

The findings of research studies on the concept of hero in both *The Odyssey* and *The Lord of the Rings* are quite diverse and sometimes even contradictory to each other. For example, in the case of *The Lord of the Rings*, Verlyn Flieger views Frodo as a fairy-tale hero but regards Aragorn as a traditional epic hero. Alexandra E. Hoerl argues that Frodo is a hero with noble impulse to engage in a task that is quite beyond his capabilities. Robin Robertson holds that Frodo is involved in a heroic journey toward the path of transcendence, starting with full awareness of his own fears and limitations yet completing the difficult mission of destroying the Ring at Mount Doom. Tutta Kesti examines the topic by using the components of the “Hero’s Journey” (Departure, Initiation, and Return) proposed by Joseph Campbell. By contrast, some scholars contend that Frodo, after having completed his quest, becomes a shattered hobbit suffering from physical and emotional damage similar to Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome (Livingston; Wilkerson).

In a similar fashion, scholars state different opinions about the concept of hero in the case of *The Odyssey*. One study proposes that *The Odyssey* is about “brain” because the hero outwits the suitors and all the situations he is thrown into when he is engaged in the task of restoring order to his chaotic home (Hetherington). Another researcher maintains that Odysseus, an undercover hero with god-like traits, similar to Hephaestus, the god of fire and forging, embarks on the journeys from dark to daylight (Flaumenhaft). Still another argues that Odysseus is a hero in the sense of willingly going through life enduring any kind of labors (toils and tribulations) (Finkelberg). As opposed to the aforementioned three arguments, John Fitch III insists that Odysseus, as an antihero whose fame is derived mostly from “his craftiness, stealth, and dangerous cunning,” is “a clever murderer” (par. 10), no more and no less. Gijs H. van Oenen maintains that Odysseus is a warrior full of self-deception, unable to confront himself about his true identity. It is Circe and Calypso who help to liberate and educate him in the process of identity formation.

It is interesting to note that Frodo has been appraised positively and dubbed as a fairy-tale hero, a hero engaging in a task beyond his capabilities, a hero struggling toward transcendence, and a hero fulfilling the Hero’s Journey but he

has also been criticized as a shattered hobbit suffering physical and emotional damage. It is also interesting to note that Odysseus has been praised as an epic hero, a resourceful hero, an undercover hero with god-like traits, a hero with great fortitude whereas he has also been denounced as an antihero, a clever killer, and a self-deceptive warrior. Opinions are divided among researchers on the appraisal of the adventures of Frodo and Odysseus; therefore, it is necessary to approach this subject from a different perspective so that it can explain away the contradictive viewpoints. The purpose of this study is to investigate the concept of hero in both works with some heroic code of behaviors on the one hand, and to examine the differences of character as shown in Frodo and Odysseus when they challenge forces beyond their mental and physical toughness on the other hand, so that it may shed some light on whether they both are heroes with different faces and not so different from each other as the previous studies have suggested.

Heroes in *The Odyssey* and *The Lord of the Rings* are respectively engaged in a quest throughout a long, tiresome, and adventurous journey. Odysseus's quest is "homecoming" (Rubino 943) while Frodo's is to destroy the One Ring of Power and thus prevent Sauron and the Dark Forces from conquering Middle-earth. In these two works, certain similarities and differences about the concept of hero derived from their adventures can be found. For example, heroes share certain qualities (courage, self-control, perseverance) and ordeals (the death/rebirth cycle, supernatural aid, restoration of domestic order, and sailing for another world) but they differ from each other in terms of their characters, attitudes toward enemies, interpersonal relationship, battlefield experiences, mental and physical power, and heroic qualities. In *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo always forgives his enemies in just the same way Jesus Christ does in the *New Testament*, while Odysseus in *The Odyssey* is merciless, demands justice and an eye for an eye; this is very similar to what God does toward the wicked and disobedient peoples in the *Old Testament*.

After having fulfilled their quests, both heroes must undergo another trial, namely, to expel the villains from their houses. In *The Lord of the Rings*, the Shire of the hobbits is occupied by the remaining force of Saruman; in *The Odyssey*, Odysseus's house is full of the Suitors. The hobbits and Odysseus succeed in

defeating or killing the occupants of their houses. Then they try to reestablish the domestic order. Later on, both Frodo and Odysseus sail away from their homes forever.

Both Frodo and Odysseus have been traditionally labeled as a fairy-tale hero and an epic hero respectively even though they experience something similar—fulfilling their individual quests, restoration of domestic order, and sailing for another world. It is imperative to reexamine the concept of hero so that their adventures can be fairly appraised. In order to better understand the concept of the hero, a short look at Tolkien's view about heroism is necessary. Being a scholar of medieval literature, Tolkien thought that the heroism of man was as much defined by the strength of the adversary he fought as by his own potential qualities.¹ His viewpoint about heroism was almost identical with that of Northern mythology—heroes often do something beyond their abilities, for example, to kill a dragon or to combat against supernatural beings. In short, heroes challenge forces of evil over which man could never expect to have a complete victory and do so without harm. The significance of making comparisons and contrasts of the adventures engaged in by Frodo and Odysseus is to highlight the fact that both heroes challenge forces much bigger than their potential qualities as defined by Tolkien and the weaknesses shown in their characters simply mirror the fact that they are heroes of human beings rather than gods or supernatural beings. It is impossible for man to fight against formidable forces and get a hard-fought victory without paying dearly for it.

