability to reflect the world in primary images and patterns. Thus, artistic

imagination always carries the features of mythological consciousness; in other words, literature is, in any case, a form of myth.

The Psychological Development of Myths: From Subconscious Analysis to Humanistic Concepts

Man has always been in search of primary meanings. J. Campbell noted that myths carry primary meaning and eternal principles that everyone should know. This precisely explains Updike's special approach to myth at that time and his desire to understand the deep meaning hidden in myths. He does not establish myth in a broad sense; the writer is only interested in the existence of moral ideas and images within the mythical realm. In any case, in ancient, religious, as well as modern artistic spheres, these ideas and images are regarded as products of the human psyche. This is because man has always tried to express his inner world—the problems and situations that worry and interest him—through symbols.

In the novel ***The Centaur***, mythological elements in the form of symbols allow us to reveal the shortcomings of modern society and the inner world of a person experiencing a moral crisis in a psychological context. For this reason, the images in the work are more reminiscent of psychological dramas than of images created on the basis of the poetic principles of the novel genre. The analysis of images and situations in a psychological context helps to deepen the semantic field of the work, to understand the author's position, and to reveal the subconscious desires and fears of the characters, as well as hidden layers of meaning. According to Freud, the subconscious often manifests itself in the form of symbols and metaphors, which provides an excellent opportunity to distinguish the general from the specific, the details from the essence, and, in psychoanalytic terms, the hidden from the visible. Psychological analysis in ***The Centaur*** not only helps to reveal the inner world of literary characters and the semantic features of the work, but also facilitates the study of psychological concepts and theories regarding human existence in modern societies and communities, as well as his social adaptation. According to Freud, the psychological mood of a person depends on a large number of complexes rooted in the subconscious. The spiritual development of an individual is largely shaped by early childhood experiences. According to his theory, human desires and conflicts arise primarily from family relationships, especially the relationship between parents and children. He even claims that the formation of moral and religious beliefs in humans is driven by the parent-child relationship. Updike describes the father-son relationship in the novel as significantly religious and social, and offers a Freudian view of the dynamics between these figures.

According to Freud, God is a projection of the father, one imbued with prohibitions and cosmic dimensions. Through religion, a person always feels that his parents are behind him throughout life, allowing him to prolong his childhood indefinitely. This is evident in the case of Joey, the protagonist of the novel ***Of the Farm*** (Updike, 2004): Joey's house felt more alive during his father's lifetime. Sometimes, it seems to him that his father's footsteps can still be heard from the balcony. He uses his father's old tools to mow the grass, as well as his father's razor, to relive his fond impressions of him. Life was easier for him with his father present. Similarly, Peter Caldwell was frightened when he first heard that his father was going to the doctor—and when he realized that his father might die, he became aware of his dependence on him at every stage of his life. The terrifying sense of helplessness experienced by these characters awakened a need to protect—to protect the beloved figure—and this need found expression in their idealization of their fathers. Thus, their longing for a father reflects a deep-seated need for protection against the consequences of their human weakness. The defense against childhood helplessness is what gives adult reactions to helplessness their distinctive character—a reaction that Freud defines as the formation of religion (Freud, 1927, p. 30).

George Caldwell, a father who sees the Olinger school as a source of death and tension, is nevertheless committed to raising his son as a talented artist, despite his psychological worries and the belief that death is imminent. He fears that his early death will lead to the failure of his son Peter's painting career and believes that his son still needs him. "He needs me to keep him going, the poor kid does not have a clue yet. I can't fade out before he has the clue" (Updike, 1963, p. 223).

However, George Caldwell is not rewarded for this devotion. On the contrary, Peter, who adopts a Freudian attitude toward his father, rebels against his perceived foolishness. He questions the very purpose of such sacrifice: "\[...] and I wonder, was it for this that my father gave up his life" (Updike, 1963, p. 270). So that I could create these mindless paintings? Feeling incompetent, Peter condemns his father for this. In his eyes, his father is just as unsuccessful as he is. George Caldwell's awkward appearance and self-deprecation only intensify his misery; he becomes an object of ridicule rather than an ideal to be admired or worshipped. For this reason, Peter conjures up new "heroes" from recent history—in the form of Hitler. For the adult Peter, his father is no longer his hero or God.

