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12 May 2005

The Myth of the Grateful Dead

Before science, before technology (at all levels be it the nuclear age or the stone age), even before writing there was myth. It is the single attribute of humanity that sets us apart from the animals. Even the animals have their own form of intelligence, their own forms of technology and creation, even their own languages. However, no animals have anything similar as myth. And, no other force in humanity is so transcendental. Not only do myths separate us from animals, but also they come to define humanity itself through out every generation. "It has always been the prime function of mythology and rite to supply the symbols that carry the human spirit forward" (Campbell, *Mask*, 15). Each culture is built first on its myth, then it its own superior attributes of technology and culture. It is the myth, expressed in all artistic varieties and media that is the driving force behind human progress, first from wandering animals to the *civilized* world of today. All other things therefore stem first from the myth. It was the myth that inspired all of our science and reason, even if only in attempt to disprove them.

Of the most powerful and transcendental media for the transmission of myth, is the art of music. "Music is part of the universal language of ritual and with out it ritual must always be impoverished" (Cavendish 1910). Music brings myth to life, setting it apart from the rest of human creativity. Most of the mythological literature we read in books and scrolls today was originally written lyrically as music. This includes the Bible, Greek and Roman epics, Hindu lore,

and European superstitions. The beauty of music as a mode of transmission of mythology is that it connects words with real life through the exercise of singing and dancing.

"The action itself (dancing) was such as to remove the participants from the limitations of the everyday world, and to establish them temporarily on the 'other side' among the powerful immortals" (Cavendish 1914). The combining of instruments and mythological lyrics not only made the stories more memorable, but also provided "a setting for a magically effective ritual which breaks the bounds of the everyday and the normal" (Cavendish 1914). This out of the ordinary experience helped bridge the gap between the myth and the individual, bringing it to life and helping to manifest its principles into reality. This is why traditionally music has been the largest medium for the preservation and transmission of a culture's mythology and rituals.

In our modern world, ever under the eye of the microscope, much of the mythology that birthed this world has been lost or abandoned. "Wherever the poetry of myth is interpreted as biography, history or science, it is killed" (*Hero*, 230). The intellectual world is filled with historians, biographers and scientists, all who are the modern gurus. The stories that men write today are based more out of self-interest than cultural preservation and mythic expression. Much serve more as propaganda for one dogma or another. The only true mythical medium left magical is that of music. It can rarely be converted into a reasonable or empirical expression or experience. It is difficult to misinterpret it scientifically or biographically, because music keeps its life as it is continuously performed *live*. No matter what kind of music, be it overtly mythical or just personal expression of creativity, remains mythical and magical and those who experience its magic preserve that mythic tradition of the past.

From the perspective of Joseph Campbell, music as myth fulfills the third function of mythology. "The third function of mythology is to support the current social order, to integrate the individual organically with his group" (*Masks*, 520). In our modern times, music creates

social groups, and serves not only as a means of connection amongst the individuals in the group, but also as a socializing force that expresses the ideas, opinions, thoughts and desires of that group. This is how music in the past served as a medium for myth so effectively, and this is also why today it has been almost solely responsible for the preservation of the myth making tradition.

One musical group, the Grateful Dead (consisting of both the band and thousands of its loyal fans known collectively as *Deadheads*), has not only preserved the myth making process, but also the Hero's Journey. Campbell's *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* documents the Mono-myth of the Hero's Journey that transcends all world mythology and has been a center of human culture for thousands of years. This Hero's Journey essentially is the quest of an individual to overcome his own ego by: leaving the everyday world, going on a spiritual or introspective journey through the unconscious, and after annihilating the self-centered ego and becoming one with the Universal Father, returning to the world bearing the gift of enlightenment. This hero returns to teach others how to annihilate their own egos, expressed by: explicit instructions and teachings, a moral example, or by mythic interpretation of the Hero's personal story. This is the basis for almost every religion and myth in world history. The Hero Mono-myth served so that "the principle of ego" might be "suppressed and, if possible, even erased" (*Masks*, 521).

In the modern world of anti-myth, the musical band the Grateful Dead, also known as the Dead, preserved this tradition of the Hero's Journey Mono-myth. Through live performances, the Dead attempted to recreate the Hero's Journey. This wasn't exactly intentional, that is to say that they didn't follow a mythic blue print. Rather, because the Hero's Mono-myth is so transcendental of all cultures, their musical myth reflects the elements of the Hero's Journey almost inadvertently. Night after night, through music, the Mono-myth was told and recreated for hundreds of people. Their fans, the Deadheads, form the community of believers in the myth of the Grateful Dead and their Hero's Journey.