In the adventures of Frodo and Odysseus, both heroes challenge forces quite beyond their mental and physical toughness. Several shared heroic code of behaviors can be found in the process of their adventures. The first one found in these two works is that heroes are courageous to do what they should in spite of the dangers thrown on their way. In *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo is not an inborn hero, nor are the other hobbits—Pippin, Merry, and Sam. However, as they have

¹ In his 1936 lecture "Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics," Tolkien argues that the great strength of the early English masterpiece lies in its mythological embodiment of radical evil in the dragon, a force of evil so that man could never expect complete victory over it.

experienced more dangers, they become braver. At the beginning of the story, Frodo, among the hobbits, is neither stronger nor braver than other people. He, a common hobbit, has doubts, feels fears, falters, and makes mistakes. When in company of Pippin, Merry, and Sam, carrying the Ring from Hobbiton to Rivenden, Frodo encounters the Wraiths on the road, and he is so frightened that he has a strong desire “to slip on the Ring,” and “almost before he realized what he was doing, his hand was groping in his pocket” (Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* I: 116).² Later on, he asks Gildor: “But where shall I find courage? ...That is what I chiefly need.” The answer he gets is “courage is found in unlikely places” (*LotR* I: 124). It is only after Frodo has undergone the adventures of Old Man Willow, the Barrow-downs, Barliment Butterbur's Inn at Bree, Wraith's attack at Weathertop, and the battle with the leader of Nine Riders at the Ford of Bruinen that he becomes mature and courageous. These adventures are the necessary trainings for Frodo to become the Ringbearer. Therefore, it is not surprising that, when no one in the council of Elrond wants to be the Ringbearer, Frodo says, “I will take the Ring, though I do not know the way” (*LotR* I: 354). His willingness to take on the task quite beyond his capacities shows his remarkable courage.

Similarly, in *The Odyssey*, Odysseus has the courage of his convictions to fulfill his quest—homecoming. When Calypso tells him that he must endure misery before he can reach home, Odysseus answers, “I have a heart that is inured to suffering and I shall steel it to endure that too. For in my day I have had many bitter and shattering experiences in war and on the stormy seas. So let this new disaster come. It only makes one more.” (*The Odyssey*: 93)³ Odysseus, on another occasion, also shows his courage; that is, when he awakes from his sleep, finding his ship back again in Aeolia because of his crew's opening the Winds Bag, he almost wants to “drown [himself] in the sea rather than stay alive and quietly accept such a calamity” (*Od*: 156). Nevertheless, he accepts it and plucks up courage to go on his voyage.

² All parenthetical page references concerning *The Lord of the Rings* (hereafter *LotR*) are taken from the authorized edition, *The Lord of the Rings*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1988.

³ *The Odyssey* (hereafter *Od*), trans. Emil V. Rieu, New York: Penguin Books, 1988. All subsequent quotations are taken from this edition and will be cited within the paper.

It is interesting to note that Frodo's courage is gradually cultivated by what he has experienced while Odysseus's is innate. Courage, for Frodo, is not a kind of heroic quality without any fear when he is engaging himself in a difficult mission. Rather, it is the Northern “theory of courage” defined by Tolkien as the “‘creed of unyielding will’—the ability to face imminent death with a resolution and strength of spirit that refuses to see death as defeat” (Bruce 156). In other words, courage is something by which Frodo faces whatever he encounters on his way despite his fears and doubts. Frodo feels fear, but he has a determined mind to try his best in each trial and to learn something from it. After having undergone a trial, Frodo grows in terms of courage, even though he is only “a low mimetic hero thrown by circumstances not of his making into high mimetic action.”⁴ In short, it is this sort of courage that makes Frodo, a little hobbit, become the hero of heroes when other powerful figures dare not undertake the mission.

In the case of Odysseus, courage is a kind of unflinching quality that enables him to endure sufferings despite fear. For example, on Calypso's Island, he sits in tears by the seashore, eager to be home, like a strayed child. It is notable to remember that his situation is beyond the control of human power or beyond any human struggle. Odysseus does not lack courage to sail alone on the stormy sea even though he knows that sufferings are waiting ahead for him. Later, on Ithaca, he tells Eumaeus after Melanthius' attack, “I have been toughened by what I have suffered in the field and on the sea. After all that, what matters a bit more?” (*Od*: 266). It is this kind of courage that leads him to claim—“so let this new disaster come.” Great fortitude—“It only makes one more” and “what matters a bit more”—marks Odysseus a hero.

