USES OF COMPARATIVE MYTHOLOGY

Essays on the Work of Joseph Campbell

Edited by Kenneth L. Golden

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KENNETH L. GOLDEN
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To all who would learn, and to all who would teach—

This book is dedicated to all students and all teachers everywhere, everywhen.
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Preface

This collection offers critical-interpretative essays on various aspects of the work of Joseph Campbell (1904–1987). The appearance in 1988 of the Bill Moyers television conversations with Joseph Campbell—*The Power of Myth*, in six one-hour segments—occasioned a generalized interest, both academic and public, in the man and his viewpoints on myths and mythology. Such interest is hardly surprising, for Campbell is clearly one of a very few international experts on myth. Nor is it difficult to chart several of the reasons why so many people were then, and continue to be, fascinated by what he says.

Joseph Campbell examines myths and mythologies from a comparative point of view, and he stresses those similarities among myths the world over as they suggest an existing, transcendent unity of all humankind. Such a reading of myth proves attractive, even popular, as the turbulent twentieth century now moves toward its close. A century of wars in every decade, with two elevated to the status of “world wars,” this era has witnessed the development of the power of humankind to destroy itself and possibly all life on this planet. Problems of nationalistic, racial, and ethnic groups also have proved, as they continue to do, a major, divisive concern. Understandably, then, growing numbers of individuals around the world are weary of these conflicts and seek alternatives as a means of sustaining (or renewing) their hope for a better life, a less hostile planet.

Precisely here, in fact, lies one strong element of Campbell’s appeal. No matter the particularizing, constricting myth of a given tribe, people, or nation, Campbell shows and even argues that individuals today must see themselves as members of the same human aggregate: inhabitants of a holistic, blue-green globe whirling through the vastness of space.

Campbell’s interpretations of myths and mythologies, in other words, foster an openness, even a generous appreciation of, *all myths*; and he attempts to generate a broad, sympathetic understanding of the role of these “stories” in human history, in our present-day lives, and in the possibilities of our future. In his numerous volumes, he finds all over the globe the recurrence of similar, often the same, mythological motifs and
images. Whether a pattern, theme, or image of a "fall" from innocence, of a flood, of the end of the world, of a hero/savior, or of humanity—Campbell sees in myth that which may remind us of our similarities, our universal and constant needs, tendencies, and even of the life-paths we all share.

Such a viewpoint and the assumptions inherent in it run counter to attitudes and approaches dominant in the West since the beginning of this century; and Campbell certainly has received negative, even harsh, criticism. (In common usage today a myth, for example, frequently denotes a "falsehood" or a "ridiculous assertion.") The triumph in our time of the empirical sciences and their ancillary methodologies has made myth an outcast to a great extent. As the twentieth century enters its final decade, however, even the so-called objective scientific consciousness shows marked cracks in its assumptions, methodologies, and certitudes.

Essays in this collection speak directly and thoughtfully to issues and statements in Campbell’s works that sometimes conflict with a detached, cognitive viewpoint; others examine and often defend the independent, metaphorical emphases and interpretations Campbell offers. Essays in the first section, “The Man,” focus on Campbell himself, the scope of his career, or his general point of view. Those in the second section, “The Work,” treat in depth and detail specific questions, subjects, or themes in Campbell’s work. The final section, “The Farther Reaches,” offers essays treating more generally Campbell’s influence on contemporaries or on the way in which his treatment of myth reaches out into other areas of interest and knowledge.

Kenneth L. Golden
The University of Arkansas at Monticello
Abbreviations

Used for intertextual parenthetical citation of major Campbell works. Full citations appear in "A Joseph Campbell Bibliography" on pages 261-265.