Campbell himself recognized the mythic qualities of the Dead. He said of them, "The Deadheads are doing the dance of life, and this I would say is the answer to the atom bomb" (*Joseph Campbell And The Grateful Dead*, par. 2). He had been a long time friend of members of the band, and in February 1986, towards the end of his life, he attended a Grateful Dead concert. Of the event Campbell said:

" I had a marvelous experience two nights ago. I was invited to a rock concert (*crowd laughs*). I'd never seen one. This was a big hall in Berkeley and the rock group was the Grateful Dead, whose name, by the way, is from the Egyptian Book of the Dead. And these are very sophisticated boys. This was news to me. Rock Music has never seemed that interesting to me. It's very simple and the beat is the same old thing. But when you see a room with 8000 young people for five hours going through it to the beat of these boys, the genius of these musicians- these three guitars and two wild drummers in the back. Listen, this is powerful stuff! And what is it? The first thing I thought of was the Dionysian festivals, of course, this energy and these terrific instruments with electric things that zoom in. This is more than music. It turns something on in here (*points to chest*). And what it turns on is life energy. This is Dionysus talking through these kids. Now I've seen similar manifestations, but nothing as innocent as what I saw with this bunch. This was sheer innocence. And when the great beam of light would go over the crowd you'd see these marvelous young faces in sheer rapture- for five hours! Packed together like sardines! Eight thousand of them! Then there was an opening in the back with a series of panel windows and you look out and there's a whole bunch in another hall, dancing crazy. This is a wonderful fervent loss of self in the larger self of a homogeneous community. This is what it is all about! It doesn't matter what

the name of the God is, or whether it's a rock group or a clergy. It's somehow hitting that chord of realization of the unity of God in you all, that's a terrific thing and it just blows the rest away." (*Joseph Campbell And The Grateful Dead*, par. 4)

Joseph Campbell recognized the mythology in the Grateful Dead and was enraptured in the whole Deadhead experience, but how is it that this rock group could have such powerful affect over not only their music fans, but also an acclaimed mythologist and anthropologist? This is because the Dead's music was beyond the normal myth. By telling the Hero's Journey, the Dead not only fulfilled the third function of myth like any other music, but also the fourth. "The fourth function of mythology is to initiate the individual into the order of realities of his own psyche, guiding him towards his own spiritual enrichment and realization" (*Masks*, 521). The Dead's music was not mere entertainment. To the band and the Deadheads alike, it was a means of transcending everyday reality and "doing the dance of life." Dead concerts were not the average rock concerts, but rather were intended mythical and magical experiences where the people abandoned themselves and their egos for at least just a night. This is what had caught Campbell's attention so much, that the Dead had such a powerful affect. That thousands of people could, like the Mono-mythic Hero, lose their self-centered ego and come together as a "homogenous community."

The Dead experience is so powerful, and so mythical, because it tells the story of the Hero's Journey. The music recreates the process of Departure, Initiation, and Return when it is being performed. The Dead provide a means for others to experience this Hero's Journey themselves, in hopes that they too will hear the *Call to Adventure*. The show then serves as the Journey itself, in hopes that the audience: will leave their everyday world, depart into their

unconscious psyche, annihilate their self-centered ego, and return to their everyday world to help others embark on this Journey themselves. The Dead do this by a combination of mythic lyrics that document stages of the Hero's Journey and take the listener along, and also instrumental music that serves as a metaphysical medium to encourage the listener on their voyage of self-discovery.

“This first stage of the mythological journey- which we have designated the ‘call to adventure’ - signifies that destiny has summoned the hero and transferred his spiritual center of gravity from within the pale of his society to a zone unknown” (*Hero*, 53). This is point in a Hero's life, when he is confronted with the reality that there is more to His own life than the everyday. His destiny confronts him, in a million possible ways that all end in the same result, the Hero finding this destiny and fulfilling it by crossing the first threshold of the His Journey.

The Dead begin their musical telling of the Hero's Journey with the song *That's It For The Other One*:

“The other day they waited, the sky was dark and faded, solemnly they stated, ‘He has to die, you know he has to die.’ All the children learning, from books that they were burning, every leaf was turning, to watch him die, you know he had to die. The summer sun looked down on him, His mother could but frown on him, and all the other sound on him, He had to die, you know he had to die.” (*That's It For The Other One*)

Here, our anonymous hero's, who can take on the form of any particular audience member, ego is confronted with the reality of the Hero's Destiny. It seems that the entire world, including innocent children and even Nature itself, have stopped to watch the Hero accept His destiny and take on the Journey. The Universal Father, represented by the Summer Sun, and the

Mother Goddess are both witness as well. They are all in attendance and anticipation of the death of His ego. “This popular motif gives to the lesson that the passage of the threshold is a form of self-annihilation” (*Hero*, 84). The scene implies that the Hero here has no choice to refuse the Call, as His whole world is watching. “Whatever the Hero does aside from the call, is doomed to failure” (*Hero*, 55). No aspect of the Hero’s world is going to allow him to refuse, as they all have come to the unanimous decision that “he has to die, you know he has to die” (*That's It For The Other One*). Once he accepts this call, he approaches the Threshold of the Unknown regions of the unconscious.