The second heroic quality shared by Frodo and Odysseus is self-control to resist temptations. Even though it is a fact that Frodo is inclined to put on the Ring whenever he encounters dangers, yet he gradually resists the temptation of the Ring. In the adventure of the Barrow-downs, Frodo, instead of putting on the Ring to

⁴ In “Frodo and Aragorn: the Concept of the Hero,” Verlyn Flieger shows a good comparison between Frodo and Aragorn. Frodo, according to **Flieger's** viewpoint, is a fairy-tale hero while Aragorn is a traditional epic/romance hero.

become invisible, strikes off the spectral hand with a sword. Likewise, at the moment he faces the leader of the Nine Riders, he refuses to put on the Ring and still holds the sword in hand, even as he faints from the poison of the Morgul knife (*LotR* I: 286). Another similar occasion that Frodo resists the temptation of the Ring occurs at Moria, where he unflinchingly stabs the cave troll with his sword in the monster's feet (*LotR* I: 421). If Frodo succumbs to the lure of the Ring at Mount Doom, it is not because his self-control fails him, but rather the power of the Ring is too much for anyone to resist,⁵ and this is the reason why many powerful figures, such as Galadriel, Gandalf, Aragorn, and Elrond, do not want to shoulder the mission to take the Ring to Mount Doom to destroy it.

Quite similar to Frodo, Odysseus shows his self-control on many occasions. When his men fail against the drive of curiosity to learn about the Bag of Winds and against the instinct of hunger to kill the cattle of the Sun, Odysseus endures the enticements. He also withstands the temptations to stay with comfort, beauty, and immortality and give up the hard voyage home in the situations like the meetings with the charms of the Lotus-eater, Circe, the Sirens, Calypso, and Nausicaa. In the same manner, he displays his self-control more fully at the moment when he is insulted by the Suitors and maidservants. At the outset, Melanthius gives him a kick on the hip (*Od*: 265). Next, Antinous flies a stool at Odysseus on the right shoulder (*Od*: 271). Then, he is insulted by Arnalus, a beggar. Finally, even Melantho, one of the maidservants in the house of Odysseus, gives "him the rough side of her tongue" (*Od*: 284) and tells him: "Still here! To plague us all night long, cruising around the house and ogling the women. Off with you, Wretch, and be glad of the supper you had, or you'll find yourself thrown out at the door with a torch about your ears" (*Od*: 289).

⁵ This is the key point in *The Lord of the Rings* which irritates many critics. To some, Frodo's failure to destroy the Ring and his being saved by Gollum may seem a contrived solution, a *deus ex machina*, but Tolkien argues in a letter to various critics that the solution was carefully prepared, saying: "We must estimate the limits of another's strength and weigh this against the force of particular circumstances. I do not think that Frodo's was a moral failure. At the last moment the pressure of the Ring would reach a maximum—impossible ... for anyone to resist... Frodo had done what he could and spent himself completely" (326). See *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien*, ed. by Humphrey Carpenter, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981.

It is also interesting to note that Frodo's self-control comes from the awareness of his limited capacities to be the Ringbearer and wield it against its maker, while Odysseus's is derived from his confidence in his ability to withstand any temptation and insult. One of Frodo's qualifications for the task of ringbearer, as Richard L. Purtill has perceptively remarked, is his knowledge of his own limitations (54). The danger of the Ring lies in its power gradually to control and consume the bearer's will, and finally cause him to fall into its trap. The only way to deal with the Ring is never to take one's eyes off it. Frodo's humility is the fountain-head of his caution, and his caution constitutes his main strength of self-control. It is his self-control that distinguishes Frodo from other heroes. As for Odysseus's self-control, he thinks that he has experienced a lot of trials; one or two more do not matter for him because he has sufficient ability and will to cope with them. To assert his will and ability in adverse conditions makes him feel that he is able to be what he wishes. In addition, he withstands all sorts of enticements and insults in order to fulfill his quest—the reunion with his father, wife, and son.

Perseverance is the third heroic quality shared by Frodo and Odysseus. Despite his fear, Frodo has an unwavering commitment to the quest once he has undertaken it. He tells Legolas: “Torment in the dark was the danger that I feared, and it did not hold me back” (*LotR* I: 490). When the Nine Walkers fall away one by one, Frodo chooses to leave the company and complete the mission on his own. Later on, as he and Sam arrive at the land of Shadow, they cannot cross Cirth Gorge for orcs mass there, and Frodo tells Sam, “It's no worse than I expected, I never hoped to get across. I can't see any hope of it now. But I've still got to do the best I can” (*LotR* III: 246). The nearer they draw to Mount Doom, the weaker they become. Frodo becomes so weak that he must crawl, and finally be carried by Sam to the Cracks of Doom.

Odysseus also shows perseverance on his way home, especially when his ship is destroyed by Poseidon's storm after leaving Calypso. He swims two days and two nights in heavy seas before he sees headlands, but there is only “a smooth cliff rising sheer; deep water near in; and never a spot where a man could stand on both his feet and get to safety” (*Od*: 99). Tired as he is, he does not give up hope;

he swims along with the coast and finally lands at the mouth of a river. And “all his flesh was swollen and streams of brine gushed from his mouth and nostrils. Winded and speechless, he lay there too weak to stir, overwhelmed by this terrible fatigue” (*Od*: 100).

However, Frodo differs from Odysseus in his motive to be so perseverant in the process of his quest. The power driving Frodo, a small man, to undertake such a strenuous task is derived from his love for people. After the collapse of the Fellowship, he decides to complete the mission on his own. His motive for going on alone is neither out of his hubris nor the feeling that one or two men might escape notice where a larger group would not. Rather, he feels “the evil of the Ring is already at work even in the Company, and the Ring must leave them before it does more harm” (*LotR* I: 519). At the end of the story, Frodo tells Sam: “I tried to save the Shire, and it has been saved, but not for me. It must often be so, Sam, when things are in danger: some one has to give them up, lose them, so that others may keep them” (*LotR* III: 382). It is his self-sacrificing love for the happiness of people that makes Frodo become very persevering.

