In the Kingdom of the Blind: the Deconstruction of *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*

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In the Kingdom of the Blind: the Deconstruction
of The Hero With A Thousand Faces
by Kent Huffman, '96

The structuralist view of the heroic/epic form would have us believe that all heroes, whether in literature or in myth, conform to a basic cycle. According to Joseph Campbell, that basic structure is the three-part Departure, Initiation, and Return that he outlines in his major work on heroic form, The Hero With A Thousand Faces. The form here, according to Campbell, stems from his theory that the desire to create myth is a basic element in human nature. This theory is backed up in the book by hundreds of examples from all cultures in history, from all over the globe—Primitive, Occidental, Oriental, and Creative Mythology—all carefully sifted through by Campbell to show that all legends have the same common elements (see Campbell's four-volume Masks of God series). It is these common elements that Campbell uses to base the foundation of his structuralist form, saying that all mankind's heroes are a part of the same mythical cycle, and in fact, are all variant versions of one another.

Campbell's scholarship and knowledge of myth and legend is to be admired, yet his theory is flawed. The idea that the desire to create legendary heroes through storytelling amounts to a common element within human nature is a fascinating theory, but using it as justification for such a colossal infrastructure, which according to its very purpose should be all-encompassing, Campbell has lent himself to folly: if a heroic epic is found that meets the requirements of the formula, but has no specific place within the cycle, the infrastructure fails. The examples that follow should prove that while Campbell may have been a leading authority on myth and its role in society, his word (especially in The Hero With A Thousand Faces) should hardly be taken as law on heroic cycles.

First comes the issue of the structure of Campbell's argument: he first advances the theory that all heroes conform to a basic structure. This, of course, is the basic premise of Hero With A Thousand Faces, and from this theory comes the seemingly endless stream of examples Campbell provides in evidence of this cycle. The true cycle of the book, however, is buried among the examples in the second major theory: that myth-making has always been a basic human need. Campbell cites Freud among his primary inspirations, and says in his introduction to the book, "we must learn the grammar of the symbols [in myth], and as a key to this mystery, I know of no better modern tool than psychoanalysis." (Preface). In presenting his theories in this way, a nicely self-perpetuating cycle is established, one theory presented as "proof" of the other and vice-versa, and the multiple examples and stories Campbell fills the book with distract the reader from ever questioning either.

Campbell's usage of these examples in Hero With A Thousand Faces serves a second function as well: in trying to outline a uniform structure to all myth, the author sometimes overreaches himself and fails to explain how certain aspects of specific stories fit into his overall design. In these cases, he simply loads the chapter with examples and, in effect, asks the reader to let them stand as self-evident proof of the theory. This occurs notably in chapter three, section two, "Transformations of the Hero," where Campbell outlines all the roles the hero plays within the scope of human imagination, including "The Hero as Saint" and "Departure of the Hero." In addition, Campbell allows Western philosophy to affect his presentation of myths from other cultures. Native American folklore, Oriental spirituality, Middle Eastern legend, and ancient lore are all viewed through Campbell's own Judeo-Christian idealism, and in being taken out of context in this way, they lose their basic purpose. These examples are offered in proof of conclusions about myth that, consciously or not, are basically Christian principles.

For example, in chapter two, section four, "Folk Stories of Virgin Motherhood," Campbell includes the New Testament ideal of a blessed child being born from a virgin mother among his variations of the hero myth. This is also an example of another section of Hero With A Thousand Faces where Campbell clouds his basic point with stories. In this chapter, Campbell passingly cites the stories of Buddhism, Aztec myth, and Ovid's Metamorphoses as examples of virgin birth, then goes on to recount in detail a Tongan folk tale he calls "queer" about a mother giving birth to a clam, which in turn becomes pregnant from eating a coconut husk and gives birth to a human boy. Campbell never specifically explains exactly how the image of virgin birth fits into the heroic cycle as he sets it up; in fact, Campbell's own explication in this section is limited to a few sentences, while the storytelling takes up several pages. Again, we see that while it is admirable that Campbell knew myth and legend so well, his usage of it in his examples is, at best, questionable.