“This fateful region of both treasure and danger may be variously represented: as a distant land, a forest, a kingdom underground, beneath the waves, or above the sky, a secret island, lofty mountaintop, or a profound dream state; but it is always a place of strangely fluid and polymorphous beings, unimaginable torments, superhuman deeds, and impossible delights.” (*Hero*, 56)

The Dead not only use lyrics to recreate this strangely fluid dreamlike world, but also instrumental music. As the band plays, the crowd listens and dances and all seem to be sharing the same momentary dream. The next verse sings: “ Spanish lady comes to me, she lays on me this rose. It rainbow spirals round and round, It trembles and explodes It left a smoking crater of my mind, I like to blow away. But the heat came round and busted me for smiling on a cloudy day” (*That's It For The Other One*). We are now introduced to the Hero’s *Supernatural Aid*, who has come to provide a symbolic gesture to protect the Hero on his Journey. “For those who have not refused the call, the first encounter in the Hero’s Journey is with the protective figure who provides the adventurer with amulets against the dragon forces he is about to pass” (*Hero*,

63). The protective amulet here is the rose given by the Spanish lady. This rose “spiraled round and round, trembled and exploded” sending the Hero across the First Threshold.

“With the personifications of his destiny to guide and aid him, the Hero goes forward in his adventure until he comes to the ‘threshold guardian’ at the entrance zone of magnified power” (*Hero*, 71). This threshold guardian is the “heat” who had come around to bust the hero for smiling after accepting his destiny. In the final verse, the Hero, with the aid of the amulet rose, passes the threshold guardian into the Unknown. “Escaping through the lily fields I came across an empty space It trembled and exploded Left a bus stop in its place, The bus came by and I got on That's when it all began, There was cowboy Neal At the wheel Of a bus to never-ever land” (*That's It For The Other One*). The Hero has escaped the Threshold Guardian, and come across an empty space of the Unknown. “The regions of the unknown (desert, jungle, deep sea, alien land, etc.) are free fields of the projection of unconscious content” (*Hero*, 72). After defeating the Threshold Guardian, he is replaced by a bus stop, symbolic of the departure itself. The bus arrives and the hero steps onboard, crossing the first threshold and departing deeper into his psyche. His ego, represented by his mind, exploded and was replaced by a “smoking crater of his mind” which symbolizes that he has become self denying. “The force of the monster of phenomenality was dispelled, and he was rendered self-denying; self denying he became divine” (*Hero*, 82). The song finishes, “And when the day had ended, with rainbow colors blended, Their minds remained unbended, He had to die, oh, you know he had to die” (*That's It For The Other One*). Our Hero has accepted his destiny, confronted the threshold guardian, and defeated him rendering himself self-denying. His ego, metaphorically, is dead, and the old Hero has died. “The hero, instead of conquering or conciliating the power of the threshold, is swallowed into the unknown, and would appear to have died” (*Hero*, 83). This belly of the whale motif is symbolic

of the passage of the magical threshold as a means of rebirth (Campbell 83). The *Belly of the Whale* is symbolic of the ego death of the Hero, and is the final stage that leads to the Hero's Initiation.

“Once having traversed the threshold, there hero moves in a dream landscape of curiously fluid, ambiguous forms, where he must survive a succession of trials” (*Hero*, 89). After *Crossing the First Threshold* and experiencing the self-denying power of ego annihilation, the Hero is confronted with a *Road of Trials*. In the song *Uncle John's Band*, the Dead sing, “Well the first days are the hardest days, don't you worry anymore, 'Cause when life looks like Easy Street, there is danger at your door” (*Uncle John's Band*). This experience of trials and tribulations serve to purify the Hero, and prepare Him to meet with the Divine. “In the vocabulary of the mystics, this is the second stage of the Way, that of the ‘purification of the self,’ when the senses are ‘cleansed and humbled,’ and the energies and interests ‘concentrated upon transcendental things’” (*Hero*, 93). The next verse sings, “It's a buck dancer's choice my friend; better take my advice. You know all the rules by now and the fire from the ice” (*Uncle John's Band*). “The ordeal is a deepening of the problem of the first threshold and the question is still in balance: Can the ego put itself to death?” (*Hero*, 100). “Which of you to gain me, tell, will risk uncertain pains of hell?” sings *Terrapin Station*.