In contrast, Odysseus's perseverance originates from his love for his family. As far as Odysseus is concerned, to have a harmonious family equals the greatest blessing a man or a woman can have in this world. This belief is revealed in what he prays for Nausicaa in return for her saving his life: “... may [gods] give you a husband and a home, and the harmony that is so much to be desired. Since there is nothing nobler or more admirable than when two people who see eye to eye keep house as man and wife ...” (*Od*: 107). Family, for Odysseus, is not merely a unit of society but rather a proper place for all human beings in the universe.

The motives for Frodo and Odysseus to be perseverant in their quests are different, but they share something in common: they love those about whom they care. Love is the driving force to back them up and to make them persistent to go through all sorts of ordeals. Going through the death/rebirth cycle is the first ordeal experienced by both Frodo and Odysseus throughout their journeys. Each cycle only trains them to become more determined to complete their quests. In the case of Frodo, at the end of Book I, he is wounded by Black Rider's Morgul Knife; he

faints on the ground and loses his consciousness. In a sense, he is dead, even if it only lasts for a short period of time. He had almost put his feet on the land of the Hades if Aragorn had not saved him in time with some herbs. The significance of this event indicates that, after having gone through this death/rebirth cycle, Frodo is a new man, mature enough to be the Ringbearer. After the collapse of the Fellowship, Frodo and Sam decide to cross the river of Anduin in order to go to Mordor. It is noteworthy that hobbits do not live by the riverside because they have an inborn fear of water. In addition to this, Frodo's parents were drowned when he was a small boy. The decision to cross the Anduin is, for Frodo, a matter of life and death. It is a final initiation or last irreversible step. So this event can also be counted as a death/rebirth cycle. It is through this rite of passage that Frodo shows his will and courage to be the Ringbearer.

Another occasion for Frodo's going through the death/rebirth cycle happens in the Cave of Shelob. Misled by Gollum, Frodo and Sam go into the lair of Shelob. As it turns out, Frodo is stung by this terrible giant spider and faints on the ground. He lies there breathlessly; Sam thinks that Frodo is dead. So he takes the Ring from him and goes on to complete the quest. Frodo, of course, is not yet dead but this episode causes him to experience a terrible whipping because he has been captured by orcs. In the case of Frodo, each cycle prepares him to face the challenge of a higher level of difficulty; each cycle provides him with an opportunity to acquire the heroic qualities he urgently needs for his difficult mission.

As for Odysseus, he goes through several death/rebirth cycles, too. To begin with, he is as naked as new-born baby when he creeps out from under the bushes to see why people give out the shriek outside. With a leafy bough to conceal his naked manhood, he meets Nausicaa, who, later on, gives him clothes to wear. The significance of this event implies that Odysseus, a mortal man, now returns to the real world from the supernatural world by the rite of death and rebirth. In other words, he is again in the proper place that he is destined to be in. Next, he visits the Hall of Hades in order to consult the soul of Teiresias about his future. Generally speaking, Hades is a place where only the dead are permitted to travel, but Odysseus goes there and comes back safely. In a sense, he has experienced another

death/rebirth cycle. This event is conducive to Odysseus' going back where he came from—Ithaca, because he knows, through the vision of the ghosts, what will happen and how he must act in the days to come. To put it another way, this event is a critical turning point about how he should act when he reaches Ithaca. Finally, he disguises himself as a beggar to get information about the Suitors and to test the love and loyalty of his friends and family. This is also a form of death. The purpose of this disguise is to hide his true identity; since almost no one knows Odysseus, he suffers the insults and attacks that would not be imposed on him if the offenders knew who he was. Odysseus has been away from his home for nearly twenty years. He must go through the rite of death/rebirth cycle so that he may have a safe reunion with his family and friends.

Meetings with supernatural beings are another ordeal Frodo and Odysseus have in common in the process of quest. As in any hero's journey, gods and other supernatural beings in *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Odyssey* take an interest or an active part in great actions. In addition, both in the myth and the fantasy, they serve the roles of guides or mentors in the stories to shape and test the heroes. Throughout all of his adventures, Frodo, first of all, meets Gandalf, a great wizard, who has profound knowledge as well as great power. It is Gandalf who can read the inscription on the Ring and knows how to open the doors of Durin into Moria, a vast underground city. It is also Gandalf who has the power to fight against the monstrous Barlog in order to let the company escape across the bridge of Hazaddum. Though he and the monster fall into oblivion after the bridge has broken, Gandalf reappears in Book III to awaken Theoden from his year-long despair to set a war against Saruman. The victory at Helm's Deep attracts the attention of Sauron; therefore, Frodo and Sam have a chance to enter stealthily into Mount Doom.