A final point concerning Campbell's selection of legends to back up his theories is that he is too discriminating in each specific chapter for all the examples in Hero With A Thousand Faces to support each other collectively. A favorite example of Campbell's throughout this book (and many of his others) is the Arthurian saga. However, if the Arthurian myth is applied to the chapter on virgin birth above, it fails to correspond. Far from being the holy child of a virgin mother, Arthur was begotten on the Duke of Cornwall's wife, Igraine, by the would-be High King of England, Uther Pendragon. This illegitimate
consummation was achieved by an even further anti-Christian concept. Merlin the Wizard assisted Uther's lustful purpose through magic in changing Uther's form to that of Igraine's husband, the Duke of Cornwall, so that she could be deceived (see Book 1, Chapter 2 of Malory). Arthurian legend is one of Campbell's main sources in composing his heroic cycle; however, it is clear in viewing how Arthurian lore works within this chapter that the structure within *Hero With A Thousand Faces* focuses on examples too specifically to be all-encompassing.

Keeping these basic ideas in mind, we will examine how truly flawed *The Hero With A Thousand Faces* is in a detailed examination on three major premises dealing with the creation of heroes and heroic cycles. First comes the creation of heroes from history. It is a well-known fact that history is recorded from the point of view of those in power. Michael Foucault's theories of truth and power will enter here in our look at William Shakespeare's heroes from his history plays, particularly *Henry V*. Next we move to the creation of heroes from legend in the tales of Robin Hood, the outlaw hero of Sherwood Forest. Here, we will see the evolution of a heroic cycle down through the passage of time. Finally, we will move to the creation of heroes from fantasy, quite possibly the only true mythic form remaining in the twentieth century, in the writings of J. R. R. Tolkien, author of *The Lord of the Rings*. These three examples (none of which fit Campbell's qualifications for a "true" heroic cycle) will highlight the inherent weaknesses in Campbell's structure and show that not all heroes conform to his supposedly all-encompassing design.

I. Creation of heroes from history: William Shakespeare's *Henry V*

Henry V is popularly known as England's finest monarch, and is also felt by some to be the greatest of Shakespeare's history plays. Such a noble monarch, immortalized forever in the words of the greatest poet in the Western world, would surely be expected to conform to Campbell's outline. He seems to complete the three major stages outlined in *Hero With A Thousand Faces*: Departure, in which he holds council about his right to begin his campaign in France, and later leaves for the French shore; Initiation, where the young King sees the atrocities of war first-hand with the murder of all the young boys by the French nobles; and Return, in which he brings the French princess Kate home to the English shore, having completed a successful campaign. The basic problem with *Henry V* is, the man is not quite so heroic as Shakespeare would like us to believe.

First comes the notion of Foucault's concept of truth and power. Hal is extremely problematic with regard to this theory, as he was (naturally) the "winner," and history would show him favorably because he was so, but he was also very well-liked by his subjects (at least in the Shakespearian version). We are faced with a hero who, because of his status, could write his own role in the history of England and be loved by his subjects, feared by his enemies, and respected by his peers all at the same time. Foucault tells us that we should question this, as he was the King, he had the power he needed to create his own "truth." This would be the truth that Shakespeare picked up and elaborated so dramatically in his play. No power figure could ever dream of more. Our first question in regard to *Henry V* as a heroic cycle arises: can we trust him as a hero? The simple fact that history is written from the point of view of those in power would lend us to some doubt on this point. In addition, since Henry V was arguably the most powerful king in English history, it fits within this theory that he would be portrayed the most heroically.

