

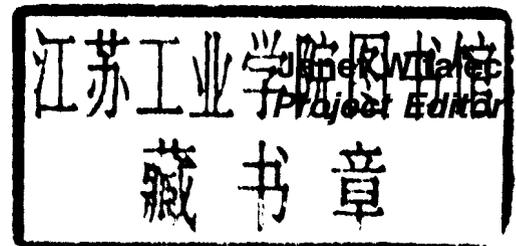
**Twentieth-Century  
Literary Criticism**

**TCLC 140**

Volume 140

# Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism

**Criticism of the  
Works of Novelists, Poets, Playwrights,  
Short Story Writers, and Other Creative Writers  
Who Lived between 1900 and 1999,  
from the First Published Critical  
Appraisals to Current Evaluations**



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## Preface

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*TCLC* is designed to serve as an introduction to authors who died between 1900 and 1999 and to the most significant interpretations of these author’s works. Volumes published from 1978 through 1999 included authors who died between 1900 and 1960. The great poets, novelists, short story writers, playwrights, and philosophers of the period are frequently studied in high school and college literature courses. In organizing and reprinting the vast amount of critical material written on these authors, *TCLC* helps students develop valuable insight into literary history, promotes a better understanding of the texts, and sparks ideas for papers and assignments. Each entry in *TCLC* presents a comprehensive survey on an author’s career or an individual work of literature and provides the user with a multiplicity of interpretations and assessments. Such variety allows students to pursue their own interests; furthermore, it fosters an awareness that literature is dynamic and responsive to many different opinions.

Every fourth volume of *TCLC* is devoted to literary topics. These topics widen the focus of the series from the individual authors to such broader subjects as literary movements, prominent themes in twentieth-century literature, literary reaction to political and historical events, significant eras in literary history, prominent literary anniversaries, and the literatures of cultures that are often overlooked by English-speaking readers.

*TCLC* is designed as a companion series to Gale’s *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, (*CLC*) which reprints commentary on authors who died after 1999. Because of the different time periods under consideration, there is no duplication of material between *CLC* and *TCLC*.

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- A **Portrait of the Author** is included when available.
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- Critical essays are prefaced by brief **Annotations** explicating each piece.
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An alphabetical **Title Index** accompanies each volume of *TCLC*. Listings of titles by authors covered in the given volume are followed by the author's name and the corresponding page numbers where the titles are discussed. English translations of foreign titles and variations of titles are cross-referenced to the title under which a work was originally published. Titles of novels, dramas, nonfiction books, and poetry, short story, or essay collections are printed in italics, while individual poems, short stories, and essays are printed in roman type within quotation marks.

In response to numerous suggestions from librarians, Gale also produces an annual paperbound edition of the *TCLC* cumulative title index. This annual cumulation, which alphabetically lists all titles reviewed in the series, is available to all customers. Additional copies of this index are available upon request. Librarians and patrons will welcome this separate index; it saves shelf space, is easy to use, and is recyclable upon receipt of the next edition.

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# Joseph Campbell

## 1904-1987

American nonfiction writer, essayist, critic, and editor.

The following entry presents an overview of Campbell's career through 1999. For further information on his life and works, see *CLC*, Volume 69.

### INTRODUCTION

Recognized as a leading modern authority on mythology and folklore, Campbell is best known for writing *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), a comparative study of hero myths from numerous cultures. Often noted for their extensive reproductions of primitive art and breadth of scholarship, Campbell's works have been credited with popularizing the study of myth.

### BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Campbell was born on March 26, 1904, in New York City. Campbell developed an interest in Native American mythology and history after seeing Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show at Madison Square Garden as a child. He attended Dartmouth College from 1921 to 1922 before transferring to Columbia University, where he earned a bachelor's degree in 1925 and a master's in medieval literature in 1927. During the next two years Campbell studied French and German medieval literature in Paris and Munich while working towards a doctorate, an endeavor that he abandoned after being informed that mythology was an unsuitable topic for his thesis. Campbell returned to the United States in the early 1930s and, unemployed, spent most of his time reading at a cabin in Woodstock, New York. In 1934, Campbell joined the faculty of Sarah Lawrence College in New York, where he taught comparative mythology and literature until his retirement in 1972. He died on October 30, 1987.