“And the testings of the Hero, which were preliminary to His ultimate experience and deed, were symbolical of those crises of realization by means of which his consciousness came to be amplified and made capable of enduring the full possession of the Mother-destroyer, his inevitable bride” (*Hero*, 111). The purpose of the *Road of Trials* is to prepare the hero for the *Meeting with the Goddess*. The Goddess represents an incarnation of the duality of man, “thus she unites the ‘good’ and the ‘bad’ exhibiting the two modes of the remembered mother, not as

personal only, but as universal“ (*Hero*, 105).

In the song *Caution*, the Dead introduce us to the Goddess:

“I went down to see this Gypsy woman, you understand, I told her my story, I told her what was going on. And she told me, man she said, all you need, all you need, She said all you got to have, oh Lord, Just a touch of Moro's hand, oh bring it back on, And it feels pretty good, yes indeed.”

(*Caution*)

At the end of the *Road of Trials* the Hero is seeking comfort. He is seeking that Goddess, who had appeared to him earlier as *Supernatural Aid*, for comfort, companionship, for a better understanding and explanation of His Journey. “Woman, in the picture of mythology, represents the totality of what can be known” (*Hero*, 106). The Dead too sing of the Hero’s yearning for the Goddess, “I’ll get by somehow, maybe not tomorrow, but somehow I know someday I’ll find someone who can ease my pain” (*No Tomorrow*). Of course, if the Hero has come far enough along His Journey of self-denial, he comes to a realization that Woman represents everything He is trying to escape in His Journey:

“But when it suddenly dawns on us, or is focused to our attention, that everything we think or do is necessarily tainted with the odor of flesh, then, not uncommonly, there is experienced a moment of revulsion: life, the acts of life, the organs of life, woman in particular as the great symbol of life, become intolerable to the pure, the pure, pure soul” (*Hero*, 112).

This theme expressed by Campbell is very common in the Dead’s music. The best example of which is in the song *Rosemary*. “All around the garden grew scarlet and purple and

crimson and blue. She came dead and she went, and at last went away, the garden was sealed when the flowers decayed“ (*Rosemary*). *Rosemary* represents that feeling of revulsion towards the woman, and of her being fully tainted by the flesh and being contaminating for the pure Hero as she destroys the beauty and innocence of the Garden by her very presence. For the Hero, the Woman comes to be a temptress, enticing Him to return to His original life and to abandon the Hero’s Journey, just as He has approaches the apex. She offers Him a life previously known, yet with the potential powers that He has discovered thus far. The song *Samson and Delilah*, a rendition of the biblical story, tells the story of woman as a temptress to the Hero:

“Well Delilah was a woman, she was fine and fair, She had good looks, God knows, and coal black hair, Delilah she gained old Samson's mind. When first he saw this woman, you know he couldn't believe his mind. Delilah she climbed up on Samson's knee, Said tell me where your strength lies if you please. She spoke so kind and she talked so fair, Well Samson said, Delilah cut off my hair. You can shave my head, clean as my hand and my strength will become as natural as any old man.” (*Samson and Delilah*)

Delilah tempts Samson into giving up His life as Hero, by revealing his vulnerability. In telling her his weakness, Samson voluntarily gave up His Hero’s Journey, to remain “as natural as any old man.” However, the Woman does not always come to be this Temptress. If the Hero is successful with the Goddess, and overcomes temptation, then “she lures, she guides, she bids him burst his fetters; and if he can match her import, the two, the knower and the known, will be released from every limitation” (*Hero*, 106). In this sense, the *Meeting With the Goddess* and not the *Crossing of the Threshold* represents the point of no return for the Hero. Either He gives into temptation, and ends the Journey, or He overcomes temptation and learns from the Goddess. She

prepares Him for the very purpose of His Journey, *Atonement With the Father*.

“Atonement (at-one-ment) consists in no more than the abandonment of that self-generated double monster- the dragon thought to be God (superego) and the dragon thought to be Sin; but this requires an abandonment of the attachment to ego itself” (Campbell 120). The *Atonement with the Father* phase of the Hero’s Journey is that moment when He has fully abandoned His ego, and has merged with the Father. It is the fundamental point in the Hero’s Life, where He comes to full realization of the World, of the falsity of duality, and of the self-generation of the Ego. This is a crisis of sorts, for the Hero truly realizes that He shall never be the same, for what He previously thought of Himself is no longer. In a sense He is no longer Himself, but has merged with the Father, in the same way that the Goddess represents the merging of duality, good and bad. Of course, he did not come to this point purely on His own. “It is in this ordeal that the Hero may derive hope and assurance from the helpful female figure, by whose magic he is protected through all the frightening experiences of the Father’s ego-shattering initiation”