But, most important of all, Gandalf, a father figure, initiates Frodo into his first stage of growth. He tells Frodo the secret and danger of the Ring, the misfortunes of the Ring's former owners, and the way to deal with it. He also teaches Frodo the meanings of pity and mercy, and this teaching, afterwards, exercises a great influence on Frodo's attitude toward his enemies. Gandalf sets an

example for Frodo about the significance of self-sacrificing love by the battle with Barlog. In short, it is Gandalf's teaching, directly and indirectly, that helps Frodo grow into a hero.

The next supernatural being Frodo comes across on his journey is Tom Bombadil, a mystic figure, of whose identity Tolkien does not give any description. Probably he is very old, older than the creation of Middle-earth. He is the only figure in the fantasy that does not become invisible when slipping into the Ring. In fact, he makes the Ring invisible. He saves Frodo from Old Man Willow and from Barrow-wights by singing songs. After the adventure of Old Man Willow, Frodo and his hobbit friends stay in Tom's house for the night. When Frodo asks Tom's wife whether the old forest belongs to Tom, the answer he gets is: "The trees and the grasses and all things growing or living in the land belong each to themselves" (*LotR* I: 174). It is very likely that Frodo learns from this talk not to impose his wishful will on either people or living things, and this episode may be used to explain why Frodo does not have any ambition to use the Ring to rule Middle-earth. On the point of their leaving, Tom gives a piece of advice to Frodo: "Keep to the green grass. Don't you go a-meddling with Old Stone or Cold Wights or prying in their houses, unless you be strong folk with hearts that never falter!" (*LotR* I: 186). However, Frodo and his companions do not take this advice seriously. As a result of their negligence, Sam, Pippin, and Merry are captured by Barrow-wights. Though Tom rescues them again from the hands of Barrow-wights, Frodo must learn by hard experience that the way "seems easiest... must be shunned" (*LotR* I: 315).

Galadriel is the third supernatural being Frodo meets before he voluntarily assumes the role of Ringbearer in the council of Elrond. She is beautiful and powerful, and knows the future by looking into a magic mirror. She gives Frodo a Phial of light that will grow in places where all other lights go out and a cloak that will keep him invisible to any unfriendly eyes. The light not only shows Frodo the way but helps him against the Ringwraiths and, most important, enables him to face Shelob, a spider-form monster, which lives in a cave "before Sauron, and before the first stone of Barad-dur" (*LotR* II: 402). In short, Galadriel is the

embodiment of a powerful force older than Sauron. Despite her desire to own the Ring, Galadriel does not take it when Frodo willingly offers it to her. She tells Frodo: “In place of the dark Lord you will set up a Queen. And I shall not be dark, but beautiful and terrible as the Morning and the Night!” (*LotR* I: 373) so she refuses the offering. The significance of Galadriel’s refusal to take the Ring indicates that, powerful as Galadriel is, she does not dare to possess the Ring, and this is a fair warning to Frodo for the rest of the journey to resist the temptation of the Ring.

In *The Odyssey*, Athena is the first goddess always on the side of Odysseus to help and instruct him. Athena does several things for him: firstly, she implores Zeus to send Hermes to the cave of Calypso to inform her to let Odysseus go home; next, she arranges for Nausicaa to wash clothes at the mouth of the river where Odysseus meets her and then lead him into the city; finally, Athena helps Odysseus to kill the Suitors. The next supernatural being Odysseus meets is Circe, a nymph, a witch, and daughter of Helios. When Odysseus decides to leave, he needs Circe’s direction and counsel in the matter of how to travel to the underworld to get advice from Teiresias about homecoming. In addition, she gives him a favorable wind for his homeward journey. The third enchantress figure Odysseus encounters is Calypso, who has sufficient concern for his daily life’s needs and does everything for him in person. However, she restrains him and deters his plan of homecoming. Since Calypso gets the better of Odysseus in the aspect of tricks and magic power, he “changes from a self-reliant hero to someone less self-assured” (McClymount 26-27). Therefore, he feels sad when staying with Calypso. Poseidon and Zeus are other gods who keep him getting into deep trouble. Poseidon manages to detain Odysseus in exile in order to revenge his son, Polyphemus. Poseidon destroys his ship by a storm and mountainous waves at the moment when he sees Odysseus sailing over the sea near the Phaeacians' island. Similarly, Zeus strikes his ship by lightening thunders because Odysseus's crew killed and ate the Cattle of the Sun.

Restoration of domestic order and then sailing away for another world is the third ordeal both Frodo and Odysseus undergo in the end of their heroic journeys. The content in the last three chapters of *The Lord of the Rings* is very similar to that

in the end of *The Odyssey*. In the first place, their homes are occupied by villains. At the gate of the Shire, Frodo and his hobbit friends are not allowed to enter because it is under the control of Saruman. The same situation is waiting for Odysseus because his house is full of Suitors. In the second place, the occupants consume the wealth of the hobbits and Odysseus. The villains take most of the harvests away from the Shire, cut down trees, and remove the Mill while the Suitors eat Odysseus's cattle, rams, and swine. In the third place, the hobbits and Odysseus succeed in defeating the villains and the Suitors. The last common action both Frodo and Odysseus take is to sail away from their homes after having reestablished the domestic order. Frodo does not sail alone, but in company of Gandalf, Bilbo, Elrond, and Galadriel while Odysseus, according to the prophecy of Teirisias, "must take a well cut oar and go on till [he reaches] a people who know nothing of the sea and never use salt with their food" (*Od*: 174).