### MAJOR WORKS

In 1944, Campbell collaborated with Henry Morton Robinson on *A Skeleton Key to "Finnegans Wake,"* which explicates the structure, themes, and difficult passages of James Joyce's last novel. In Campbell's first major work, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, he argues that most heroes undergo a similar series of ad-



ventures: separation from the everyday world, initiation into a mystery or greater state of awareness through trials and ordeals, and a triumphant return in which the gifts of this experience are bestowed upon humanity. Using extensive quotations from epic literature and folktales from around the world, Campbell demonstrates numerous parallels between the aspirations and experiences of folk heroes from various cultures. His next major work, *The Masks of God* (1959-68), is a four-volume survey of mythological traditions. In the first volume, *Primitive Mythology*, he discusses the origins of mythology in prehistoric agricultural and hunting societies from archeological and psychological perspectives. *Oriental Mythology* charts the development of Eastern mythology in the religions of Egypt, India, China, and Japan, while *Occidental Mythology* focuses on classical Greco-Roman mythology, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The last volume, *Creative Mythology*, examines the use of mythology in Western art and literature from the twelfth century to the present. Campbell's other books include *The Flight*

of *the Wild Gander* (1969), a collection of essays focusing on the biological origins of myth; *Myths to Live By* (1972), which is based on lectures Campbell delivered between 1958 and 1971; and *The Mythic Image* (1974), a lavishly illustrated volume examining artistic representations of myth.

## CRITICAL RECEPTION

*The Hero with a Thousand Faces* is regarded as one of Campbell's most popular works. Although his comparatist approach has been attacked for neglecting important distinctions between cultures, the study has been recognized as an important and influential analysis of myth because of its insightful explication of common elements in hero myths. Campbell attained widespread posthumous popularity for his interviews with Bill Moyers, which were aired as the PBS television series "Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth" in 1988. The series explored the relevance of myth to modern life and served as the basis for the best-seller *The Power of Myth* (1988). In 1989, Brendan Gill launched a controversial attack charging that Campbell, in contrast to his public persona, harbored racist and anti-Semitic views. Gill's claims have been supported by some who knew and worked with Campbell, and commentators continue to debate the validity of his scholarly methods, occasionally finding factual discrepancies and poorly supported arguments in his works. Nevertheless, Campbell's reputation as an eminent teacher and authority on myth remains largely unaffected.

## PRINCIPAL WORKS

- A Skeleton Key to "Finnegans Wake"* [with Henry Morton Robinson] (nonfiction) 1944  
*The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (nonfiction) 1949  
 \**The Masks of God*. 4 vols. (nonfiction) 1959-68  
*The Flight of the Wild Gander: Explorations in the Mythological Dimension* (nonfiction) 1969  
*Myths to Live By* (lectures) 1972  
*The Mythic Image* (nonfiction) 1974  
 †*The Historical Atlas of World Mythology*. 2 vols. (nonfiction) 1983-88  
*The Inner Reaches of Outer Space: Metaphor as Myth and as Religion* (nonfiction) 1986  
*The Power of Myth* [with Bill Moyers] (interviews) 1988  
*An Open Life* [with Michael Toms] (interviews) 1989  
*The Hero's Journey: The World of Joseph Campbell: Joseph Campbell on His Life and Work* [with Phil Cousineau and Stuart L. Brown] (nonfiction) 1990  
*Transformations of Myth through Time* (lectures) 1990

\*This series encompasses the following volumes: *Primitive Mythology*, *Oriental Mythology*, *Occidental Mythology*, and *Creative Mythology*.

†This series includes the following volumes: *The Way of the Animal Powers* and *The Way of the Seeded Earth*.

## CRITICISM

### Jamake Highwater (essay date 22 March 1985)

SOURCE: Highwater, Jamake. "The Myth is the Medium." *Commonweal* 112 (22 March 1985): 183, 187-88.

[In the following excerpt, Highwater provides a laudatory assessment of *The Way of the Animal Powers*, calling the volume a "masterful presentation" of aboriginal folklore and mythology.]

Speaking of his painting, the American artist Arthur Dove said: "We cannot express the light in nature because we have not the sun. We can only express the light we have in ourselves." It is not by accident that we have invented imagery that overcomes the limitations of language. Common to all of us is the manipulation of truth we call "poetic license."

Our lives are filled with every conceivable ploy to escape or penetrate the "ordinary." Even those of us who are most mundane despise our condition, and when we recount the simplest story it inevitably becomes something else: a "tall tale," or a "fish story." These terms are efforts to describe the remarkable interaction of imagination and something even more quixotic than imagination: that which many of us innocently call *the truth*. Clearly, tall tales are not true, and yet, even for naive realists (fundamentalist or scientific) those who fervently believe in something as obsolescent and undependable as "the truth," such tales are not counterfeit.

The universal inclination to evoke a reality that is truer than the one before us—even the everyday creation of tall tales—is simply the most commonplace aspect of a profound disposition of the human psyche: the making of myths. Joseph Campbell tells us that "it is a curious characteristic of our unformed species that we live and model our lives through acts of make-believe." We are myth makers. We are legenders. Of all the animals we alone are capable of dreaming ourselves into existence.

