Advanced International Journal for Research (AIJFR)
E-ISSN: 3048-7641 ● Website: www.aijfr.com ● Email: editor@aijfr.com

The Posthuman Child: Decentring the Humans in Saint Exupéry's *The Little Prince.*

Dr. Gopa Das Talukdar

Assistant Professor, Department of English, Kokrajhar University.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.63363/aijfr.2026.v07i06.9087

Abstract

Antonine Saint De Exupéry's *The Little Prince* is a remarkable work of art which is child-centric and revolves around the protagonist's attempt to uncover critical questions relating to identity, love, relationship and responsibility. Reading Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince* (1943) through a posthumanist lens moves the attention away from hominoid supremacy and adult freethinking toward interrelationship and non-human agency. Rather than treating landscape and the wildlife purely as properties or cryptograms for human instructions, a posthumanist approach observes how non-human figures vigorously form the prince's integrities and distinctiveness as an individual. The present paper attempts to understand the child protagonist as a Posthuman phenomenon which has engulfed our whole existence. The Little Prince embarks upon an interplanetary journey because of a fallout with his beloved because of her vanity, but life comes full circle when he realises that he is rather responsible for the relationship that he has created. His encounter with several non-human creatures makes him realise his responsibility. As Posthumanism deals with entities that go beyond human domain, the protagonist's gradual coming to terms with complexities relating to relationship makes the novella Posthuman. This spirit of Posthumanism is explored in this paper as the work is a Critique of Anthropocentrism, the idea that humans are at the centre of everything.

1. Introduction

Humanism:

Humanism created a lot of furore during the Renaissance for its regal approach towards enhanced autonomy of humans over their body, mind and soul. Humanity means the extension of human quality and Humanism developed into a metaphysical and edifying crusade against the response to the objectification of mankind. It spread over Europe due to the inducement of spiritual leaders who manipulated the religious institutions for gaining authority and control. Developers of humanism proclaimed that human beings have enormous possibility to live autonomous and efficacious lives.

Defining Posthumanism:

Posthumanism, on the other hand questions the conformist human-centric prominence of humanism. It sensibly reconnoitres the blurring lines of distinction amongst humans and their contrived counterparts. Posthumanism, as a theoretical concept imagines a new world order by pushing humans to the periphery. "It questions the traditional limits separating humans from non-humans, blurring the distinctions between the organic and the technological, physical and the digital. This theoretical viewpoint leads to a reassessment of the definition of humanity in a time characterized by fast technological advancement, environmental challenges, and profound sociocultural transformations." Devendra Kumar Katroliya (436-437).

By fluctuating the emphasis from the humanoid question, posthumanism propositions fresh intuitions into individuality, intervention, and integrities within literature. Furthermore, it exactly hints at the antique fruition of post humanist thought, emphasizing reviews of humanist ideologies such as the dislocation of the human subject, technical amalgamation, and the formation of fused identities. Rosi Braidotti says "Not all of us can say, with any degree of certainty, that we have always been human, or that we are only that. Some of us are not even considered fully human now, let alone at previous moments of Western social, political and scientific history. Not if by 'human' we mean that creature familiar to us from the Enlightenment and its legacy. (2013) The Posthuman.

In addition, it explores the application of posthumanist theory in literature, contribution shrewd investigations of significant works by renowned authors like Margaret Atwood, Philip K. Dick, and Kazuo Ishiguro. These analyses illustrate how posthumanist themes restructure description edifices and character expansion. Ultimately, the passage concludes by emphasizing the transformative potential of posthumanism in comprehending contemporary existence and advocating for a broader, more interconnected perspective beyond the limitations of humanism.

The present paper reflects upon the complex relationship of a child with adults. It tries to explore the way a child questions the greater scheme of things. The book begins with the narrator reflecting back on the first drawing he made as a six-year-old of a boa constrictor who had eaten an elephant. Upon showing the picture to grown-ups, he was provoked to create his second drawing of the inside of the boa constrictor to prove the first drawing was not a hat. At this point, he was directed by the grown-ups to put away his drawings and pursue something practical. As an adult, he kept his first drawing with him and showed it to new associates to determine if the grown-up was as rational as a child. But the adults always reply that the picture was of a hat, so he learns to only talk of reasonable things to them, rather than the fantastic.