(*Hero*, 120). The definitive Dead song *Dark Star* reflects *Atonement*:

“Dark star crashes, pouring its light into ashes. Reason tatters, the forces tear loose from the axis, Searchlight casting for faults in the clouds of delusion. Shall we go, you and I while we can through the transitive nightfall of diamonds? Mirror shatters in formless reflections of matter, Glass hand dissolving to ice petal flowers revolving, Lady in velvet recedes in the nights of goodbye, Shall we go, you and I while we can through the transitive nightfall of diamonds?” (*Dark Star*)

The Dark Star is the Hero himself, as his everyday reason has been shattered by the realization of the Father, which tears loose the ego from its axis at the center of the Hero. The

Ego, which is the Mirrored reflection of the perceived self, how the Hero sees himself, is shattered and the Hero takes on the new “formless reflections” of the Father. Instead of seeing himself in the cosmic Mirror, He now sees the Father in His place, hence *at-one-ment*. “Ideally, the invested one has been divested of his mere humanity and is representative of an impersonal cosmic force; He is twice born: he has become himself the Father” (*Hero*, 126). Having become the Father, the Hero is competent now “to enact himself the role of initiator, the guide, the sun door, through whom one may pass from the infantile illusions of good and evil to an experience of majesty of cosmic law, purged of hope and fear, and at peace in the understanding of the revelation of being” (*Hero*, 126).

The total realization of being is no light matter. It was the Hero’s Destiny to find this understanding, as it is the Destiny of everyone if they adhere to the Call. In the self-realization that there is no separation from the Father, and that Man and God are in fact one, the Hero finds too that if Man is one with the Universal God, then in fact all men are equal parts of the Father and therefore are equal to each other. In realizing that there is no such thing as I (ego) or Self, the Hero has come to understand that all of humanity is brothers and sisters, equal in all respects to each other and to the Universal Father. “The good news, which the World Redeemer brings and which so many have been glad to hear, zealous to preach, but reluctant, apparently to demonstrate, is that God is love, that He can be and is to be loved, and that all without exception are his children” (*Hero*, 146)

This point of *Apotheosis* is represented in several Grateful Dead songs. In *I Hear A Voice Calling*, “I hear a voice calling it must be our Lord Must be, must be our Lord It's coming from

on heaven high I hear a voice calling I hear the reward, I hear the reward On the land we shall never die” (*I Hear A Voice Calling*). Again in *Comes A Time*, “Comes a time when the blind-man takes your hand, says ‘don't you see? Gotta' make it somehow on the dreams you still believe.’ Don't give it up, you got an empty cup only love can fill” (*Comes A Time*). In *Walk in the Sun*, “Oh how strange is the story your eyes tell me And quiet all the new words that you say So come and hold my hand for you see I'd understand And remember the only time is now” (*Walk In The Sun*). Having heard the Calling, taken on the Adventure and become one with the Father, the Hero knows the very meaning of being, which is that “only time is now.” To the world he left behind, he is now blind, and yet having become an initiator himself, and the sun door, he now is the blind man who calls to the world to take their hand and guide them to fulfill their own dreams and their destiny of self-realization. “The departure from the world is not regarded as a fault, but as the first step into that noble path at the remotest turn of which illumination is to be won concerning the deep emptiness of the universal round” (*Hero*, 153). Having discovered “not only that the Everlasting lives in them, but that what they, and all things, really are is the Everlasting,” the Hero sets out to bring this realization to the rest of the world, whose ego-based understanding he is now blind too (*Hero*, 154). “Been walking all morning went walking all night, I can't see much difference between the dark and light” (*Comes A Time*). Having understood the nature of the Father and become one with Him, the Hero himself takes on the role of World Redeemer, to bring to the world that *Ultimate Boon* of self-realization of being.

“The gods and goddesses then are to be understood as embodiments and custodians of the elixir of Imperishable Being but not themselves the Ultimate in its primary state; what the hero

seeks through his intercourse with them is therefore not finally themselves, but their grace” (*Hero*, 168). Having found that elixir, the Hero is now the Sun Door, is now an immortal, and can now pass this grace down to others by the same initiation, which he himself underwent. “High green chilly winds and windy vines in loops around the twisted shafts of lavender, they're crawling to the sun” (*The Eleven*). The world becomes like windy vines, looping and twisting around the Hero, crawling towards the Sun, which is that immortal Elixir, which He himself possesses. “Wonder who will water all the children of the garden when they sigh about the barren lack of rain and Droop so hungry beneath the sky” (*The Eleven*). The children of the world, being represented as the Garden in several Grateful Dead songs, are lacking spiritual rain and have become barren. Only the Hero can bring salvation to them and quench their parched thirst for life. “No more time to tell how, this is the season of what, now is the time of returning with our thought Jewels polished and gleaming. Now is the time past believing the child has relinquished the rein, Now is the test of the boomerang tossed in the night of redeeming” (*The Eleven*). In possessing the elixir of Imperishable Being, the Hero possesses the power to initiate the spiritual children of the world, be they physically old or young, and give them the power to relinquish the rein of the ego, and like the boomerang, depart for themselves on the Journey in hopes of returning “in the night of redeeming.”

