

Joseph Campbell Foundation & OPUS Archives Research Grant Summary

Overview of research topic

Ever since he first stumbled across *'Transformations and symbols of the libido'* as a graduate student at the University of Munich, Joseph Campbell read, and was inspired by, the works of Carl Gustav Jung. Although Campbell was often labeled a 'Jungian' during his lifetime, especially in the early days of his career, most scholars nowadays put more emphasis on the differences between Jung and Campbell. In my PhD thesis about the relationship between Jung's theory of religion and Campbell's body of work (University of Edinburgh, Religious Studies department), however, I will argue that emphasizing the differences between Campbell and Jung gives a distorted impression of the true nature of Campbell's ideas. After a detailed analysis of Jung's ideas about mythology and religion, I will argue that Campbell's reception of these ideas can be divided into three phases: an early phase, in which he drew on both Jung and Freud in equal measure; a middle phase, in which he openly dismissed Jung; and a final phase, in which he came to embrace Jung once again and his ideas were highly similar to Jung's ideas – much more similar than is generally recognized.

Research undertaken at the Joseph Campbell library

First of all, my research trip to the Joseph Campbell library enabled me to find a wealth of general information about Joseph Campbell that did not specifically help me back up my PhD hypothesis, but which I would not have been able to find anywhere else in the world. It was a wonderful opportunity to be able to go through Campbell's old letters; to see book proposals he sent to his publishers before beginning work on books that are now famous; to read the many, many transcriptions of interviews with Campbell which the archive owns. It was a bit overwhelming at first, really, as there was just so much valuable material that I really couldn't go through each and every single document. Of the general information that I went through the interviews were probably the most helpful and interesting for me. Campbell had a tendency to give similar answers to questions that people would ask again and again; however, often times I would come across interviews where Campbell would suddenly say something which I hadn't seen him mention before. This really helped my understanding of Campbell's ideas. Campbell's assertion that 'myth is an expression of the organs of the body in conflict with each other', for example, started to make a lot more sense to me after I had stumbled across an interview in which he dealt with this topic in much more depth than he usually did.

Even though I had a lot of fun soaking up general facts and details about Campbell and his ideas that I didn't know about yet, the most exciting part of my research in the archive was trying to find information relevant to my PhD topic. Richard Buchen, the special collections librarian, was especially helpful in this regard. He took great effort to understand what I am trying to argue in my PhD, and went out of his way to find information that would help me back up my hypothesis.

It was fantastic to be able to go through all the books by Jung Campbell owned, many of which are underlined and contain handwritten notes. This enabled me to check whether certain

key passages had been studied by Campbell. One of the most important things I discovered this way was the following:

One of the oldest books by Jung in the Campbell library is a book called *The Integration of the Personality*. This contains an early version of an essay called “Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious”, which Jung first presented as a lecture at one of the early Eranos conferences. The essay in Campbell’s copy of the book is heavily underlined, which proves that Campbell studied it and was aware of its contents. Jung was in the habit of heavily rewriting his work: the same essay is included in *Collected Works volume 9 part 1*, but with certain key passages added by Jung. In the version which is included in the *Collected Works*, Jung the following:

The archetype is essentially an unconscious content that is altered by becoming conscious and by being perceived, and it takes its colour from the individual consciousness in which it happens to appear.

He also added a new footnote, in which he makes what I think is a crucial point to understand about his concept of the archetype:

One must, for the sake of accuracy, distinguish between “archetype” and “archetypal ideas.” The archetype as such is a hypothetical and irrepresentable model, something like the “pattern of behaviour” in biology.

The whole essay is heavily underlined in Campbell’s copy of *Collected Works vol. 9 pt.1*. This will allow me to argue what may have caused Campbell’s ‘shift’ in regard to Jung’s ideas: he simply didn’t have the right information in the earlier part of his career. When Campbell was working on *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, he only had the original, unaltered version of ‘Archetypes of the collective unconscious’, which led him to think that Jung’s archetype is a ‘closed system’, which isn’t open to imprinting. Once the *Collected Works* started coming out, Campbell could finally read certain key texts with the extra comments by Jung (which he had added to help clear up certain common misconceptions about his ideas). As I will argue in my PhD, this allowed Campbell to see that Jung didn’t think of the archetype as a ‘closed system’ at all: on the contrary, it is open to imprinting, “*takes its colour from the individual consciousness in which it happens to appear*”, and is therefore perfectly compatible with Campbell’s own concept of the ‘open IRMs’ that he claimed could be found in the human nervous system. The fact that Campbell had not only heavily underlined the essay “Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious” in his copy of *Collected Works vol 9*, but also owned a book which included an earlier, different draft of the same essay, was a real discovery for me.

Something else which really helped me to find material relevant to my PhD topic was being able to go through the notes Campbell made before he gave his lectures. All of these are dated, so that one can see which lecture they belong to. After studying these notes carefully, I could see that there was a clear pattern behind the topics Campbell would deal with. In the earlier lectures, Jung often made an appearance, but wasn’t yet a topic that would be included in each and every single lecture. From around 1970 onwards, however, I could see that Jung really became the backbone of the way that Campbell set up his lectures. He would often start by explaining what for him mythology was: a local imprint a general archetype. Campbell *always*

makes mention of Jung when discussing this topic after 1970; before that date he doesn't really do this. Again, this was for me a confirmation that my PhD hypothesis is correct.

Relevancy for the Joseph Campbell library and archive

I am of the opinion that if one wants to truly understand Campbell's ideas, it is crucial to see how these ideas relate to the ideas of Jung. I would like to think that my argument that Campbell's ideas changed radically in this regard is relevant to other researchers who may visit the archive in the future. If my work on this subject will enable other researchers to see Campbell's intellectual development with more clarity, than my research will have been successful, at least for me. I hope that the Archive and Research Centre and the Joseph Campbell will share this opinion about the relevancy of my research once my PhD is complete.