A closer examination of Shakespeare's play yields even more doubt. First there is the fact that Hal, once he gained his place on the throne, turned his back on his old friends among the common people. Falstaff and the others in the tavern are almost forgotten by Hal until the French campaign, when he orders the execution of one of his old drinking mates for plundering. His old mentor, Falstaff, dies alone of consumption, and Hal does not go to him. The friends of his youth have been replaced by his noble advisors, who, even though portrayed honorably by the playwright, have Henry's best interests at heart, for their fates (and their powers) are bound to his. Again, Foucault enters—Hal now has the power to surround himself with friends who are charged by honor, duty, and self-interest to him. He no longer needs the common folk.

Even more disturbing is the final scene, with the "wooing" of the French princess, Kate. Again, Hal is in complete control of the situation—so much so that this scene has been looked at as a kind of rape in Shakespearian criticism. He has won the field in battle, utterly destroyed the French army, and claims Katherine as the spoils of war. The French king has no choice but to accept his terms, and Kate, in her innocence (and very poor English) fails to understand completely what is happening to her. In this, at the end of the play, it would seem that if *Henry V* fit in with the theories of *Hero With A Thousand Faces* at all, it would be only in chapter three, section five: "The Hero as Emperor and as Tyrant" (see 345-49). Of course, history was not Campbell's main focus; his expertise lay primarily in myth and legend. The next two examples should show even more how the kind of structuralism displayed in *Hero With A Thousand Faces* operated on Campbell's own level.

II. Creation of heroes from legend: The tales of Robin Hood

It seems that everyone is familiar with the legendary medieval bandit of Sherwood Forest and his troop of merry men. It also seems that no one would question Robin Hood's status as a hero; his only
rival for such a title among the myths of his native England would be King Arthur, a favorite example of Campbell’s. Remarkably, then, we find that this noble thief is never mentioned by Campbell, and furthermore is excluded because he does not conform to the structure in *Hero With A Thousand Faces*.

The legend of Robin Hood is a fascinating study into the evolution of a heroic cycle from the fifteenth century to the present. The problem is, the adventures of Robin Hood have never been collected into a single, definitive volume (such as has been the case with Malory’s *Le Morte D’Arthur*); and thus, his tales are too scattered for the mythic outlaw to complete each of Campbell’s three basic requirements.

The simple reason for this is that the legend of Robin Hood has undergone several drastic changes as each age adapted him to its own standards. To understand this better, an explanation of how these variations within the mythology of Sherwood Forest and its legendary inhabitants is needed.

Robin Hood in the 1400’s was very much a common man’s myth. His legend began in the ballads of medieval minstrels who portrayed him not as the noble “prince of thieves” that we in the 20th century have come to know him, but as outlaws were known in that same day and age. There was no Maid Marian, no Friar Tuck, no sense of robbing the rich to give to the poor, and no sense of the “jolly” nature of life in the forest as it has come down to us. Robin and his men were out for personal gain, pure and simple, and they would attack anyone who dared set foot in the Greenwood (which, in the beginning, was Barnesdale—not Sherwood—Forest, just north of the traditional roaming ground in Nottingham).

Still, the basic elements that made Robin Hood a lasting force in English folklore were there: due to his love of Mary Magdalene and the church, he would never let any woman come to harm by his hand or by his men’s. He would not rob the poor (though, as mentioned above, he did not rob the rich solely for them either!). He aided those in need, he would shelter those who came to him in good will, and if an adversary put up a worthy fight, he would ask him to join his company in the forest. This Robin Hood was very much a man of action, with very little in the way of intricate plot lines or complications of character; remember that the vehicle for this legend in this century was the ballad, which had no room for such complexities.

This was the basis of the legend, and similarly is the basis for the reason he is not included by Campbell among the literary and mythic heroes of the same age. These common beginnings as a ballad hero set the tone of the Robin Hood legend as opposed to the more collected stories of Charlemagne, Roland, and Arthur; Robin Hood was a forester, a *common man*—a man of the people. In this, the first incongruity in Campbell’s theories within this example surfaces: *The Hero With A Thousand Faces* says that heroes are common men, those who come from the “navel of the world” (see 40-46), yet only the nobles are counted as examples in that book, while Robin Hood is disqualified.