“Art” = “Mythological Themes in Creative Literature and Art”

Business = This Business of the Gods

“Commentary” = “Commentary” to Where the Two Came to Their Father

Creative = The Masks of God: Creative Mythology

Earth 1/2/3 = Historical Atlas of World Mythology, II: The Way of the Seeded Earth, 1/2/3

Flight = The Flight of the Wild Gander

Hero = The Hero with a Thousand Faces

Image = The Mythic Image

Inner = The Inner Reaches of Outer Space

Journey = The Hero’s Journey

Myths = Myths to Live By

Occidental = The Masks of God: Occidental Mythology

Open = An Open Life

Oriental = The Masks of God: Oriental Mythology

Power = The Power of Myth

Power video 1/2/3/4/5/6 = The Power of Myth (video series)

Primitive = The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology
“Renewal” = “Renewal Myths and Rites of the Primitive Hunters and Planters”

Skeleton = A Skeleton Key to Finnegans Wake

Time = Transformations of Myth through Time
Joseph Campbell

The Man
Phil Cousineau

The Soul’s High Adventure:
Campbell’s Comparative Mythology

I

Without vision, the prophets declared, the people perish; without adventure, the scholar Joseph Campbell believed, the individual, in some mysterious way, perishes.

For Campbell, every modern individual is in the alternatively exhilarating and despairing position of the medieval knights of the Round Table. The mysterious Grail of destiny has been shown to us, the challenge has been announced, the adventure into the dark forest—“where there is no way or path”—is upon us: For “if there is a path it is someone else’s path and you are not on the adventure” (Time 212). To Campbell, the Arthurian romances were marvelous not simply as enchantments, but in the sense that each knight found his own way into the forest adventurous, metaphorical of the Western soul, alone on the trackless way with no rules, no precedent, and no one to follow. The spirit evinced by the knights epitomized for him what was “gorgeous” about the West, that every individual is unique. What else is the peculiar yearning in the Western soul, so clearly separated from Eastern thought, but to bring forth what the world has never seen before, one’s own singularity, one’s own potentiality?

After fifty years of cross-cultural scholarship and a life-long fascination with the mythic scheme of things, Joseph Campbell believed that the recurring theme, “the very essence of mythology,” was the call to this adventure, the adventure of the questing soul on its meandering journey into the inscrutable mystery of existence, from life to death and onward to what his own Celtic ancestors used to describe as the Back of Beyond (Open 23). Encouraged by his female students at Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, New York—who for thirty-eight years called upon him to
evoke the personal meaning of myths—Campbell came to consider the value of myths as our wisdom stories, spiritual clues along the tangled way that can tell us where we are on the arc of life’s journey. The thrill of recognition that we feel from the reading or telling of the myths, then, is the thrill of familiarity, the sense of hearing an echo of the individual inward life, a reverberation of one’s own soul’s high adventure. The power of Campbell’s view of myth is that he shows how stories and images are sacred things, that they are not static but kinetic, actually transformational in their capacity, psychological in their perspective, mystical in their ultimate concern for reclaiming the soul.

In his first major work, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), Campbell clearly announced his vision to anthologize the universal truths behind the masks of the hero in religion and mythology that amply illustrate this cosmic adventure of self-knowledge. Granting the differences between various cultures in the preface to his seminal book, he described his work as a search for the commonality of themes, for the elementary ideas, in world myth. Leaving the “thick description” about culture to other anthropologists, ethnologists, and historians, he hoped that by concentrating on the similarities, the differences would appear less divisive and insurmountable than popularly and politically assumed. For that matter, he directed his readers to turn to the original sources, to “ramble through the multitude of tales,” if they desired more than the fragments of whole myths he used to illustrate the stages of his hero cycle (*Hero* 58). In his own maverick style of scholarship, he strove to give his students and readers a sense of the “human mutual understanding” possible when comparing rather than condemning other traditions: “As we are told in the Vedas: ‘Truth is one, the sages speak of it by many names’” (*Hero* viii).

Inspired by the parallels he discovered between myriad traditions, such as the native American Indian myths he was drawn to as a boy, the religious “truths” in his own Irish Catholicism, the Arthurian tales, and Oriental philosophy, Campbell sets the tone for his life’s scholarship by outlining “the whole realm of the desired and feared adventure of the discovery of the self” (*Hero* 8). This *aventiure* is an “event, occurrence”; “a marvel, an accident, a bold beginning of uncertain outcome, a fortunate occurrence; a destiny,” as the etymology of the very word *adventure* suggests (*Creative* 190).