In spite of the similarities between Frodo and Odysseus mentioned above, one remarkable difference in their characters can be detected—Frodo never tells a lie under any circumstances throughout the whole story of his life, but Odysseus, being a hero who does not easily trust gods as well as human beings, tells lies when he has any doubt about his safety. When asked of his name, he tells Polyphemus he is called *Nobody*. The most interesting scene occurs when he tells Athena a long story about himself and the reason why he comes to Ithaca. Athena remarks: "my stubborn friend, Odysseus, the arch-deceiver, with his craving for intrigue, does not propose even in his own country to drop his sharp practice and the lying tales that he loves from the bottom of his heart" (*Od*: 210). After this event, Odysseus gives Eumaeus, Penelope, and his own father respectively a long story about his faked identity. It seems that he will not tell the truth to any suspicious character in order to protect himself from any harm.

Next, Frodo and Odysseus do not share the same attitude toward enemies. Frodo is merciful while Odysseus ruthlessly demands justice. At the beginning of the story, Frodo does not take pity on Gollum, and says that Gollum deserves death. As a response to Frodo's judgment, Gandalf observes: "Many that live deserve death. And some that die deserve life. Can you give it to them? Then do not be too

eager to deal out death in judgment" (*LotR* I: 93). However, when Frodo meets Gollum in the Forbidden Pool, he has felt the pain of loss and the burden of the Ring working on him and is thus able to have sympathetic feeling for the suffering of the wretched creature. Therefore, Frodo spares his life. As a result of his magnanimity and mercy on Gollum, the creature at the crucial moment bites off his finger and the Ring, and falls into the Cracks of Doom. Ironically, Gollum then saves Frodo's life and helps him fulfill his quest. Frodo's mercy and forgiveness toward the enemy is very much like the deeds of Jesus Christ in the *New Testament*.

By contrast, Odysseus puts out Polyphemus's eye to get revenge for his killed crew. It is very likely that Odysseus might kill Cyclops had he power to do so. In addition, he kills the Suitors and hangs twelve maid-servants. He and his son, Telemachus, do not spare any offender; even their good friend Menelaus's son, Amphimedon, is no exception. Nevertheless, what has to be noticed is that Odysseus does not kill people without reason. For example, he spares Phemius, a minstrel, and Medon, a herald. In short, Odysseus demands justice in the same way God does in the *Old Testament*.

Another difference both heroes display is that whereas Frodo in his interpersonal relationship does not give pain to his friends and enemies, Odysseus receives pain as well as gives it to people around him in the journey of quest. From the start to the end of his journey, Frodo tries to sacrifice himself in order to protect his comrades from the harm of the Ring and the Dark Forces. He is selfless in his love for his companions. He is merciful to his enemies when he is not threatened by death.

When compared with Frodo, Odysseus is hurting people, directly and indirectly, consciously and unconsciously throughout the whole story. The name "Odysseus," given by his grandfather, is closely connected with pain. As John Fitch III perspicaciously points out, Odysseus receives and distributes pain in the process of homecoming quest. He is constantly looking for conflict and struggle. It is Odysseus who insists on waiting in Polyphemus's cave for the giant's return, and this insistence causes several of his men to be eaten by the giant. It is also he who

insists on exploring Circe's island. As a result, his men are changed into swine. And it is for his sake that Poseidon turns one Phaeacian ship into stone and roots "her to the sea-bottom" (*Od.* 206). Odysseus is the unwitting cause of grief to his parents, wife, and son. His father, preoccupied with his longing for his son, withdraws to his farm; his mother dies of grief for his sake; his wife is subjected to the wooing of the unruly Suitors because of his absence from home; and his son experiences insults and plots from the Suitors. What is more, he indirectly brings death to his crew. None of them has a chance to live to see Ithaca again.

The battlefield experience is the fourth difference between Frodo and Odysseus. Frodo is largely at war with the Ring, the symbol of the dark side of human nature, while Odysseus always struggles with monsters, supernatural beings, and men during the entire journey. The battlefield in the case of Frodo is located in the deep corner of his mind. He must resist the temptation of the Ring. The Ring has power to rule over other rings, and whoever claims it will be the evil ruler of the Middle-earth. In addition, whoever puts on the Ring will be invisible to his friends as well as to his enemies. Since Gandalf has told Frodo the misfortune the Ring had already brought to its former owners, the hobbit tries his best not to be tempted by its power. Sometimes, he succeeds in his attempt to resist the Ring's temptation; sometimes, he yields to it. However, his resolution to destroy it is all the same, though on the edge of Doom the Ring succeeds in making Frodo a hobbit Sauron. He claims the Ring, but then Gollum snatches it away from him by biting off his finger. This event is a parallel to the case how it was taken away from Sauron at the end of the Second Age. The parallel between Frodo and Sauron suggests not only the dual nature of man but also the transformation of Frodo, who has almost become the enemy whom he has tried to defeat his whole life.

