

The Fool with a Thousand Faces by Brian Clark

The Major Arcana of the Tarot includes 22 cards, the number of paths on the Tree of Life, the number of zodiacal signs and contemporary planets, as well as the number of stages described by Lord Raglan in the archetypal quest of the hero. The Major Arcana describes this heroic archetypal journey through the trials and tribulation of the Fool. In this article Brian Clark explores the sequence of the 22 cards in terms of Joseph Campbell's monomyth. This article appeared in the Autumn 2007 edition of the electronic newsletter of the *Tarot Association of the British Isles* www.tabi.org.au/.

The Fool with a Thousand Faces: *an archetypal journey through the Major Arcana*

It also seems as if the set of pictures in the Tarot cards were distinctly descended from the archetypes of transformationⁱ

-Carl Jung

Jung's only reference in his Collected Works suggests that students of the Tarot are already familiar with. The cards, especially the Major Arcana, reveal stages of an archetypal journey familiar to all human beings. As an archetypal process it suggests the stages represented by each of the 22 cards will, in some way, be encountered by each individual on their life path. Whether we meet these experiences in ourselves, or through projection onto others, their archetypal essence suggests that these are aspects of our own psychic makeup. As Jung notes each of these cards may also be essentially transforming by nature as they invoke the 'archetypes of transformation'.

Joseph Campbell is widely recognised as an expert on the archetypal stages of the heroic journey, as revealed through the mythic biography of the hero. He amplified the cycle associated with the rites of passage of separation, initiation, and return originally delineated by Van Gennepⁱⁱ into a format, which could be applied to the biographies of most mythological heroes.

Joseph Campbell's book *A Hero with a Thousand Faces* explores the stages of initiation in the myth of the hero. He describes the archetypal journey as follows:

A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are encountered there and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.ⁱⁱⁱ

The first stage of Campbell's prototypical heroic story is separation: the departure from the tribe after the hero is called to adventure. His heroic vocation is revealed through divine signs and omens and with the assistance of the gods the hero ventures forth from his homeland into the unknown. In the Major Arcana this can be seen as the Fool's separation from spirit, incarnation and encounter with his spiritual (Magician and High Priestess) and earthly (Empress and Emperor) parental guides. The second stage of the hero's life is the quest phase, when he is initiated into his destiny. Here the hero is engaged with labours or trials, which challenge and elevate him above the average human to the heroic or super human. Through the success of his labours he is able to receive the 'boon' or the gift that will be brought back to be shared with the collective. This stage is also evident in the Major Arcana's sequence of initiatory cards. The third and final stage is the return and re-entry into society, when the profits from his heroic deeds are dispensed to society. This path of the journey culminates in the World card. The heroic trilogy developed by Campbell is a standardised plot for the life cycle of a mythic hero.

While Campbell may be the best known author to document the common stages in the heroic cycle, he was not the first or the only to suggest that heroes had a similar destiny. Otto Rank, an important contributor to the early psychoanalytic movement, isolated a number of features common to heroic stories in his book *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero*^{iv}: virgin birth, dual parentage, abandonment, etc. His tripartite heroic cycle took the form of Birth, Initiation and Death. Again Tarot students will see similar themes in the Major Arcana such as the dual parentage, initiation, death, resurrection etc. Rank, as well as Nietzsche's work on the heroic aspect of myth, was inspirational to both Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung in their formulation of instincts and archetypes of the human psyche. Many scholars including Mircea Eliade and Lewis R. Farnell also chartered the common landscape of heroic adventures.^v Of interest to students of the Tarot is Lord Raglan's list of traits common to heroic myths. He condensed his pattern of the hero into 22 common points,^{vi} the exact number of cards in the Major Arcana.