The mythic image of the visionary quest was critical for him from the very beginning because he saw the intrepid individual, constellated as the hero or the heroine who, in answering the call, symbolizes the critical movement from the given path to the discovered path from “the way of the village compound,” with its common, traditional, and binding myth, to
"the way of the forest," the uncommon, creative, releasing one. Campbell's Western hero is kin to the classical hero of the Spanish philosopher Ortega y Gasset, who writes that "the will to be oneself is heroism," or to that of Emerson who described the hero as the one who is "immovably centered," or to the individuated person of Jung's psychology. It is assuredly not the way of the inflated adolescent that modern pop psychology thinks of the as hero. Rather, for Campbell, he or she is the innovator, the one who takes the adventure in order to discover or to create something the world has never seen before. What Campbell's survey of classical heroes taught him was that the journey is not about self-aggrandizement but the bringing back of the boon, the gift, the "agent of change" to the community, selflessness won through self-knowledge precisely because the hero "is someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself" (Power 123). And the heroic life? Simply the living of the individual adventure.

The monomyth, the "one shape-shifting but marvelously constant story" that he gleaned from Ovid, Frobenius, Joyce, Mann, Jung, and others, had been relegated until the modern era to the shaman, hero, saint, or sage (Hero 3). In our time the adventure is to be expected of Everyman, of Everywoman. What fascinated Campbell as both scholar and raconteur were the symbols and rites and underlying stories that flowed through the subterranean chambers of the unconscious and gave courage to those who saw themselves as part of that river of wisdom. Some have wrongly charged those with an interest in the adventure of self-knowledge with being profligate, elitist, or excessive. To Campbell this quest is—in a pluralistic world that makes a collective mythology impossible—an adventure incumbent on us all. What must be left behind for the restless soul who hears the song of destiny is the "village" with all its comforts and securities but also its binding traditional ways.

The "task of tasks" is to find out what myth each one of us is living, as Campbell's mentor Carl Jung put it. Yet we are living in a demythologized age where the social, spiritual, and pedagogical structures are disintegrating all around us. Thus the only recourse is to create personal mythologies out of our own searches for understanding the unfolding tale of humanity's tragicomic destiny. In this way, we "exchange the unconscious myth with conscious biography," as Sam Keen says. It is frequently with the blazing of "sudden insights" that the soul awakens from its long slumber. Through the imaginative life, the soul realizes itself: illumination, awakening, rapture; mythic metaphors from the moments of peak experience; a mystical realization, not spiritual melodrama, but dramaturgy of the soul.
Campbell’s speculative pursuit and interpretation of mythic lore is reminiscent of what John Keats described in Shakespeare as the “circumnavigation of the soul,” a life dedicated to mapping out not just the territory of the myths, “the landscape of the soul,” but the experiences of plumbing those depths as recounted on the therapist’s couch, the artist’s canvas, the writer’s page. The timeless visions bubbling up from the depths of the psyche are but rhapsodies on a theme of the dangerous journey of the soul, with its inevitable tests and trials, metaphorical images of the crises of self-development, clues for “soul-making.”

How to plumb those depths? Campbell’s answer is through dreams, stories, art, myth, the activating of our inward life. And yet this pivotal myth of the search for the self that unites the spiritual quest of the ancients with the modern search for identity can be, as Keen comments at the end of his 1971 interview with Campbell for Psychology Today, “splendid. And how very lonely.”