Campbell's *The Way of the Animal Powers* is a masterful presentation of the imaginal miracle that lies behind the term "shamanism"—an excellent and insightful description of those animistic, hunting cultures that

have survived into our own century and which may reflect dimly upon our Paleolithic ancestors: the Bushmen, Pygmies, Andamanese, Tasaday, Australian Aborigines, Native Americans, and many others. *The Way of the Animal Powers* is about dreams and myths and the countless, ingenious ways in which we ritualize the ineffable cosmos as social as well as personal experiences. This concern for personal myths and their dynamic interface with the myths of the community is especially important in our time when society is no longer supported by a truly pervasive and significant system of beliefs. It is a time when the creative impulse has been internalized and has few resources in the external world. It attests to the fact that even our mythologies must be dynamic if they and, through them, we are to survive. The power of the dream is still in the capacity for dreaming.

Campbell tells us that the first function of a mythology is to waken and maintain in the individual a sense of wonder and participation in the mystery of this finally inscrutable universe. "Mythologies differ as the horizons, landscapes, sciences and technologies of their civilizations differ." The essential function of mythologies is the instruction of the group and the individual in "the passages of human life, from the stage of dependency in childhood to the responsibilities of maturity, and on to old age and the ultimate passage of the dark gate."

The process by which this complex network of myth and ritual makes itself visible and effective is metaphorical, poetic, imaginal. At its simplest it is the telling of tall tales, at its most profound, the creation of masterworks of art.

Campbell is himself a legender who speaks to us through an exceptional amalgam of scholarship and imagination. The sweep and scope of his new book is truly astonishing. We follow him through time and geography, examining the traces of early mankind: the first human burials, the artifacts of a worldwide cult of animal powers, details imprinted in temple-caves, upon rock face, and on fragments of bone and shell.

We may not wish to follow Campbell step by step. We may decline his assumption that we can know our ancestry through the examination of twentieth-century aboriginal peoples. And we may not be inclined to accept the Jungian insistence upon the "spiritual unity" of human beings. But these are small matters, indeed, in comparison to the epic intellect and imagination which functions at the heart of Joseph Campbell's brilliant new book. It is surely the culmination of his life's work, and we can only look forward with great anticipation to the remaining volumes in the series.

*The Way of the Animal Powers* requires a special note of praise in regard to its achievements in the field of bookmaking. Campbell's text is handsomely integrated

with a lavish series of color plates, full-color maps, drawings, black and white photographs, and charts. The physical book itself is certainly one of the finest examples of exquisite bookmaking which not only complements the text but, in a valid sense, extends its imaginal and scholarly reach in a manner that is possible only with the most ingenious artistic efforts.

Chris Goodrich (essay date 23 August 1985)

SOURCE: Goodrich, Chris. "PW Interviews: Joseph Campbell." *Publishers Weekly* 228 (23 August 1985): 74-5.

[In the following essay, Goodrich offers an overview of Campbell's life and work.]

Joseph Campbell starts talking about myth even before we exit the elevator en route to his room at the Clift Hotel in San Francisco. He has just returned from the coastal town of Mendocino, three hours to the north, where he participated in an annual retreat organized by the poet Robert Bly. Campbell is brimming with enthusiasm—he walks right by his suite on the first attempt, too busy describing his recent experience to remember which corridor is which. "You know that white Masonic hall in town? With that freemason symbol, the Time and the Virgin statues on the top? The town is wonderful, and that building—marvelous!"

"Marvelous" is a word one hears frequently while listening to Campbell, this year's recipient of the National Art Club's Medal of Honor and considered by many to be the world's foremost authority on mythology. So many things seem to excite Campbell and influence his writing—art, literature, history, archaeology, linguistics, psychology, philosophy—that it's hard to keep up with him. At 81, but looking at least 15 years younger, Campbell can't stop celebrating new experiences and, yes, marveling at how they so frequently seem to have a mythic dimension. Even the necktie reflects the man and his beliefs; the pattern is undeniably Celtic, interlocking circles and snaking, connecting lines.

"Robert Bly put on such a show in this wonderful redwood forest," Campbell says. "These devotees sang choral music in four parts—I was enchanted—and as a farewell, a magician did a whole lot of tricks while reciting a poem of Goethe's. They asked me up to help. The magician puts a thing in my hand, I open it up and there are two things, I open it up again and there are three! It was marvelous! The magic of things happening that shouldn't happen—I had a ball. The mysticism—that's basic, that's what primitive people are hearing, that's what one wants to hear. That's what you *do* hear if you'll open your ears, in the woods."