Lord Raglan's suggested the 22 common motifs in the pattern of the heroic quest were:

1. The hero's mother is a royal virgin;
2. His father is a king, and
3. Often a near relative of his mother, but
4. The circumstances of his conception are unusual, and
5. He is also reputed to be the son of a god.
6. At birth an attempt is made, usually by his father or maternal grandfather, to kill him, but
7. He is spirited away, and
8. Reared by foster-parents in a far country.
9. We are told nothing of his childhood, but
10. On reaching manhood he returns or goes to his future kingdom
11. After a victory over the king and/or a giant, dragon, or wild beast
12. He marries a princess, often the daughter of his predecessor, and
13. Becomes king.
14. For a time he reigns uneventfully, and
15. Prescribes law, but
16. Later he loses favour with the gods and/or his subjects, and
17. Is driven from the throne and city, after which
18. He meets with a mysterious death,
19. Often on top of a hill.
20. His children, if any, do not succeed him.
21. His body is not buried, but nevertheless
22. He has one or more holy sepulchres.

While the Major Arcana does not fit exactly with these stages there are overlaps. The identification of 22 seems to represent the number of pathways or initiations in the heroic story. These are the number of paths on the Tree of Life and the total number of contemporary astrological archetypes that encompass the twelve signs of the zodiac and the ten planets of the astrological pantheon (the two luminaries, seven classical planets and three outer planets). The 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet and their correspondences to the Major Arcana cards has already been well developed.^{vii} (For the correspondences to the astrological archetypes and the Hebrew letters that correspond to the pathways on the Tree of Life see the table at end of article).

Another author David Leeming also described the hero's journey through various archetypal stages. In his book *Mythology Voyage of the Hero*^{viii} he delineates the eight stages of the heroic cycle as:

1. The miraculous conception, the divine birth and the hiding of the child.
2. Childhood, Initiation and Divine Signs.
3. Preparation, Meditation and Withdrawal.
4. Trial and Quest.
5. Death and the Scapegoat
6. Descent into the Underworld
7. Resurrection and Rebirth
8. Ascension, Apotheosis and Atonement.

The cycle of Campbell's composite hero was coined 'the monomyth': many heroes, one story. His cross-cultural hero is described in **seventeen** subsections of the three phases, drawing examples of the heroic story from many diverse cultures and religions. Campbell convinces the reader that this story is 'archetypal', therefore a psychic artefact of every human, regardless of race or gender. Inspired and influenced heavily by Carl Jung's psychology, Campbell also ascribes to the doctrine of archetypes, and that they populate the domain Jung termed 'the collective unconscious'. It is this terrain that the Fool's journey covers; the Tarot is also a monomyth in that each card's motif is common to every human being.

Campbell also draws on Freudian theory. Psychoanalytic theories of the time contributed to enhancing his understanding of the hero's passages. By marrying the psychoanalytic theories of the primitive and infantile aspects of the unconscious with his mythological research, his 'monomyth' became more than just a treatise on comparative mythology. His synthesis of the heroic pattern into a homogeneous cycle was a symbol for modern man's quest. Myth, now, had a personal meaning. According to Campbell, the hero's quest is a metaphor for our spiritual journey:

'the hero is symbolic of that divine creature and redemptive image which is hidden within us all, only waiting to be known and rendered into life.' (39).

Campbell is convincing. He has been multi-cultural and refrained from religious doctrine, yet also used religious personages as universal examples of heroes. His heroic pattern is not bound by cultural theories or supportive of only one system of psychoanalytic thought, instead it is cross-cultural. The journey of the Fool through the Major Arcana is also cross-cultural and can embrace all journeys regardless of race, colour, creed, religion, sex or age while inspiring the individual to awaken to their own spiritual path. This is confirmed by the amount of decks that have used different cultural approaches in portraying the cards.

Emphasising the personal association to the heroic cycle, the 'monomyth' theory reaches beyond comparative mythology and therefore has a wider appeal. Campbell's concise narrative of the hero supports Jung's ideas on the collective unconscious. Examples of mythic themes are also interspersed with individual's dreams, linking the archaic aspects of the collective myth to the personal unconscious or a 'personal myth'. Again he brings myth into the human experience and engenders the ancient stories with personal numinous meaning. The fabulous hero is no longer just a fantasy figure, but an inner reality which is part of every human being. The hero is confirmed as an archetypal reality, therefore is part of the human psyche. The 'monomyth' widens the human family. Greek heroes, Christian saints, fairy tale queens and kings, goddesses and heroines along with the cards of the Major Arcana all have a common life script that is part of us. His 'monomyth' pattern supports the universality of images and demonstrates archaic links connecting disparate cultures together.