Perhaps anticipating the natural resistance to the notion of confronting the mysteries of life alone, in one of his most memorable passages, Campbell describes the consolation of the mythologically grounded life, much as medieval Europeans found the “consolation of philosophy”: “We have not even to risk the adventure alone,” he writes:

For the heroes of all time have gone before us; the labyrinth is thoroughly known; we have only to follow the hero path. And where we had thought to find an abomination, we shall find a god; where we had thought to slay another, we shall slay ourselves; where we had thought to travel outward, we shall come to the center of our own existence; where we had thought to be alone, we shall be with all the world. (Hero 25)

Between this opening salvo in 1949 and the two volumes of the Historical Atlas published at the end of his career in the 1980s, Campbell traced and retraced the maze of the human psyche, mapping out the path of destiny, the route of individuality, the road of original experience, the footsteps of our ancestors, the contrary path, where the soul ventures forth to confront a world of marvelous wonders and terrifying forces.

To him it was “one grandiose song,” that of the spiritual awakening of humanity, when “miraculously reborn, we are more than we were” (Hero 162). It is here in the yearning for transcendence, for the mystery beyond meaning, the spiritual life beyond theology, that we find the bridge in Campbell’s work between, on the one hand, the ancient hero stories and biographies of fabled saints and sages and, on the other, the modern search for identity. It is a poet-philosopher’s rendering of myth as the divine play of the gods, an unabashedly romantic interpretation of our sacred stories.
and images as potential initiations for the soul, a window of accessibility to often remote traditions of transformation, a door of access to those moving toward a humanistic (in all the truest senses) one earth, a nature-oriented spirituality, a mythology for the whole planet, or the sound of one hand clapping from one of our "crazy wisdom masters." 

II

By regarding himself as a generalist, Joseph Campbell felt he could move in a range of scholarship and history that was "more rationally human" than that of the specialist. Following in the footsteps of his mentor, Indologist Heinrich Zimmer, the first man he knew who spoke "about myths as though they had messages that were valid for life, not just interesting things for scholars to fool around with," he sought out the analogues and correspondences of the myths he loved that could speak to the lives of his students and readers with humor and passion (Power 10). In his iconoclastic fashion, he put the popular, the people, back into the study of myth.

Campbell's comparative methodology was as eclectic as it was vast. His search for the archetypes of the great adventure began at the beginning, recounting the vision quests of shamans from the paleolithic caves of France and Spain to the Russian steppes and the Americas; the first heroes he called them. Besides the shamanic round of revelation, quest, and return, he discussed the adventurers of myth, folklore and fairy tale, art, poetry, and literature, as well as the inward journey remembered by patients in psychoanalysis, including clinically diagnosed schizophrenics. In the labyrinthine passages of their stories he recognized over and over again the familiar pattern of descent and ascent, death and rebirth, dream and waking, as depicted by these deeply significant motifs... the everlasting recurrent themes of the wonderful song of the soul's high adventure. And each who has dared to harken to and follow the secret call has known the perils of the dangerous, solitary transit: 

A sharpened edge of a razor hard to traverse,
A difficult path is this—the poets declare!

(Hero 22)

What emerges in the early pages of The Hero with a Thousand Faces is that Campbell identifies the shaman, dreamer, and hero with the soul, thereby intensely personalizing his scholarship. As myths are the masks of
god, the personified energies of the universe in the guise of sacred stories and images, so the shaman in trance, the sleeper in dreamtime, and the hero threading the labyrinth are metaphors for the soul in its long reach for spirit, like Psyche in pursuit of Eros, paradigms for the spiritual evolution of the human species. With disenchantment riddling our contemporary religious institutions, the need for individual spiritual experience seems to manifest in “a drift to the shamanic idea” (Open 37), a fascination with exotic cultures, medieval heroes, dream sojourners, and artists, all those spiritual explorers of what Campbell came to call “the inner reaches of outer space.”

