

## “DOG LEGENDS”- RETURNING TO MYTH: A NARRATIVE MODEL FOR EDUCATION AND MEANING IN THE TECHNOLOGICAL ERA

**Mihaela Camelia MOTORCA,**

Psychology Private Practice “Motorca Mihaela Camelia”,

[cami@camimotorca.com](mailto:cami@camimotorca.com)

**Abstract:** *In the contemporary context marked by accelerated digitalization and increasing frequency of identity crisis of children and adolescents, story reemerges as a powerful educational, symbolic, and therapeutic tool. “Dog Legends” is a transdisciplinary narrative project which reinterprets Campbell’s hero’s myth through a series of stories that combine archetypal symbolism, artificial intelligence, and innovative educational applications. Inspired by the 6 archetypes model proposed by Carol S. Pearson (“The Hero Within: Six Archetypes We Live By”), these stories offer a frame for emotional and moral learning through some canine emblematic characters, Shiba- The Orphan, Rey- The Altruist, Ryo- The Warrior, and Algo the degu squirrel- The Innocent. These symbolic figures become mirrors for identity formation processes, offering children and educators a language through which they can explore vulnerability, courage, care, and meaning. By integrating contemporary narrative technologies- 3D Pixar style animations, avatars generated by AI (artificial intelligence), and interactive storytelling- “Dog Legends” series become an educational ecosystem that can be applied both in schools or therapeutic interventions or personal development. This paper proposes a cultural and pedagogical analysis of the way myth can have a new manifestation in the digital era, not as a relic of the past, but as a live instrument for cultivating empathy, critical thinking, and social cohesion. Thus, “Dog Legends” is shaping as a model integrated at the intersection of story, symbol, and technology.*

**Keywords:** *hero’s journey; moral development; narrative identity; biophilia; educational storytelling; archetypal psychology; digital culture; artificial intelligence; therapeutic narratives; symbolic transformation; contemporary myth.*

**Introduction: The symbol crisis and the absence of myth**

In contemporary culture, marked by hyperconsumption and technologization, the child is raised in the absence of a symbolic structure that can support the process of self formation. The psyche is exposed to rapid stimuli, to premature emotions, but without an accompanying map. In this context, myth is not delivered anymore as a form of orientation and introspection, but is perceived as an archaic fiction, disconnected from reality.

Though, according to Eliade (1957), myth is not a simple cultural product, but a sacred structure of existence, a way of restructuring the meaning through origins' reactivation. Myth is not merely a story, but a paradigmatic experience: a return to the sacred foundational time, which reestablishes coherence and reinstates meaning in the face of everyday chaos.

In modern education, this dimension has been mainly lost. Mythical narration with its formative and transformative potential has been replaced with standardized contents and measurable learning objectives. In the absence of a symbolic anchoring, often, the child remains unguided in front of their existential questions, without inner landmarks that can articulate their own moral and identity becoming. Therefore, the reinterpretation of myth through a contemporary lens, not as a replica of the past, but as a living form of symbolic regeneration, becomes a necessary pedagogical act. Projects as "Dog Legends", not only translate the myth into visual language for the modern child, but also reactivates it as a tool for introspection, empathy, and meaning construction, rooted in the profound need of story.

**Theoretical Grounding: The symbolic ecology of transformation**

"Dog Legends" book series is founded on a complex theoretical architecture, articulated as a symbolic ecology of becoming. This architecture reunites myth, morality, nature, story, and meaning in a narrative space designed to sustain identity development and ethical reconstruction in an educational and therapeutic context.

**1. Hero's Myth**

According to the universal model proposed by Joseph Campbell (2004), the hero's myth structures the self profound journey in three archetypal stages: the departure, the initiation, and the returning. In Dog Legends, this structure becomes symbolic support for inner changing processes of children and professionals.

**2. Moral Development**

Jean Piaget (1932) described moral evolution as a passing from a heteronomous stage, in which rules are imposed from external, to an

autonomous stage, in which the child becomes capable of own ethical judgement. The characters from “Dog Legends” function as moral narrative models, fostering the internalization of responsibility and relational comprehension of good.

### 3. Logotherapy

According to Viktor E. Frankl (1959), the human need for meaning is a fundamental motivational force, especially in confrontation with suffering. In this frame, the story becomes not just a symbolic space, but also a form of existential searching. “Dog Legends” cultivates this dimension through reflexive questions and narrative trails focused towards meaning.

### 4. Biophilia

In 1984, Edward O. Wilson (Melson, 2001), introduced the concept of biophilia as an instinctive, emotional, and moral connection with life, nature, and animals. The choice to work with animated characters in “Dog Legends” is an integrated part of this philosophy, an attempt to reconnect with the live and nurturing dimension of humanity.

### 5. Narrative Psychology

In 1990, White and Epston (Fleming, 2003), argued that identity is built through stories, and that therapeutic intervention can allow the “rewriting” of a narrative self otherwise frozen in muted trauma. In “Dog Legends”, the child is not only a witness of the story, but a co-creator of the meaning: characters become a support for expression, repositioning, and emotional learning.

Complementary, Mircea Eliade’s perspective (1957) regarding myth as sacred trans-temporal and ontological restorative structure, offers a profound ideological frame to the project. Myth is not an archaic fiction, but a live form of symbolic coherence, a matrix of humanization.

## **Archetypes and the formation of identity: from the internal to digital expression**

In the absence of some coherent symbolic structures, the contemporary child is often left to define themselves through external volatile landmarks, the validation of social networking, contradictory models of popular culture, or communicable anxieties of the educational environment. This process of “becoming without a map” can lead to a fragile identity, marked by offense, avoidance, and moral confusion.