Freud's psychoanalysis teaches us to perceive a deep connection between the paternal complex and faith in God. He argues that psychologically, a personal God—unlike

an abstract or impersonal one—is an idealized, exalted father figure. Freud also observes that young people may lose their religious beliefs, or even fall into ruin, as a result of the unrelenting authority of their fathers, as in the case of Leonardo da Vinci. Thus, we recognize that the roots of religious need lie in the parental complex; the Almighty and just God and the kindly forces of Nature appear as grand sublimations of the father and mother—or more precisely, as revivals and restorations of the young child's early impressions of them (Freud, 1910, p. 73). Peter involuntarily sees his father as his alter ego and projects his own inner conflicts onto him (Astvatsaturov, 2020). George Caldwell, a teacher who cannot even manage his students effectively, sometimes admits his helplessness, though the students subconsciously admire him and benefit from the wisdom he imparts. Like the mythological Centaur Chiron, who chose science and teaching over warfare and earned the title "guide of the young," George Caldwell deserves similar respect. His dedication to educating the younger generation echoes the humanistic effort toward personal and societal growth. Though mentally and physically burdened, George Caldwell consistently puts others before himself. One winter morning, he notices a shivering man on the roadside and, despite being late for work, offers him a ride. After the hitchhiker exits, George and his son discover that their belongings have been stolen. Peter is furious and condemns his father's actions as foolish. He regards the hitchhiker as "a rotten bum," Diefendorf as "an obscene animal," and views self-sacrifice and compassion for such people as meaningless and futile. His father, however, holds an entirely opposite view.

On the other hand, the psychological concept known as the "Wounded Healer" archetype embodies empathy, prejudice, and self-sacrifice, representing a figure who, though suffering and wounded, seeks to heal and uplift others. In contemporary research, this archetype is often associated with the centaur Chiron, regarded as a vital symbol in one's spiritual and psychological development and even integrated into psychotherapeutic practices. In both modern psychology and mythological studies, the "sacrificer" is understood as a model of transformation—mythologically, it signifies a necessary stage for renewal, balance, and spiritual evolution; psychologically, it offers insight into the dynamics and boundaries of self-sacrificing behavior, particularly in addressing burnout syndrome. By identifying the dominant archetypes in their life stories, individuals can take meaningful steps toward emotional and spiritual growth. Boswell (2001) draws on Jung's archetypal theory to highlight the role of cultural, religious, and psychological archetypes in Updike's works. While "sacrifice" is not a specific term within Jung's system, the theme resonates deeply with the broader archetypes such as the Self, Shadow, and Hero. In the context of psychological transformation, sacrifice is linked to the elevation of consciousness through ego renunciation or reconciliation with the Shadow. Universally, acts of sacrifice for a higher goal or the welfare of society reflect the Hero archetype. In ***The Centaur***, the theme of sacrifice forms the novel's mythic and moral foundation. George Caldwell embodies this archetype, striving to impart values like intimacy, kindness, faith, and familial love, even at the expense of his own interests—values that contemporary society often deems futile or irrelevant. This disconnect engenders a profound emptiness within him, and his moral struggle concludes with resignation and sorrow. Overwhelmed by the forces of modernity that prioritize materialism and individualism, Caldwell is ultimately powerless. Updike, portraying the gradual unraveling of social harmony, reveals the stark dissonance between an individual's inner world and society's external expectations.

CONCLUSIONS

The novel "The Centaur" emphasizes the importance of man's reconciliation with his contradictory nature, the establishment of a true spiritual connection through love and sacrifice. This indicates the author's ability to perceive the world not only rationally, but also on an intuitive and emotional level. His struggle with the external world, which denies his personal aesthetic views, is eternal. Updike accepts the ideas of philosophers such as Soren Kierkegaard, Karl Barth, Paul Tillich and Jean-Paul Sartre, but no philosophical approach is presented in the novel as an answer that fully encompasses the complexity and contradictions of the human condition. His desire to fill the existential imperfection, to find the "eternal meaning", the Christian ideal, seems unattainable. Updike's attempt to realize these ideals in a modern society dominated by pragmatism and materialism ends in failure. Because although the modern world tries to understand human freedom and inner needs, it always forces him to obey the norms of society. Updike does not confront his hero with the dilemma of adapting to norms or opposing them. He explains the problems of modern society through individual human experience. To solve these problems, he proposes new models of therapy that combine philosophical, mythical and psychological approaches. The new methodological approach, by harmoniously combining the strengths of historical and modern ethical traditions, shows the possibility of creating an inclusive and peaceful world for both individuals and societies.

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