“And so it is that the cosmic symbols are presented in a spirit of thought-bewildering sublime paradox,” Campbell writes:

> The Kingdom of God is within, yet without, also; God, however, is but a convenient means to awake the sleeping princess, the soul. Life is her sleep, death the awakening. The hero, the waker of his own soul, is himself but the convenient means of his own dissolution. God, the waker of the soul, is therewith his own immediate death. (Hero 260)

Looked at in this (at first) admittedly bewildering manner, the protean features of Campbell’s high adventure of the soul form a syncretic image, a revealing metaphor of the variety of religious experiences and choices of faith, hope, and destiny. It may, indeed, be perplexing to the majority of people raised in the belief of exclusive divine revelation of their own special chosen-people group. This idea of the surge of the individual life stands out as though in bas-relief to the “one great cosmic law” of ancient cultures:

> In Egyptian this law was known as Maat, in Sumerian, as Me; in Chinese it is Tao; in Sanskrit, Dharma. There is to be no individual choosing, willing, even thinking; no occasion to pause to ask oneself, “What is it I would now most like to do? What is it I would like to be?” (Myths 65)

These existential questions Campbell traces back to the raptures of the medicine men and women who first followed the call of the “world-fathoming adventure.” The shaman crisis that propels the soul’s departure on visionary journeys or spirit possession Campbell deems the earliest evidence of the mythologically informed life. Their visions and healing powers, translated into myths and rites, were the very origins of religion: “The realm of the myth from which, according to primitive belief, the whole spectacle of the world proceeds, and the realm of shamanistic trance are one and the same” (Primitive 250).
In his *Masks of God* tetralogy, Campbell unravels these intertwining roots of shamans and myth back to paleolithic times. He delves into the lessons of the myriad masks of god, the depths of the well of the human psyche, the contrast between the shaman and the priest, and the two radically contrary views of human destiny on earth:

Among tribesmen depending on the hunting skills of individuals for their existence, the individual is fostered: even the concept of immortality is individual, not collective. Spiritual leadership, furthermore, is exercised primarily by shamans, who are individuals endowed with spiritual power through personal spiritual experience, not socially installed priests, made members of an organization through appointment and anointment. (*Occidental* 506–507)

In marked contrast to agricultural mythologies that suppress any sign of individualism, the mythology of the paleolithic hunter reveals how it was to the advantage of the group to encourage rather than to crush out the urge to self-discovery. The accent of planting peoples is on the group; the accent of hunting peoples, on the individual, realized in the extreme by the shaman—in his suffering, solitude, and silence—in whom the mysteries of the supernatural world are manifested.

The prototype of the visionary journey and earliest evidence of ritual life for Campbell is in the paleolithic caves of the Dordogne region of France and northern Spain. On the cave walls are brilliant paintings swirling and bursting with the magic of the hunt, inexhaustibly rich in possible interpretations, one of the prerequisites, one might say, of mythic imagery. Why such transcendent art in sites so difficult to reach? Reviewing his masters before him, the Count Begouen, Abbé Breuil, Leo Frobenius, and Herbert Kühn, Campbell postulates that the ordeal of passage through the caves was more of an early form of initiation than of sympathetic magic, more of a rite of second birth than primitive superstition. In the “Sistine Chapel” of prehistory, the Sanctuary of Les Trois Frères, he noted the symbolic stages of the cave journey that mirror the morphology of his hero’s journey model:

1. a departure from the light-world of time-factored knowledge and relationships, through a subterranean opening, into darkness; 2. a difficult, dangerous, frightening struggle there through a narrow, tubelike passage; 3. a releasing entry into a vast chamber, torchlit, where 4. a semihuman, semianimal form presides above an everlasting Happy Hunting Ground. (*Animal 1* 77)
Down through the centuries, ranging from the Buriat to Yakut, Ostyak, Vogul, and Tungus shamans of Siberia, “a classical academy of shamanism,” to the Dakotas and Tierra del Fuego in the Americas, the shaman flourished as the early mystic, the man or woman of sacred knowledge. From the arctic explorers, Campbell learned of the Eskimo shaman, Igjugaijuk, and found his poignant maxim to be representative of shamans everywhere:

The only true wisdom lives far from mankind, out in the great loneliness, and it can be reached only through suffering. Privation and suffering alone can open the mind of a man to all that is hidden to others. (Primitive 54)