“When the hero-quest has been accomplished, through penetration to the source, or through the grace of some male or female, human or animal, personification, the adventurer still must return with his life-transmuting trophy” (*Hero*, 179). This is the point where the Hero’s Journey, has come two-thirds circle, and it represents the final leg of the Journey. Having

completed at-one-ment successfully and having come to full self-realization, also possessing this knowledge as the initiator, the Hero must return to the world he left behind to share the spoil. “But the responsibility has been frequently refused” (*Hero*, 179). For whatever reason, the Hero chooses to ignore the Return. Perhaps he has been persuaded by his new knowledge, and disdain for the world, that the last bits of the selfish ego try to take hold. This is a testing ground of sorts, to see if the Hero truly has vanquished the Dragon that is his ego.

Just because the Hero refuses the return at first, does not mean that he never shall return at all. Quite the contrary, the Hero just needs this last time to prepare for returning to a world that he is no longer a part of. The song *Black Peter* tells of the Hero’s refusal to return. “One more day I find myself alive, tomorrow maybe go beneath the ground. See here how everything led up to this day, and it's just like any other day that's ever been, Sun going up and then the sun going down. Come around, come around” (*Black Peter*). The Hero might feel remorse and regret at the thought of leaving the Journey itself. It has replaced what He used to believe to be himself, and so momentarily he feels that there is nothing for him to return to. He knows that he is not the only Sun to have risen in the world, and that surely his time will set as those Initiators before him. Even more, He has judged the world guilty sins against those previous Heroes, and blames them for the setting of the Hero-Suns.

In the song *Ship of Fools*, the Hero judges the world he left behind. “Ship of fools on a cruel sea, ship of fools sail away from me, It was later than I thought when I first believed you, now I cannot share your laughter, ship of fools” (*Ship Of Fools*). Every step of His Journey has led up unto this point, and yet this seems to be the hardest point for the Hero to accept. “Trouble

ahead, trouble behind, and you know that notion just crossed my mind,” sings *Casey Jones*.

However, he must return to stop their childish laughter and ignorance and save the ship of fools that has now come to be the world.

“If the Hero in his triumph wins the blessing of the goddess or the god and is then explicitly commissioned to return to the world with some elixir for the restoration of society, the final stage of his adventure is supported by all of the powers of supernatural patron” (*Hero*, 182).

The Divine has granted the full manifestation of his destiny. He has been commissioned to complete the Journey, and bring himself full-circle, and come resurrected to the everyday world that he left behind.

“I spent a little time on the mountain, I spent a little time on the hill, I heard someone say ‘Better run away’”, others say ‘better stand still,’ Now I don't know, but I been told it's hard to run with the weight of gold, Other hand I have heard it said, it's just as hard with the weight of lead” (*New Speedway Boogie*). “Another well-known variety of the magic flight is one in which a number of delaying obstacles are tossed behind by the wildly fleeing hero” (*Hero*, 186). The obstacles of gold, representing the selfish greed of the Hero's Refusal to Return, and lead, representing the burden of guilt, are thrown behind the Hero as He follows the voice of the Goddess who tells him, “Better run away.”

“The Hero may have to be brought back from his supernatural adventure by assistance from without; that is to say, the world may have to come and get him” (*Hero*, 192). Sometimes the Hero, in his remorse or regret, forgets that the world desperately needs him for their salvation. The World has to in some way, whether directly or indirectly, call the Hero back. He has to

remember the *Ultimate Boon*, the Imperishable Elixir, is needed more so by society than himself. “In the book of love's own dream, where all the print is blood. Where all the pages are my days, and all the lights grow old. When I had no wings to fly, you flew to me, you flew to me” (*Attics Of My Life*). When the Hero is lost in his own self-pity, or the opposite in his hatred for the world, the world must fly to the Hero, as he has forgotten His wings.