On the way home, Odysseus experiences different kinds of trials: the Cyclops, the Laistrygones, the confrontation with ghosts, Scylla, Charybdis, Zeus's storm, Poseidon's storm, and the charms of the Lotus-eater, Circe, the Sirens, Calypso, and Nausicaa, and finally his struggle with the Suitors and maidservants. All the trials he undergoes are not wars with his internal self, but rather with the external world. That is to say, he is directly or indirectly in conflict with men,

monsters, and supernatural beings. If he is defeated, at worst, he may have a physical danger brought to him, but not a threat to his spiritual life. By contrast, Frodo, once defeated, must risk losing his spiritual life as well as his physical life because he will be consumed by the Ring and become another Gollum as well as another Sauron.

The fifth difference that distinguishes Odysseus from Frodo is related to their physical and mental power. Odysseus is a king, an epic hero, larger than life—remarkable in resource, versatility, and strength, while Frodo is only a little hobbit, both literally and figuratively. Frodo is utterly ordinary, and this is his great value. He is ordinary in the sense that he is neither powerful in physical strength, shrewd enough to avoid being betrayed by Gollum, nor skillful enough even to keep body and soul together on the journey if he had not had Sam with him. To begin with, Frodo is not strong. He complains that Sam must have put the heavier objects into his traveling bag for he can scarcely walk any longer as they journey across the wild lands on the border of the Dark Lord's kingdom. Frodo knows that he is not powerful so he does not have any ambition to be a great figure like conventional heroes such as Boromir, who tries to seize the Ring from Frodo and use it to be the ruler of Middle-earth. Paradoxically, his lack of physical and mental power becomes the protective strength by which he can deal with the Ring. Next, Frodo is not shrewd in dealing with people. He trusts what Gollum tells him. He and Sam follow Gollum into the lair of Shelob. Consequently, he is wounded by Shelob. Afterwards, he is captured and brought into the tower of Cirith Ungol by the Orcs. With the help of Sam, he escapes from the tower. Then he and Sam arrive at the Cracks of Doom. If Frodo is not a person easily cheated, he will not be able to find the shortcut to the Cracks of Doom, not to mention to complete his mission of destroying the Ring. Finally, Frodo is not skillful in doing chores. On the way of the journey, Sam, playing the role of a wife or mother, takes care of Frodo. Sam looks for fruits, catches rabbits, and does daily chores for him. Paradoxically, if Frodo is an able hero, and needs not the company of Sam, he will not have any chance to fulfill his quest because, as mentioned above, it is Sam who rescues him from the hands of the Orcs and it is Sam who carries him on his back at the last

stage when he cannot walk. Therefore, it is not too far-fetched to say that Frodo's commonness is his great virtue.

Odysseus is resourceful whenever he gets into trouble. For instance, the Trojan War would have gone on for many years had Odysseus not invented the Wooden Horse. Another example is that when imprisoned in the Cave of Cyclops, Odysseus offers potent and mellow wine to the giant and, after a drunken sleep overtaking him, then puts out his eye; finally by hanging on to the bellies of the sheep he and his crew escape from the giant's cave. A third example of his resourcefulness is shown when staying in Eumaeus's hut, he gives him a hint by a story that he needs clothes or some blankets because it is cold in the night. The swineherd is so pleased with the story that he promises to give the beggar what is needed for the night. Odysseus also shows his cleverness and intelligence in inventing the stories about his identity. He is able to tell his stories without thinking; what is more, all he tells is so vivid and believable that the audience (except Athena) does not know that he is telling a story.

Odysseus is talented in many fields. He is able to cut down trees and make a boat to sail on the Mediterranean by watching the stars. At the moment when he is challenged by Laodamas to have a contest in games, Odysseus picks up the biggest disk of all; he throws it through the air, "and so lightly [does] it fly from his hand that it [overshoots] the marks of all the other throws"; then he says, "I am not a bad hand all round at any kind of manly sport" (*Od*: 127). As a matter of fact, he is quite at home in archery, javelin, disk, wrestling, running and boxing. In addition to these, he is able to do chores, good "at anything that humble folks do by way of serving their betters" (*Od*: 278).

It is generally agreed that the image of Odysseus's strength and skill is his great bow.⁶ It needs sheer physical power to string the bow and strength wedded with skill to shoot through the axes in the contest of the Suitors. The bow is the most important weapon for a hero like Odysseus because he is a master in using it

⁶ Agathe Thornton mentions this point in *People and Themes in Homer's Odyssey* (78), and H. W. Clarke shares the same view with Thornton in his *The Art of the Odyssey* (76-77).

either on the battlefield or in any contest. When he is among the Phaeacians, he says: “I can handle well the polished bow, and I should be the first to pick off my men with an arrow in the enemy ranks” (*Od*: 127-28). Later on, as he is in battle with the Suitors, the decisive weapon is, of course, his great bow— a gift from Iphitus, whose father, Eurytus, is a great archer. It must be noted that before the battle, none of the Suitors can string the great bow while Odysseus can easily use it. Therefore, it is entirely fair to say that Odysseus has more powerful physical strength than any of the Suitors, and his strength, skill, versatility, and intelligence make Odysseus the hero of heroes.