Another vision quest tradition Campbell explores is that of the Aboriginal walkabout. Following T.G.H. Strehlow, Campbell illustrates how the North Aranda tribe of aborigines of Central Australia in their mythological adventure follow in the footsteps of the ancestors (Animal 2 138). When the voices of the legendary Ulamba ancestors are heard, the young men of the tribe are led by the elders on a day’s pilgrimage to the totemic center of the Ulamba. While there they create sacred ground paintings hardened with the men’s blood, display the sacred tjurunga, chant a traditional song, and, all told, effectively dramatize the Creation and re-creation of the world. This “Dreaming” was believed to re-create the original Creation with each singing of it during the ritual journey. As with all the mythic journeys Campbell catalogs, the walkabout involves the sacralizing mind.

These cross-cultural correspondences of the call to adventure, the awakening of the self in the “crooked lanes of the spiritual labyrinth,” Campbell further compares to those found in the stages of the mystical experience as schematized by Evelyn Underhill in her seminal study of mysticism, when one can concentrate “upon transcendental things” (Hero 102).

Campbell’s commentary on such “very simple men—at least in our terms of culture, learning, and civilization”—is a gloss on one of his overarching themes, the difference between wisdom and knowledge. Campbell grants the wise old men and women of the “primal cultures,” in Jamake Highwater’s phrase, a dignity not always accorded by the dominant culture:

Yet their wisdom, drawn from their own most inward depths, corresponds in essence to what we have heard and learned from the most respected
mystics. There is a deep and general human wisdom here, of which we do not often come to know in our usual ways of active rational thinking. (Myths 212–213)

The parallels that Campbell draws out between shaman, hero, and mystic, and all of us in the dark night of the soul, speak "for certain powers in the psyche [soul] that are common to all mankind" (Power 217). Also, what the adventure of life is about is not merely an earnest search for meaning, but, as he told Bill Moyers, a search for "an experience of being alive, so that our life experiences on the purely physical plane will have resonances within our own innermost being and reality, so that we actually feel the rapture of being alive" (Power 5).

Campbell's aim was to give us back a sense of the universal wisdom journey, to stir in us "the blood memories" of those times and places when the deep cri de coeur of the soul journey was ritualized and celebrated. The appeal of his work lies there. The transitional life of the student, the creative crossroad of the artist, the clawing curiosity of the reader or audience is galvanized by the primordial images of the questing beast still within us and the pungent possibilities, as revealed to us by the mesmerizing storyteller, of the healing powers of confrontation. Campbell's intellectual figure-eights with his idea of the soul's high adventure crosses the soul's need for an adventure with its undeniable need to hear about comparable adventures.

III

Campbell marks well the radical shift between the old ways of the archaic world where the emphasis in myth and ritual is upon the distant gods or the supernatural, and the mystery religions of classical Greece where the focus turns to the individual. Through the vaunting of the rational mind, the investigating intellect, cool reason, and the ideal of beauty, came a democratization (except for women and slaves) of not only the city-state, but the self, the soul. According to Campbell:

It is this dramatic, epochal and . . . unprecedented shift of loyalty from the impersonal to the personal that I want to characterize here as the Greek—the European—miracle. It is comparable to an evolutionary psychological mutation. (Occidental 236)

The accent on the "particular excellencies" of the individual and on the personal experiences of the gods were reflected in the Bronze Age mystery
games such as those at the shrine of Eleusis near Athens. The highly ritualized descent into a symbolic underworld followed by ascent into light reveals a rite of rebirth, a reenactment of the agricultural cycle of the harvest, a revelation of transformation within mother earth. Campbell reminds us of Clement of Alexandria’s mockery of the Eleusinian mysteries as “silly” for involving “the elevation of a grain of [Persephone’s] wheat. Yet the culmination of the Roman Catholic mass is the elevation of a wafer of wheat” (Time 193). Once again he finds an equivalent mythological symbol, this time of a holy rite that makes possible a shift of consciousness from the profane to the sacred, the fleetingly phenomenal to the deeply eternal.