Campbell personalises myth. We are no longer just an observer of an age-old story but involved and identified with the hero, the Tarot's Fool. Campbell's 'monomyth' evokes the imagination and helps the complexity of the myth become real to us. The heroic formula confirms the universality of the hero figure, an archetypal presence throughout diverse cultures whose life pattern animates modern man.

The 'monomyth' helped to popularise myth by reducing the heroic cycle to some common denominators. By organising the chaos of myth into a logical, sequential pattern, the heroic tale is more accessible and comprehensible. In some ways the creation of the 'monomyth' is itself, modern day myth-making as the ancient stories are manipulated and crafted into a pattern that supports Campbell's beliefs. Using the Tarot is also myth making. Through the images of the cards stories and insights of the individual's journey and story are revealed.

While most of Campbell's contemporaries acknowledged his heroic labour in compiling the 'monomyth', they also criticised him for being idealistic or "the most naive of Jung's explainers".^{ix} Wendy O'Flaherty labelled Campbell "a Jungian without shadows"^x for his insistence on finding beauty in what was tragically ugly or beyond redemption. The propensity to idealise and beautify is also embedded in the 'monomyth'. Not every hero was 'a personage of exceptional gifts' or 'honoured by his society' (37) or the illustrious saviour who Campbell likes to paint. Heroic Jason turned his back on the woman who successfully helped him on his quest, and met his death unheroically. Theseus abandoned the lover who was his accomplice, illicitly entered the underworld, and was eventually exiled, dying tragically. Not every heroic biography fits neatly into the ideal of the hero perpetuated by Campbell's ideas. When compiling myth around a formal structure, every myth is subject to the formula. Even when the myth does not conform to the pattern it is explained in terms of the pattern, therefore loses objectivity. Everything is expected to fit the formula, even the exceptions: "If one or another of the basic elements of the archetypal pattern is omitted...the omission itself can speak volumes for the history and pathology of the example." (38). Readers of the Tarot need to

take note of both these points. First to be aware that avoiding the shadow may often constellate it in the reading and secondly trying to fit everything into a particular formula or pattern may mean we are not listening or hearing what the individual or the cards are actually saying or trying to tell us.

In Jungian psychology the hero is an archetypal representation of the struggle towards individuation. However the hero is constantly always at risk of regressing, constantly reminded of his tragic flaw of being human. The hero as the Sun is often in contrast to the Shadow as dark and the heroic journey is to take the unconscious material and bring it back to consciousness. Many of the labours are to do with king making and the development of the ego. Jung once said that the shadow could also contain gold - be up to 80% pure gold. But as Barbara Hannah once pointed out it is just the people who have the pure gold in their shadow who show the most resistance to digging it out.

The theory of the mythic hero with a thousand faces has great merit in that it makes their stories both more accessible and understandable, endowing them with meaning and purpose. Too it reveals the archetypal pattern that underlies the hero and how this psychic energy may be an eternal part of each individual. The hero becomes animated and their quests, trials and life experiences are brought to life through our identification with the hero. Using the Tarot reminds us that the Fool has a thousand faces and while his journey is an archetypal one, each individual will experience the initiations in their own unique way. When a Major Arcana card is drawn the individual's unconscious reveals an imminent initiation and addresses the need to be aware of the archetypal presence that is influencing and guiding our unfolding myth.

ENDNOTES

ⁱ CG Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, Volume 9I Collected Works*, translated by RFC Hull, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London: 1959, para. 81.

ⁱⁱ A. Van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, translated by M. Vizedant and G. Caffee, University of Chicago, Chicago: 1960.

ⁱⁱⁱ Joseph Campbell. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Princeton University Press (Princeton, NJ: 1968). 30. The book was first published fifty years ago, in 1949. Other quotes from *Hero with a Thousand Faces* will be referenced with the page number in parentheses after the quote.

^{iv} Otto Rank. *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero*, translated by F. Robbins and S.E. Jelliffe, Robert Brunner (New York: 1952). The first edition was published originally in German in 1909.