The song *Fire on the Mountain*, tells of the Hero's refusal to return:

“Long distance runner, what you standing there for? Get up, get out, get out of the door, your playing' cold music on the barroom floor Drowned in your laughter and dead to the core. There's a dragon with matches that's loose on the town, Takes a whole pail of water just to cool him down. Fire! Fire on the mountain! Almost ablaze still you don't feel the heat, it takes all you got just to stay on the beat. You say it's a living, we all gotta' eat but you're here alone, there's no one to compete. If Mercy's a bus' ness, I wish it for you more than just ashes when your dreams come true. Fire! Fire on the mountain! Long distance runner, what you holdin' out for? Caught in slow motion in a dash for the door. The flame from your stage has now spread to the floor, you gave all you had, why you wanna' give more? The more that you give, the more it will take, to the thin line beyond which you really can't fake.” (*Fire On The Mountain*)

The Hero is the long distance runner, who is standing still after having nearly completed the race of the Hero's Journey. He knows that the Dragon of Ego is loose on the world, and that only he as the elixir of Imperishable Being, represented as a “whole pail of water” which will

“cool him down.” The Mountain that is on Fire is the world, caught in the flames of self-centeredness and egoism. Having under went the Journey himself, the Hero can only empathetically “feel the heat” of the world “almost ablaze.” The Hero may try to rationalize his decision not to return, but at the end of the Journey, he is there alone, and so there is no need. He must remember Mercy, and bring it to the world, fulfilling his dreams, his destiny. Again, the Hero is holding out from departing back to the world. He seems to be caught in slow motion, and be unable to move as he continues to ponder on his decision. However, the flame of the Ego has spread further through out the world, and the Hero knows that only he can put it out. He has to return from the Unknown to the Known, to initiate the world into the Hero’s Journey, and be that sun door that he is worthy of by the virtue of his atonement with the Father.

It is the Hero’s destiny, either having been commissioned by the Divine, or begged by the world, to cross the *Return Threshold* and return to the everyday world he left behind. He never actually left the real world, as “the realm of the gods is a forgotten dimension of the world we know” (*Hero*, 201). Rather, he must go back to the people he symbolically left behind, to show them the Door to the Unknown, to remind them that We and the Divine are in fact one, as are our differing worlds. “This is the Hero’s ultimate difficult task, how to render back into light-world language the speech-defying pronouncements of the dark; how to represent on a two-dimensional surface a three-dimensional form” (*Hero*, 202). Though the desperate need of the world draws the Hero back, no one at first seems to understand or even care about His Journey. They fail to comprehend his Elixir of Imperishable Being. They are as blind as was he before he departed. He must find a way to transmit this knowledge to the world, that they too might hear

the call. As the Hero's Journey is Universal and the Call in everybody's life, he must simply find a way to teach the people to hear that call themselves.

Ripple sings:

“Ripple in still water, when there is no pebble tossed, nor wind to blow. Reach out your hand if your cup be empty, if your cup is full may it be again, Let it be known there is a fountain, that was not made by the hands of men. There is a road, no simple highway, between the dawn and the dark of night, and if you go no one may follow, that path is for your steps alone.” (*Ripple*)

The Hero tells the world that there is a fountain, made by the hands of the Divine that shall give the elixir of Imperishable Life. There is a road, a path to be followed, in between the dividing lines of our own notions of the world. This road is the Hero's Journey, that if he goes, no one may follow, because each Hero's Journey is unique to the individual, and is for his steps alone.

In Wharf Rat, the Hero meets with the lowly of the world, who is seeking nourishment, and the Hero obliges by giving his ear. “Old man down, way down down, down by the docks of the city. Blind and dirty, asked me for a dime, a dime for a cup of coffee. I got no dime but I got some time to hear his story” (*Wharf Rat*). The Hero tells the old man that he has no physical nourishment, but that he has a time to talk and listen. He has nothing physical to offer, but rather does have the transcendental art of story telling, of the Hero's Journey. This is one way in which the Hero may pass the Hero's torch, and share the elixir of Imperishable Being with the world, by lending a patient ear to the needy.

In listening to the old man's story, etiquette implies that the old man will listen to the Hero's.

"The individual, through prolonged psychological disciplines, gives up completely all attachment to his personal limitations, idiosyncrasies, hopes and fears, no longer resists the self-annihilation that is prerequisite to rebirth in the realization of truth, and so becomes ripe, at least, for the great at-one-ment; his personal ambitions being totally dissolved, he no longer tries to live but willingly relaxes to whatever may come to pass in him." (*Hero*, 220)

Having come full circle on his journey, the Hero has completed the great at-one-ment and the fullest realization of truth. He no longer has free will, but lives life reactionary rather than defensively. He has become the *Master of Two Worlds*, that of the mortal and the immortal.