Primitive cultures are very much on Campbell's mind as he begins to talk about the second volume in his ambitious—and celebrated—*Historical Atlas of World Mythology*, the lavishly illustrated art-and-scholarship series being published by Alfred van der Marck Editions and distributed by Harper & Row. Originally conceived as a four-book set, to be published between 1983 and 1986, the atlas has evolved into six volumes to be released over perhaps 10 years. Van der Marck published the series' first book, *The Way of the Animal Powers*, in 1983, and the second volume, *The Way of the Seeded Earth*, is nearing completion. Volumes three and four will deal with the early high civilizations up to 500 B.C., and the last two will take myth into the present.

"In *The Way of the Animal Powers*," Campbell says, "people are killing animals all the time; that's where the base of the culture rests. This second book is about women's magic—birth and nourishment. The myth shifts from the male-oriented to the gestation-oriented, and the image is of the plant world—out of death and rot comes life. The basic myth is of an earthly paradise, like the Garden of Eden, when there is no distinction between male and female, between men and animals, and no movement in time. Then a killing takes place, the bodies are planted, and out of that come the food plants. So begetting and death come together. You see in some ritual sacrifices the repetition of that original mythological act, you go back to the beginning and get a renewal of energy. And it's the same thing, really, in the Roman Catholic sacrifice of the mass."

These ideas about the development of myth are not new discoveries by Campbell, who has been fascinated by mythology ever since he saw Buffalo Bill's Indian show in Madison Square Garden as a child. He studied literature and languages as a graduate student at Columbia, but two years on scholarship in Europe showed him that America had a very limited point of view. He returned to the U.S. in 1929 (with a smuggled copy of *Ulysses* in hand) two weeks before the Wall Street crash. With no money and no job, he dropped out of Columbia and society and spent five years in Woodstock, N.Y., "reading, reading, reading, reading. I began to see that Joyce, and Mann, and Spengler, and Jung are all talking about the same thing, and then I traced those sources back. Those years were terrific. I was out in the woods—thrown out, you might say, by the collapse of society—and I found my own path."

Campbell, who now lives in Hawaii, suggested similarly independent routes to his students at Sarah Lawrence College after landing a teaching position at the experimental school in the 1930s. And the wording of his advice, as might be expected, is memorable: "Follow your bliss, I told them. Go with the thing that really talks to you." Campbell taught literature there for 38 years, always with an emphasis on mythology. "Tho-

mas Mann and James Joyce helped me build my life and see the relevance of mythology to everyday life," he says. And his interest in Joyce led to his first book: he coauthored *A Skeleton Key to Finnegans Wake*, published in 1944. Five years later came the book for which Campbell is best known, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*.

Campbell has written or edited more than a dozen books on myth, including the four-volume *Masks of God* series, and has ideas, he says, for more than a dozen more. One of them is already written, a "talk book" that Van der Marck will publish this fall. Titled *The Inner Reaches of Outer Space: Metaphor as Myth and as Religion*, it delves into the nature of mythic values. Metaphors either connote or denote, Campbell says, and mankind has, unfortunately, lost much of its ability to read metaphors properly—for their connotations.

"What myths are dealing with are the powers of the psyche that are in you," he says. "If you read myth in terms of denotation rather than connotation, you get stuck with the image and lose the message. It's a little like going to a restaurant and eating the menu instead of the food." Campbell paraphrases a statement by his late friend Heinrich Zimmer: "The best things cannot be told, and the second best are misunderstood"—because the second best are metaphors for the best, and are read—actually, misread—literally.

The loss of the connotative reading, he says, "occurs with the Bible, though I'm not hitting that point too hard. This accent on historicity is quite specific to Judaism and its descendants, Christianity and Islam, taking these things so literally." Reading myths for connotation allows for symbolism, Campbell says—his arms flying and hands crashing to make his point—which has a personal relevance for the individual listener and reader. Reading for connotation remains alive primarily in the gnostic traditions of Judaism and Christianity, he says, "with the god being inside instead of out there—and that's blasphemy in the mainstream of these religions. The notion that God is a fact . . . he *can't* be a fact, he's a metaphor!"

Without the metaphorical dimension to myth, Campbell says, "you lose the radiance. The clergy today, instead of talking about the radiance of the symbols, are telling you whether to vote for atom bombs. And the artists are doing the same thing—the whole mythic dimension is wiped out, it's short-circuited into ethics." And ethics, he says, "is exactly what cuts you short"—making rules for other people to follow, rather than letting them find their own paths. "It's a very different thing in Buddhism, where the third temptation of the Buddha was social duty. With Buddhism, the consciousness is in everyone: the Buddha becomes an example because he realized his consciousness."