^v see Mircea Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation* (New York: 1958) and Lewis R. Farnell, *Greek Hero Cults and Ideas of Immortality* (Oxford: 1970).

^{vi} F.R. Raglan, *The Hero A Study in Tradition, Myth and Drama*, Vintage Books (New York: 1956). The first edition of the book was published in England in 1936.

^{vii} See Paul Foster Case, *The Tarot*, Macoy Publishing Co., Richmond, VA: 1975.

^{viii} David Adams Leeming, *Mythology the Voyage of the Hero*, J.B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia, PA: 1973.

^{ix} Robert Eisner, *The Road to Daulis; Psychoanalysis, Psychology and Classical Mythology*, Syracuse University Press (Syracuse, NY: 1987). 204. Classical scholars seem ambivalent about Campbell's work. For instance Morford and Lenardon in *Classical Mythology, Fifth Edition*, Longman (White Plains, NY: 1995) page 16, praise the fact that he helped to popularise comparative myth, yet complain "we wish that, in his popularisations at least, he paid more serious attention to the Greeks and the Romans."

^x Wendy O'Flaherty, "Origins of Myth-Making Man", *The New York Times Book Review*, December 18, 1983. 25. She too seems ambivalent about Campbell's contribution, criticising his simplistic approach, yet admiring his ability to grasp the disparity of the mythic narrative. At one point she praises him, linking him in a trinity with Jung and Eliade: "One might say Jung, Mr. Eliade and Mr. Campbell constitute the mythological troika of this century." ("Origins of Myth-Making Man", 24.)

APPENDIX:

Astrological and Kabbalistic Associations with the Major Arcana

Major Arcana Card	Astrological Ruler	Hebrew Letter	Meaning of Hebrew Letter
0: The Fool	Uranus	ALEPH	Ox , as a symbol of hard work, this suggests the Fool's task of individuation.
1: The Magician	Mercury	BETH	House (or Temple), being a dwelling place for the spirit
2: The High Priestess	Moon	GIMEL	Camel , as the animal of the desert it provides sustenance for the long journey
3: The Empress	Venus	DALETH	Door , representing the transitional threshold
4: The Emperor	Aries	HEH	Window or a vision to the future.
5: The Hierophant	Taurus	VAV	Nail or Hook , as a symbol it suggests fastening the experience of the divine in the everyday world
6: The Lovers	Gemini	ZAIN	Sword , the symbol of discrimination and merging
7: The Chariot	Cancer	CHETH	Fence , as a symbol of boundary, security and protection it protects us on our conscious journey
8: Strength	Leo	TETH	Serpent , knowledge, particularly of that which we seek to avoid.
9: The Hermit	Virgo	YOD	Open Hand , giving and receiving and guidance
10: The Wheel of Fortune	Jupiter	KAPH	Palm of the Hand , representing opportunity to evolve into one's destiny
11: Justice	Libra	LAMED	Ox Goad , reminding us of the Fool's tasks and the danger of complacency.
12: The Hanged Man	Neptune	MEM	Water , the feeling capacity and the elixir of life
13: Death	Scorpio	NUN	Fish , symbols of water and life and also emblematic of the divine in life
14: Temperance	Sagittarius	SAMEKH	Prop or Staff , the support on our path, also iconographical of the magical and healing staff of the gods.
15: The Devil	Capricorn	AYIN	Eye , symbolising the ability to be conscious and see the truth
16: The Tower	Mars	PEH	Mouth , as the symbol of communication and truth as misinformation and untruth.
17: The Star	Aquarius	TZADDI	Fish Hook , as an image of the ability to catch the contents of the unconscious when we are fishing in the waters of life
18: The Moon	Pisces	QOPH	Back of Head , as the knowledge of what has past, represents the unconscious and what is located behind our conscious awareness.
19: The Sun	Sun	RESH	Head , which represents the seat of intellect
20: Judgement	Pluto	SHIN	Tooth , symbolises structure retention, identity, roots
21: The World	Saturn	TAV	Mark or the equal-armed cross of Earth, to symbolise our birthright or end of the journey