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After the medieval period, Robin Hood began to undergo his first transformation as a mythic hero; his legend had become so popular in ballad form that even the upper classes had begun to take an affinity to the outlaw tales. However, a common rogue could never be accepted among the nobility, so they “gentrified” Robin Hood—he became a dispossessed nobleman rather than a common forester. This accounts for the two distinctly different “origins” of the character; one, the older Robin of Locksley, the forester; and two, the Renaissance’s Robert, Earl of Huntingdon, wrongly disowned by the corrupt Sheriff of Nottingham. This is the beginning of the mass appeal that the legend has displayed over the centuries, another factor pointed out by Campbell: that “true” heroes (since all are variants of one another) have an equal, timeless appeal to mankind. Another inconsistency arises here, as it seems even more that Robin Hood should be included among the other medieval heroes in Campbell’s writings. The outlaw’s stories may very well be more widely known than the others among the general populous because he is considered, even now, a figure of entertainment and not critical study. Yet it is this very reason he does not meet Campbell’s basic requirements.

In the late 1700’s and early 1800’s, the rise of literacy and the growing availability of the printing press created a clash between the old Robin Hood in the medieval ballads and the newer concept of the outlaw as a disenfranchised lord. Scholars and antiquarians like Joseph Ritson and Francis J. Child began researching and printing the archaic songs, as their popularity still proved strong. This “rebirth” of the more active hero (as, along with gaining nobility, Robin lost much of his character as a fighter) blended the old concepts of supremacy in battle and archery, absolute rule in the forests with his men, and a disdain of organized religion along with the newer concepts. Maid Marian and Tuck had now been introduced and accepted, Robin’s skill at swordplay cemented itself, and the ever-present threat of the untrustworthy follower (a 17th century nobleman’s nightmare) combined the old with the new to create a hybrid of the two, with the medieval strengths complimenting Renaissance sensibilities. This is the primary form of Robin Hood as he has come down to us in the 20th century, particularly with the rise of television and film-making; the role lends itself perfectly to the actor wishing to portray the ideal action hero.

This explanation merely scratches the surface of the ever-shifting popularity of Robin Hood’s legend; it does not cover the outlaw’s roles as a popular children’s story, a good Saxon fighting unjust Norman oppression, a faery-like spirit of the forests, or any of the other dozens of variations the legend has gone through over time. (As a Walt Disney animated film, in Sir Walter Scott’s *Ivanhoe*, and in Ben Johnson’s unfinished play, *The Sad Shepherd: a Tale of Robin Hood*, respectively.) There is a Robin Hood for each age, and this is the final evidence the legend of Robin Hood pits against *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*. 

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Thousand Faces: in section one of his epilogue, “The Shapeshifter,” Campbell addresses exactly this type of transformation of the hero cycle through time. He states:

For when scrutinized not in terms not of what it is but of how it functions, of how it has served mankind in the past, of how it may serve today, mythology shows itself to be as amenable as life itself to the obsessions and requirements of the individual, the race, the age (382).

One final time, we see that while it seems that the tales of Robin Hood would be a natural fit for Campbell’s purpose, they instead weaken it. Due to the fact that because the author confused so many theories into his structure, the legends of the outlaw hero cannot fit within it, and Campbell’s inconsistencies are brought to the fore.

III. Creation of heroes from fantasy: The writings of J. R. R. Tolkien

The writings of John Ronald Reuel Tolkien are the best-known examples of fantasy epic form in the modern world; and, noting that modern fantasy is the direct descendant of epic myth, it would seem that these writings would be the most compatible with Campbell’s form. Tolkien, a former Oxford professor of Anglo-Saxon literature, clearly had the heroic/epic structure as found in Beowulf and other early literary/mythic cycles in mind while creating his own three-part saga; his reason for writing The Lord of the Rings, in his own words, was:

... an equally basic passion of mine ab initio was for myth (not allegory!) and for fairy-story, and above all for heroic legend on the brink of fairy-tale and history, of which there is far too little in the world (accessible to me) for my appetite. ... I was from early days grieved by the poverty of my own beloved country: it had no stories of its own (bound up with its tongue and soil), not of the quality that I sought, and found (as an ingredient) in legends of other lands. There was Greek, and Celtic, and Romance, Germanic, Scandinavian, and Finnish (which greatly affected me); but nothing English, save impoverished chap-book stuff ... I had a mind to make a body of more or less connected legend, ranging from the large and cosmogonic, to the level of romantic fairy-story ... which I could dedicate simply to: to England; to my country (Carpenter and Tolkien 144).

Clearly, even though Tolkien wrote and revised The Lord of the Rings just before the publication of Campbell’s book (from 1937-1948), he still set to work to bring about a heroic epic along the guidelines of the structures that Campbell established in his writings. Tolkien had the same sources in mind that Campbell cites as examples of the heroic epic formula (Beowulf, Malory, the Bible, and so on), as he too knew them well, and even cited a few as inspirational for his own work: "Beowulf is among my most valued sources; though it was not consciously present to the mind in the process of writing" (Carpenter and Tolkien 31).

The most curious feature of Tolkien’s writings to note in this analysis is that his prelude to Lord of the Rings, the children’s story The Hobbit, conforms entirely to the heroic structure set up by Hero With A Thousand Faces. A single main character, Bilbo Baggins—the hero, the hobbit—goes through Campbell’s three stages step-by-step: Departure, as he leaves his small Shire to adventure out into the world in search of dragon’s gold; Initiation, where Bilbo, in his travels, begins to think and act as a hero and eventually reveals his heroic nature by bringing dwarves, elves, and men together by his example; and Return, where the hobbit (with his golden hoard and magic ring) travels back to his peaceful Shire, having had quite enough adventuring. Of course, this is a very condensed version of both Tolkien’s book and The Hero With A Thousand Faces, yet it proves beyond a doubt that Tolkien knew the heroic cycle very well and could incorporate it into his own writing at will.

With this in mind, we come to the very point: even though Tolkien meets all the heroic expectations of Campbell’s cycle in his prelude, and in fact reinforces them by meeting them so exactly, when it comes time to expand the story of The Hobbit to true epic proportions in Lord of the Rings, he fails to meet those same specifications on all fronts, in point of fact proving that the heroic theories in Campbell’s book are not by far all-encompassing as they claim to be. Quite simply, The Lord of the Rings fails to meet Campbell’s theories as completely as his prelude The Hobbit fulfills them. Strictly according to Campbell’s structure, there are no heroes anywhere to be found in the entire three-volume saga.

To prove this, and to disprove the theories of Hero With A Thousand Faces on this topic, we will embark on an individual analysis of several main characters in the saga who are set up “heroically” throughout the cycle. Frodo Baggins, the Ringbearer and nephew of The Hobbit’s Bilbo, is the obvious choice to be the saga’s hero: he accepts the quest to destroy the ring, bears its weight through the “underworld” of Gorgoroth and Mordor, and finally returns to Rivendell and his friends and family. However, Frodo does not fit the hero code; he is not alone in his actions. The hobbit has his trusty friend/ servant Samwise Gamgee helping him along every step of the way from the beginning of the quest in their home to its resolution with the destruction of the ring in the bowels of the mountain where it was forged—even to the point where Sam himself takes up the ring for a time. In this, neither Frodo nor Sam can be epic heroes, as both of them share in the responsibility that Campbell says only one should bear—each of them becomes a “half-hero.”
Possibly Aragorn, or Strider the Ranger, is the hero then—at the conclusion of the saga, he is crowned High King of Middle Earth, he leads the final forces of elves and men into Mordor for the battle that ended the war, and of course, he does have the ancient noble blood of the line of Elendil in his veins. Still, Tolkien very deliberately sets Aragorn up as a “fringe” character through most of the cycle; he describes the Rangers as “mysterious wanderers... [who] were taller and darker than the Men of Bree and were believed to have strange powers” (165), and Aragorn himself, while his role grows throughout the cycle of The Lord of the Rings, still does not take an active enough part in the story to complete any of the three requirements of The Hero With A Thousand Faces. In fact, according to those specifications, he is as much a “helper” figure as he is “heroic.” His place in the story echoes Tolkien’s description of his people: he fades into the story towards the beginning to lead the hobbits to safe ground, and when the quest to destroy the ring is decided, he leads them again for a time, then turns away to rally the forces of Men together to combat the Dark Lord’s armies in battle as the hobbits (Frodo and Samwise) go on alone.