Campbell believes that myth, properly handled within societies, “is not to control nature, but to put society in accord with nature.” He points to the civil war in Beirut: “‘The three great religions of the world,’ Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and they can’t even live in the same town. And they’re the same religion, just in three different inflections, and they can’t even read their own metaphors! One group calls God Yahweh, another God the Father, another Allah, and so we go to war! I think the world’s insane—at least the people who are running the world.”

The problem today, Campbell argues, is that most of our myths are out of date. “Myths do not export very well, either through time or through space,” he says. “They grow up in a certain environment, and now these circles have collided and fallen apart. A myth has to work the way a picture works: either you say, ‘Aha!’ or somebody has to explain it to you. And if it has to be explained to you, it’s not working.” What the world needs, he says, is “a modern, planetary myth, not one of this group or that group.” In Joyce, Campbell says, “You’ve got the modern mythographer; he’s affirmative of man even where he stinks—and he does, by God.”

The modern myth, Campbell says, “has to do with machines, air shots, the size of the universe, it’s got to deal with what we’re living with.” That’s one reason Campbell found himself enamoured of George Lucas’s *Star Wars*, which Lucas says was inspired by Campbell’s *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. “*Star Wars* deals with the essential problem,” Campbell says: “Is the machine going to control humanity, or is the machine going to serve humanity? Darth Vader is a man taken over by a machine, he becomes a machine, and the state itself is a machine. There is no humanity in the state. What runs the world is economics and politics, and they have nothing to do with the spiritual life. So we are left with this void. It’s the job of the artist to create these new myths. Myths come from the artists.”

And that is one reason Campbell became so enthusiastic about doing a well-illustrated book on myth. “Myth is expression, not just reading,” he says. But there are logistical problems. “The reader has to see the picture and say, ‘Aha!’, so the reference has got to be right there, the picture and text need to be on the same page. I just can’t tell you what agony it is getting the illustrations into the book, though I love working with them.” *Animal Powers* went through four designers, Campbell says, and he is not looking forward to the design process with *Seeded Earth*—which was actually ready four years ago when the designer died unexpectedly. Campbell subsequently had to rework the book, he says, because “You leave this stuff around and it blooms, like those Japanese knots of paper you drop in tea that open up into flowers.”

Campbell’s many projects may seem ambitious for an octogenarian, but he is not daunted in the least. He recently bought a computer to write on, even though he has never learned to type, and is frequently jetting hither and yon to give lectures and seminars, or perhaps to accompany his wife of 47 years, choreographer Jean Erdman, on one of her professional trips. “When you’re my age,” Campbell says, “death is no problem. . . . It’s the experience of death that I regard as the beginning of mythic thinking—the actual seeing of someone dead who was alive and talking to you yesterday—dead, cold, beginning to rot. Where did the life go? That’s the beginning of myth.”

For his own self, Campbell volunteers, “I feel a little like Woody Allen when he said, ‘I’m not afraid to die—I just don’t want to be there when it happens.’ But that’s not the death problem, that’s the *dying* problem. The mystical problem is what you identify yourself with—your consciousness, or your body, which is a vehicle of consciousness. There comes a time, and I think it comes naturally in people as they reach later ages, of shifting the identification from the vehicle to the consciousness. You begin to see the body as a frail vehicle, you think of all it’s missing. Once you’ve got that idea, you can drop off the vehicle; the consciousness isn’t worried.” And neither is Campbell himself, who seems prepared to go on forever.

#### Jon C. Stott (essay date fall 1986)

SOURCE: Stott, Jon C. “Joseph Campbell on the Second Mesa: Structure and Meaning in *Arrow to the Sun*.” *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly* 11, no. 3 (fall 1986): 132-34.

[In the following essay, Stott determines the influence of *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* on Gerald McDermott’s *Arrow to the Sun*.]

Although it may be linked to a tale type widely distributed in North America, every native tale has its own integrity. As a product of the culture in which it is told, it is part of that culture’s holistic view of reality; and that view of reality is rooted in the geographical location of the specific people. As Vine Deloria, Jr. has suggested in *God is Red*, his study of native religions, the beliefs of native peoples were closely tied to the places in which they lived: “Holy Places were well-known in what have been classified as primitive religions. The vast majority of Indian tribal religions have a centre at a particular place, be it river, mountain, plateau, valley, or other natural feature” (81). This is particularly true of the Pueblo peoples; their religious beliefs and the myths that embody them relate closely to the specific features of the Southwest in which they have lived for centuries.