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Editorial

The cultural uses of astronomy can be felt in areas which possess no apparent links, but which may nevertheless be connected. The work of Joseph Campbell, whose *Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949) and subsequent books did much to popularise the notion that heroic stories are woven around common structures, and that myths from different parts of the world, including cosmogonic and cosmological ones, share common archetypal origins. Campbell's influence in astrology has been expressed most strongly by Liz Greene. See for example, her *The Astrology of Fate* (1984), in which she adapts Campbell's theories to the personalities of the planets and signs of the zodiac. Campbell's concept of the 'hero's journey' is also evident through Greene's earlier discussion of the zodiac signs in her contribution to popular astrology, *Star Signs for Lovers* (1980), and the idea has become part of the currency of psychological astrology. The BBC2 documentary *Hollywood's Master of Myth* (18 July 1999; see also the London *Independent Review*, 3 Sept. 1999, p 10, *Time*, 3 May 1999, p 49-64), took a different slant on Campbell's influence, examining its impact in Hollywood in, for example, the *Mad Max* films. The documentary spent some time discussing George Lucas' reliance on Campbell in creating *Star Wars* and its sequels, the most successful series of space movies ever made, as the recent enormous attention devoted to *The Phantom Menace*, the 'prequel', demonstrates. In *Star Wars* itself, the young hero Luke Skywalker's series of adventures, from his initial calling through his many initiations, to his confrontation with Darth Vader and his eventual triumphant return home, is a literal application of the mythical pattern identified by Campbell. The interview with Lucas revealed how in 1984 he met Campbell, who was completely out of touch with contemporary cinema, introduced himself as a film director and flew the writer to the Skywalker ranch, the head quarters of the *Star Wars* operation. It is almost a quarter of a century since *Star Wars* was premiered in 1976, and in that time a generation has grown up with its imagery. In the 1980s the Reagan presidency's Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI), the plan to create a network of space-based nuclear

missile launchers, was popularly known as the ‘star wars’ programme. The London *Observer* newspaper on the same day as the documentary was broadcast provided a more recent example, showing Campbell’s influence expressed at one remove via *Star Wars*. It reported (pp. 1, 19-20) that during the Yugoslavian war in 1999 the NATO Supreme Allied Commander, Ramsay Clarke, appointed a secret planning team at Nato headquarters in Mons, Belgium, to prepare ground force options. This force was ‘known colourfully as the Jedi Knights - the “good guys” in *Star Wars*’ (p 20). We may speculate as to what message was conveyed by the use of such a name. That the ‘force’ was with them? That victory was assured? That the righteousness of the Nato struggle of good against evil was cosmically sanctioned? Either way the influence of the concept of the hero’s journey may be as evident in modern military propaganda as in contemporary astrology.

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Nick Champion