The Little Prince is an exclusive child-centric work of Antoine De Saint-Exupery, where the narrator keeps challenging the adults at different stages of his life, with his drawing of a boa constrictor that had consumed an elephant. The grown-ups, to his disappointment were unable to appreciate or comprehend the fancifulness of the picture and termed it as a hat. Moreover, he was asked not to waste his valuable time in drawing pictures. He was rather told to invest in something more empirical that would help him secure his professional career. He, therefore stopped talking about his creative endeavours with adults who tend to see everything from a rational perspective rather than imaginary.

This strain of adult superiority forms a large part of the narrative and it gets manifested through the characters and the setting of *The Little Prince.* The narrator reflects upon the times which he had wasted

elucidating things to adults. “Grown-ups never understand anything by themselves, and it is tiresome for children to be always and forever explaining things to them” *The Little Prince* (4). This statement explains the narrator’s mind where he explains the exhaustion of children in dealing with adults. The novella explores various levels of post humanist theory by situating the narrator in a position where he is able to challenge the humanist narratives that places human beings at the centre of everything.

Posthumanism seeks to confer non-human elements like plants and animals with an equal amount of knowledge, potential and space that is otherwise enjoyed by human beings. This critical theory focussed upon providing agency to the non-human characters by portraying their emotional and physical prudence that exceeds human beings. The Rose which appears to be the nurtured and protected love interest of the Little Prince. But its pride, vanity and taciturnity hurts its lover and he decides to leave the planet. And his eventual meeting with a Fox makes him realise his own mistake in leaving the Rose that he has admired and cherished. The Fox tells the Little Prince to be responsible for its own fostered relationship which he has nurtured. “People have forgotten this truth," the fox said. "But you mustn’t forget it. You become responsible forever for what you’ve tamed. You’re responsible for your rose.” *The Little Prince* (20)The fox tells him to visit the garden full of rose flowers again so he can see why his rose is so special. At the garden, the prince realizes his rose is unique to him because he has cared for and loved her. When the prince returns, the fox says that only the heart can see clearly because the eyes miss what is important, and that a person is forever responsible for what he has tamed.

Another posthuman feature is the interplanetary relationships that helped the protagonist establish lifelong bonds. The narrator builds a healthy relationship with the protagonist who is from another planet and to his utter surprise and amusement he decodes his Painting No.1which was never properly understood by grown-ups on the earth. “I have had a great many encounters with a great many people who have been concerned with matters of consequence. I have lived a great deal among grown-ups. I have seen them intimately, close at hand. And that hasn't much improved my opinion of them”. *The Little Prince (5)*

Posthumanism as a literary theory critiques the human attitude of attaching more value to abstract ideas, statistics and book-learning over experience, precision and comprehension. The planets that the Little Prince visits are inhabited by conceited beings who attach more importance to facts and figures rather than investing in ephemeral entities like love and responsibility. He comes to the conclusion that they invest more in abstract realities rather than cultivating imaginary faculty which goes a long way in proliferation of human mind and spirit.

Conclusion:

After making a thorough reading of the Little Prince, and synthesizing different areas it can be said that a child experiences shallowness on the part of the adults and his artistic quench is satisfied only after meeting the protagonist who is a young lad from a different plane. Their reflective approach towards life makes them way ahead of the adults who are largely conceited. So, the novella can be termed a work of fiction that represents Posthumanist spirit in content, context and action.

References

1. Braidotti, Rosi. *The Posthuman.* Polity Press, 2013.
2. Katroliya,Devendra Kumar "Posthumanism in Contemporary Literature: A Critical Analysis of Theory, Themes, and Texts" The Criterion: An International Journal in English Vol. 15, Issue-III, June 2024 ISSN: 0976-8165.