"Freedom to pass back and forth across the world divisions... is the talent of the master" (*Hero*, 213). *Blues For Allah* sings, "Let's see with our heart, These things our eyes have seen, And know the truth must still lie somewhere in between" (*Blues For Allah*). As the Sun Door, an initiator himself and joint-partaker of the divine, the Hero, being able to transverse the spheres of existence, is now a prophet of divine, and a guide to self-annihilation of the ego. "California, a prophet on the burning shore, California I'll be knocking on the golden door. Like an angel, standing in a shaft of light Rising up to paradise, I know I'm gonna' shine" (*Estimated Prophet*). As the Initiator, the Hero can now initiate future heroes to the ranks of Sun Door. "If I had a star to give, I'd give it to you long as you live, would you have the time to watch it shine, watch it shine or ask for the moon and heaven too? I'd give it to you" (*If I Had The World To Give*). The Hero's purpose, having come full circle, is to give the world new stars like himself, to shine on the

world and give them the elixir of Imperishable being, that elixir which annihilates the Ego and sets mankind free to be equal with the Immortals.

After all is said and done, the Hero had earned the *Freedom to Live*. "The Hero is the champion of all things becoming, not of things become, because he *is*" (*Hero*, 225). The Hero simply lives, no longer afraid of the past or the future, no longer living under the guidance of ego and self-centered free will. He lives for the greater good of the world, to bring to them His message as the World Redeemer, and to initiate as many good souls as is permitted by the Gods to the Hero's Journey, in hopes that they too discover his secrets. These secrets aren't secrets at all, but rather are the Universal principles of life, imbedded in all human beings, though they may be voluntarily ignorant of that fact.

This is exactly the plight of the modern world. Our entire culture is based upon voluntary ignorance and complacency. Often people hear the calling, and are attentive of the fact, but refuse it time and time again, and there are others who have been confused by the deceivers of this world who thrive on and promote Ego. Campbell wrote:

"The problem of mankind today, therefore, is precisely the opposite to that of men in the comparatively stable periods of those great coordinating mythologies which are now known as lies. Then all meaning was in the group, in the great anonymous forms, none in the self-expressive individual; today no meaning is in the group - none is in the world: all is in the individual" (*Hero*, 358-359).

This is why today, more than ever, humanity needs to find its myths, and to recreate them in their everyday lives. The modern man must embark on his own personal Hero-quest, to depart

from the everyday thinking, dive into his unconscious where all of mythology lives and is born universally, and experience the self-denying power of ego-annihilation, that he might return the world at one with the Father, with the gift of community and purpose. The final song I will quote sums up the end result of the Hero's Journey, the penultimate wisdom, that is passed down through all generations in their myth.

"There comes a redeemer, and he slowly too fades away, and there follows his wagon behind him that's loaded with clay. And the seeds that were silent all burst into bloom, and decay, and night comes so quiet, it's close on the heels of the day. Wake up to find out that you are the eyes of the world, the heart has it's beaches, it's homeland and thoughts of it's own. Wake now, discover that you are the song that the mornin' brings, But the heart has it's seasons, it's evenin's and songs of it's own." (*Eyes Of The World*)

The Hero's Journey Mono-myth tells us that we are all the eyes of the world. The Ultimate Boon, the Elixir of Imperishable Being, is a symbolic manifestation of that wisdom. All of humanity is equal, and all can reach atonement with the Father, for we are all his children. We are the reason for existence itself in that we exist ourselves; hence we are "the song that the morning brings." The modern Hero must not wait for his society to catch up, and to come to this understanding on its own. He must undergo the Journey, and return to bring the world the Wisdom of Existence, as no one but him will step up and here the call. He must not wait for a Sun Door to open, but rather must become the Sun Door himself. "It is not society that is to guide and save the creative hero, but precisely the reverse" (*Hero*, 362).

The 20th Century will be best remembered as the century that destroyed the myth. In a spiritual sense, it has been the more impacting then the Renaissance or the Industrial Revolution. But the soul of man has not been completely destroyed by science books and logical deductions, nor will observations and theories ever succeed in that destruction. The soul of man is eternal, and the fact that his eyes are the *Eyes Of The World*, is reflected in his music. Like the ancients, mankind today preserves its last bits and pieces of myth in its music. It builds communities and serves as an effective socializing agent, but further, there are kinds of music that still initiate the individual into the realm of his own psyche, and the Grateful Dead are such musicians. The Deadheads truly are doing the dance of life, and preserving the life giving myth that science has tried to destroy. As long as the spirit of man still longs for meaning, there will be music that validates and satisfies this need. The irony is that it is science and technology that has best preserved this magical music, through the recordings that exist in their thousands and millions of copies. Science has allowed the music and mythic ritual of the Grateful Dead's live performances to life forever, like the Mono-myth itself, and survive to be heard by all coming generations.

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