In the mysteries of Eleusis, so honored by the likes of Socrates and Euripides, and in the Greek literature of Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey, Campbell also detects the beginning of European consciousness as distinct from oriental or archaic consciousness. In the Iliad, the Greeks and the Trojans are intrigued “man for man, [with] the person they are being attacked by or whom they are attacking, who is regarded as a dignified noble human being, not simply some other kind of species to be wiped out and flayed.”

The visionary journey of Odysseus is not only a hallowed adventure but a series of male initiations, the climax of the spiritual voyage standing out in deep contrast to the highest Indian ideal of illumination:

For had Odysseus been a sage of India, he would not now have found himself alone, floating at sea, on the way back to his wife Penelope, to put what he had learned into play in domestic life. He would have been united with the sun—Noman forever. And that, briefly, is the critical line between India and Greece, between the way of disengagement and [that] of tragic engagement. (Occidental 173)

But perhaps the greatest manifestation of the Greek respect for the individual, in Campbell’s eyes, was that the combination of veneration of the body with the concept of personal excellence, made for an experience of Eros as the awakening god:

For no one achieves excellence in his life task without love for it, in himself without love for himself, or in his family without love for his home. Love brings everything to flower, each in terms of its own potential, and so is the true pedagogue of the open, free society. (Occidental 227)
The mythic image of Eros and Psyche (love and the soul) is at the heart of Campbell’s adventure, a tale of the awakener and the awakened one.

In *The Inner Reaches of Outer Space*, Campbell limns the journey of the Prince Siddhartha, Gautama Shakyamuni, who rode from his splendid palace in the dead of night on his magnificent horse Kanthaka. Into the deep forest, from hermitage to hermitage, “the Future Buddha passed in search of his way.” Fasting, bathing, resting, and finally reposing under the Bodhi-tree, where resisting the temptations of the demons Fear and Desire, he remained the Immovable One, transfiguring into the “Awakened One” (from the root *budh*). Remaining thus awake for the next fifty years, the Buddha became the heroic teacher of the mystic way (*Inner* 135).

Christ himself has the image of a hero in Campbell’s *The Mythic Image*, as Michael Toms points out in his interview with him. Campbell remarks that Jesus symbolizes the inspiration to the life force, “the life of the spirit, not simply of physical conditions, but . . . the spiritual adventure” (*Open* 26). Archetypally speaking, Campbell insists, the Buddha and the Christ “are perfectly equivalent mythological symbols. Two ways of saying the same thing: that a transcendent energy consciousness informs the world and informs you” (*Journey* 156-157). Spiritual avatars are reminders of the perennial philosophy. They teach that the divine inside us is a mirror reflection of the divine outside us and that spiritual disciplines are designed to align the two.

The second great phase of Western culture for Campbell after the Greco-Roman is the period of the Arthurian and Grail romances in the late Middle Ages, or as he called it, the time of love against faith, “Libido versus Credo,” the troubadours against the Church fathers, *Amor* spelled backwards as *Roma*, the adventures of the Grail knights seeking salvation outside the confines of the Church, and the ascendancy of individual conscience over ecclesiastical authority. For him the period represented “respect for . . . the individual way” (*Time* 210). The metaphor of the Wasteland he found in the Grail romances as a graduate student at Columbia was one he used in his entire career for the blight of the inauthentic life: “Now how does that get healed? It gets healed through the example of an authentic life” (*Journey* 107).

Later, at the “beveled edge” of the Gothic and the modern world, stands the silhouetted, Giacometti-like satire of the authentic knight, the picaresque figure of Don Quixote, “the sad parody of a more divine and serene Christ . . . torn by the modern anguish,” riding out over the plains of La Mancha, the last hero of the Middle Ages, tilting at windmills (*Creative* 213). Quixote’s world is so rapidly becoming devoid of mythic reality, Campbell implies, that he has carried adventure on in his head.