The model of six archetypes proposed by Carol S. Pearson (2015), offers a profound narrative frame for better understanding of the identity dynamics: The Orphan, the Warrior, the Altruist, the Innocent, the Wanderer, the Magician are not just metaphors, but internal

affective structures that activate process of reflection, projection, and integration.

In “Dog Legends”, these archetypes are embodied by canine characters illustrated in 3D Pixar style, in order to facilitate the emotional identification of the children:

- **Shiba**, the Orphan, embodies the archetype of vulnerability and hidden wounds, offering a symbolic space for emotions regarding loss, exclusion, and abandonment.
- **Rey**, the Altruist, reflects the tension between care for others and self-denial, becoming a model of negotiation between boundaries in relationships.
- **Ryo**, the Warrior, channels the offensive energy, the courage, but also the burden of taking responsibility, especially in the face of injustice and collective trauma.
- **Algo**, the Innocent, brings along a pure, faithful perspective, in which hope and love towards the world become moral acts, not only emotional ones.

Each child is projecting their own feelings into these symbolic companions. Therefore, the archetype is more than a mirror, but an affective container that allows indirect expression of fears, needs, and dreams.

Through this symbolic mediation, the child is offered not only emotional validation, but also a narrative distance, a safe space in which internal and complex dynamics can be explored without direct exposure.

Archetypes become transitional objects (Winnicott, 1971), which create the bridge between the internal world of the child and a shared cultural language. They help naming what is often unnamed: the desire to belong, the internal conflict between care and autonomy, muted grief of exclusion or moral impulse to repair the world.

Moreover, the diversity of the archetypes positions create a flexible educational field:

- The Orphan normalizes fragility and the urge to relating;
- The Altruist opens the reflection regarding boundaries and responsibility in relationships;
- The Warrior offers voice to the fair anger and the courage to act;
- The Innocent restores the wonder and the faith in kindness.

In this sense, “Dog Legends” do not function only as a narrative product, but a therapeutic pedagogy, a symbolic space in which emotional literacy, ethical reflection, and identity integration develop organically, through play and story.

**A symbolic ecology of education: myth, nature and belonging**

This project doesn't operate in a conceptual void, but a live symbolic ecology, where myth, archetype, and nature are interconnected. In the line of biophilia (Melson, 2001), "Dog Legends integrate the moral-ecological dimension in the narration. Algo, the little degu squirrel with a green cape, is not only a cute character, but a symbol of interdependence between self and the world, of our original connection with life and our responsibility towards the environment.

This frame promotes a kind pedagogy in which the child doesn't learn about ecology, but they symbolically live this belonging to nature. The story becomes a fertile ground for cultivating empathy, meaning, and moral reflection, without a didactic discourse, but through affective participation.

"Dog Legends" stories do not take place in an abstract or artificial environment, but in the heart of nature, in forests, grass, sky, and animals that live with purpose, not only with narrative function. Each scene, each interaction, is a gesture of a symbolic homecoming to life as an interconnected living whole, where the child is not only a witness, but a living being into fellowship with all the surroundings.

This choice is not decorative, but intentional. It is a form of rehumanization of education through belonging. The child not only learns about nature, but with nature. About care, not through rules, but through relation. About morality, not by imposing, but as a gesture of love towards life.

Thus, "Dog Legends" is a form of education that doesn't demand performance, but presence. Is an invitation in this hyper-digital world for the child to remember the mystery of being alive together with everything that is alive.

**Digital storytelling as space of identity co-creation**

Contrary to the perception that the digital desensitizes, *Dog Legends* demonstrate that technology can support emotion, if it is guided by a symbolic intention. The characters and the stories are created through a combination of 3D, artificial intelligence, music, and personalized interactivity.

The child is invited not only to watch, but to enter the story, to continue it with their own voice, emotions, and questions. Each scenario becomes a symbolic field where fear, shame or courage can be lived safe, without judgment.

Therefore, this project functions as a space of assisted identity narration, a therapeutic, and educational frame in which the child can be supported to tell their own story through collective myth. The

characters offer rhythm, not solutions. They do not correct, but accompany. They do not impose, but contain.

This process is of a major importance in the work with muted trauma, those experiences that do not have a language yet, but can be expressed in an indirect manner through identification, projection, and symbolization.

### **Conclusions: Story as a rehumanization of education**

“Dog Legends” is a symbolic intervention in education and therapy, an invitation to rehumanize through story. In a world in which children are often overwhelmed by emotions and fast stimuli, the story remains a safe space in which things can be understood and felt differently.

Myth doesn’t belong to the past. Myth is a living form through which people, especially children, can understand who they are and what they are going through. Archetypes are not labels, but internal models that help at the formation of identity, construction of a coherent and meaningful self-image.

In this context, education is no longer only about learning facts, but about creating spaces in which the child can (re)find, express, and transform themselves. Therefore, story becomes an essential instrument of emotional and moral development, capable of bringing together logic, emotion, and belonging.

### **Conflict of Interest Disclosure**

The author acknowledges authorship and creative involvement in the “Dog Legends” book series, which is distributed commercially. This manuscript, however, stands apart from promotional intent. It offers a conceptual and interpretive reading of the narratives through established theories in emotional development and symbolic education. This article does not incorporate commercial data, marketing discourse, or user endorsements. Its purpose is scholarly: to contribute to the pedagogical and cultural understanding of narrative tools in contemporary education. No third-party funding, institutional support, or commercial interest has shaped the content of this study.

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