Apart from what has been discussed, a stark disparity can be found between Frodo and Odysseus. The hobbits, after having undergone adventures, are mature, courageous, and strong enough to battle with evil force on their own. They defeat Saruman without any help from supernatural beings. By contrast, Odysseus, under the protection of Athena, and with the help of his son, Eumaeus, and the cowman, kills all the Suitors. However, Odysseus and Frodo show totally different attitudes toward their enemies. As already mentioned, Odysseus spares none of the offenders. This is the possible reason why John Fitch III maintains that “Odysseus has gained nothing from his journeys but pain and a desire to draw seemingly justifiable blood from his and his wife's tormentors” (par. 22). In contrast to Odysseus, Frodo has been in the battle against the force of Saruman, but he does not draw out his sword to kill enemies. He is there only to prevent the hobbits from killing those who throw down their weapons. He spares Saruman's life, saying: “It is useless to meet revenge with revenge: it will heal nothing” (*LotR* III: 369). When Saruman passes close to Frodo, he stabs swiftly but his strike does not hurt Frodo. Even after this event, Frodo still insists on letting Saruman go. He tells Sam: Saruman “was great once, of a noble kind that we should not dare to raise our hands against. He is fallen, and his curse is beyond us; but I would still spare him, in the hope that he may find it” (*LotR* III: 369). On this, Saruman says, “You have grown, Halfling. Yes, you have grown very much. You are wise, and cruel. You have robbed my revenge of sweetness, and now I must go hence in bitterness, in debt to your mercy” (*LotR* III: 369). From what has been stated previously, it is only reasonable to say that Frodo,

a changed man after having gone through his adventures, is made into something greater while Odysseus remains the vindictive warrior he has always been.

Generally speaking, Odysseus is engaged in a quest to find out man's position in the universe, to probe the secret of the continuity of the journey of human life, and to endure all the sufferings imposed on man by the Fates so that he may maintain the dignity and proper value of man's existence. The significance of Frodo's quest indicates that, though the evil power is so great that it makes an unscathed victory impossible, it is the sacrifice of heroes that sustains a fallen world. Small as Frodo may be, Tolkien suggests that it is the small hands that sometimes move the wheels of the world (*LotR* I: 353).

Finally, the journey undertaken by Frodo and Odysseus can be examined by the criteria of hero proposed by Joseph Campbell. To begin with, "a hero is someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself" (Moyers & Campbell 123). Both Frodo and Odysseus undertake a series of adventures beyond the ordinary: Frodo's mission is to destroy the Ring with power to rule the Middle-earth while Odysseus's task is homecoming to restore the domestic order. Home, for Odysseus, is the center of a man's life in the universe and this is clearly indicated in his dialogue with Calypso as well as his prayer for Nausicaa. They both have done "something beyond the normal range of achievement and experience" (*ibid.*). As already mentioned, many powerful characters in *The Lord of the Rings*, such as Gandalf, Galadriel, Aragorn, Tom Bombadil, Faramir, and Glorfindel, do not want to assume the responsibility of the Ringbearer whereas Frodo commits himself to this task. In the case of Odysseus, most of his trials or ordeals are related to supernatural beings, such as Circe, the Sirens, Calypso, Proteus, Aeolus, Zeus, Poseidon, and the soul of Teiresias. As a mortal, Odysseus has to encounter with the mysterious and strange that belong to the other world. What is more, he has to fight the Suitors with very limited help from his son before he is able to reestablish the order of his home.

Another feature in heroes, according to Campbell, is that they serve their communities as well as themselves, "either to recover what has been lost or to discover some life-giving elixir" (Moyers & Campbell 123). Frodo's quest is to

destroy the Ring and recover the peace and order of the Middle-earth, and to clean the Shire of the hobbits which is occupied by the remaining force of Saruman. Similarly, Odysseus's quest is to defeat the Suitors and maidservants and recover the domestic order. Both Frodo and Odysseus can be considered as heroes who "achieves a domestic, microcosmic triumph" by bringing change into their communities and conquering their "personal oppressors" (Campbell 38).

In the theory of Monomyth or the Hero's Journey, Campbell argues that all stories or rather all heroes are fundamentally the same because their minds, regardless from what kind of culture, are created alike, even though they may have undergone diversified trials or ordeals. The formula of the Hero's Journey consist of three phases—departure, initiation, and return. In the phase of departure, a hero sets out for his journey from the real world into "a region of supernatural wonder" (Campbell 30). The next phase is initiation in which the hero goes through certain types of ordeals in order to fulfill his quest. The final phase is return, in which the hero brings with him whatever boon he has got on his journey to bestow his fellow man. Both Frodo and Odysseus have undergone these three phases with the shared heroic qualities (courage, self-control, perseverance) and ordeals (the death/rebirth cycle, supernatural aid, restoration of domestic order, and sailing for another world). They differ from each other in terms of characters (honest vs. crafty), attitudes toward enemies (merciful vs. vindictive), interpersonal relationships (giving no pain vs. receiving and distributing pain), battlefield experiences (internal vs. external), physical and mental power (common vs. outstanding), and heroic qualities (nurtured vs. inborn). Based on what has been discussed about the concept of hero, it is reasonable to argue that when approached by the criteria of hero and the formula of the Hero's Journey proposed by Joseph Campbell, Frodo and Odysseus are heroes with different faces, and they are not so much fundamentally different from each other even though Frodo has been conventionally labeled as a fairy-tale hero and Odysseus as an epic hero.

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