Gandalf the Wizard, then, may be the hero of the story; he accepts his responsibility to oversee the quest to destroy the ring, journeys into the “underworld” of the Mines of Moria and is there killed in combat with a demonic Balrog (whom he also kills), and then returns from the dead to assist Aragorn in rallying the forces of Men to arms. However, Gandalf, like Aragorn, is more a helper figure than a singular hero. His is a position of advisor, as it was in The Hobbit, as he is a messenger of the gods of Middle Earth, a divine spirit in human form. Thus, even though he is not omniscient—the final outcome of the War of the Ring is decided by the inhabitants of Middle Earth and not divine intervention (as in some of Campbell’s examples such as the writings of Homer and Virgil)—his power is too great to allow him to be classified as the hero.

Legolas the elf and his friend, Gimli the dwarf, are two other possible candidates—as members of the “Fellowship of the Ring,” they too accept the quest to destroy the ring, journeys into the Mines of Moria (where Gandalf is slain), and reemerge again to leave with Aragorn to assemble the peoples of Middle Earth to rally for war. Still, even though these two are major characters in the saga, they do not play as active a role as some of the other members of the Fellowship (as say, Frodo, Aragorn, and Gandalf, and thus do not complete the three stages required of heroes—they are simply part of a team in which they are not major players. True, both of them have moments where they shine individually; Legolas and Gimli both are truly responsible for the survival of Aragorn and other lesser characters at the battle of Helm’s Deep, yet on the whole, they are simply not individually active enough for consideration.

The other two hobbits in the Fellowship, Peregrine Took and Merry Brandybuck, seem to complete a heroic cycle after the Fellowship is broken: they (like everyone else) accept the quest, then are captured by a company of orcs (goblins), and are carried through what might be called an underworld as their evil captors race away from the pursuing trio of Aragorn, Legolas, and Gimli; and then escape to meet the tree-people called Ents and return with their newfound allies to the battle (and the company of their friends). Yet Merry and Peregrine, like Gimli and Legolas, do not take an active enough role to truly be considered heroes. In fact, these two are almost comic relief from some of the harsher elements of the story which affect some of their more prominent comrades.

The final member of the Fellowship, Boromir, takes what can only be called a minimal part in the story, as he is only featured from the time the Fellowship is assembled to a short time later when he is killed by the orcs that steal away with Merry and Pippin. It is a “heroic” death, as he fights off hordes of goblins while shot through with arrows and calls Aragorn to his aid with his battle-horn (in the tradition of Robin Hood!), yet his role is minimal, and he cannot be a hero because he is simply not alive long enough. This eliminates the entire Fellowship of the Ring—the logical place to look for our hero: Frodo, Samwise, Merry, Pippin, Aragorn, Gandalf, Legolas, Gimli, and Boromir. There are others that might be considered, yet they can all be eliminated fairly quickly, as the only characters who truly play a large enough role in the story are the first eight members of the fellowship. Elrond, the keeper of the elvish safe haven Rivendell, like Gandalf, knows too much about events that are transpiring in the war, he never leaves his valley, and is clearly a helper figure. Eowyn Shield-Maiden destroys the evil King of the Ringwraiths, yet aside from the fact that Campbell does not include women among his heroes, this is her only major role in the story (though it deserves to be noted that Tolkien’s women figures do play very important roles in the saga serving as everything from fighters to advisors). There are many other powerful characters that the Fellowship comes across in their travels: Galadriel, the elvish queen; Tom Bombadil, the master of the forests; and Eomer, brother of Eowyn; but all these characters are very clearly nothing more than helper figures and not heroes in their own right (according to the structuralist guidelines).

Perhaps an even more interesting point is this: there are only two characters in the saga that play a major enough role to be considered enemies: Sa, the Dark Lord of Mordor (who is, in fact, considered by the good characters to be the enemy and is named as such); and Gollum, or Smeagol, the former hobbit who was warped in body and mind by the evil power of the ring. The most obvious difficulty with finding a specific enemy at this point is this: Campbell describes the enemy as being a polar opposite of the hero; yet in Lord of the Rings, we have no hero to compare an enemy to. Sauron, the
Dark Lord (the Necromancer of *The Hobbit*) is named by all the good characters in *Lord of the Rings* as "the enemy" repeatedly—they call him this for fear of even uttering his name. However, in truth, Sauron is no more than a presence in *Lord of the Rings*. He has no corporeal form, he never leaves his high tower in Mordor, and he does nothing more than watch the progression of the good characters against his forces and instills fear in them through some form of telepathy. This is the point that eliminates Sauron from being an enemy according to *Hero With A Thousand Faces*, and is a very interesting detail to note in relation to the fact that he has no hero to contrast himself to: through the entire story of *The Lord of the Rings*, Sauron takes no action at all! Gollum, or Smeagol, the former hobbit, does take action through the story—he constantly antagonizes Frodo and Samwise once they reach the valley of Gorgoroth in his attempt to regain his ring, his "precious." However, Smeagol cannot be considered the main enemy because of one simple point. He is simply not powerful enough. The War of the Ring has nothing to do with him specifically; he was simply its former owner (the one whom Bilbo stole it from in the events of *The Hobbit*). He only accosts Frodo because he wants it back. He is not evil in nature (as is Sauron); he has been enslaved by the corruptive power of the ring. Smeagol is not the enemy either.

In *Lord of the Rings*, the choice of the hero is left up to the reader, as we are presented with a wide array of major characters who, while not jumping through the hoops set up by *Hero With A Thousand Faces*, act heroically—and individual choice is something altogether missing from that book's theories. Campbell would tell us exactly who our heroes are, while Tolkien leaves the choice up to us. It is this notion of choice, or of individual freedom, that eliminates the *Lord of the Rings* from meeting Campbell's qualifications. There is no room for choice within the rigid structure of *Hero With A Thousand Faces*, and this may be the most disturbing point about the entire book. Either one is a hero, or one is not a hero. Richard II was not a hero; Henry V was. Robin Hood was not a hero; King Arthur was. And no one in *Lord of the Rings* is a hero, and neither are there any enemies, at least according to the structuralist view.

IV. Conclusion

There are several critical problems with *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*, but it is still a remarkable piece of scholarship, both in its influence and, since its publication, in the impact that it has had on modern hero cycles—both within its structures and those that range outside it. It inspired a young George Lucas to write a hero epic in complete conformity with Campbell's theories, but to place it in space, and call it *Star Wars*. Similarly, fantasy author Michael Moorcock, creator of the *Elric Saga* (a distinctly anti-hero series), says in his introduction to one of his books:

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There is, in my view, a level at which the hero can become faintly ridiculous, often because he never fundamentally questions the rules. For instance, John Wayne's characters were always basically in favour of old-fashioned paternalism, no matter how much they pretended to be rugged individualists (vii).

Since the publication of Campbell's work, we have seen the rise of many kinds of heroes—some traditional, some very much anti-traditional—and despite Campbell's own apparent misgivings about heroes in the modern world (see his epilogue, section three, "The Hero Today"), there seems to be no end of heroic cycles in sight. Perhaps, on one count at least, Campbell was right; perhaps it truly is human nature to create heroes.

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