

Frodo as Beowulf

Tolkien reshapes the Anglo-Saxon Heroic Ideal

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What do Beowulf and Frodo have in common? At first glance, very little. Beowulf is human; though fictional, he comes from a real place, and his story is intertwined with historical facts, but he is a character of mythical proportion, with near super-human strength. He is a hero. Frodo Baggins, on the other hand, is a creature of fantasy, not quite human, though with very human features and characteristics. Frodo lives in a world not our own. Yet, he is also a hero.

But the fact that Beowulf and Frodo are heroes is not their common bond. Their common bond is the type of hero they are, and the characteristics they share. Beowulf is the depiction of the Anglo-Saxon heroic ideal. Though clearly not Anglo-Saxon, Frodo represents the Anglo-Saxon heroic ideal portrayed in Beowulf. Tolkien, consciously or not, took the heroic characteristics of Beowulf and transferred them into the character of Frodo. In some cases, these characteristics closely follow the model of the Anglo-Saxon ideal; in others, however, Tolkien tweaks the ideal, reworking the heroic for a different time and place. In his essay on 'Tolkien and Frodo Baggins', Sale states, 'Frodo is, unlike a great deal else in the trilogy, modern' (199). While being a modern hero, Frodo is also very clearly a 're-shaped' version of Beowulf, the very embodiment of the Anglo-Saxon heroic ideal.

Background

Some scholars may argue that Beowulf is not an Anglo-Saxon hero but a Scandinavian or Germanic hero. Beowulf is a Geat. Others, such as Klaeber and McNamee, argue quite eloquently that Beowulf is a Christian hero. He may well be. Elements of the poem have clear Judeo-Christian overtones, although it has no direct references to the Christian New Testament. However, my intention is not to argue these points. Whether he is a Geat or a Christianised hero, Beowulf is the main character in the oldest extant piece of English poetry, the Anglo-Saxon poem, *Beowulf*. Whatever else he might be, he is still a portrayal of the Anglo-Saxon heroic ideal, which is how an Anglo-Saxon audience listening to the poem would have viewed him. And, that is how we must also see him.

What, then, do we make of Frodo? If we are talking about him being a 'reshaped' version of the Anglo-Saxon hero, we must understand as clearly as possible what that hero is. First, we must ask, 'What is a hero?' According to Lubin, 'the hero is a 'man admired and emulated for his achievements and qualities'' (3). In general, Lubin continues, the hero 'is consumed by some kind of ambition, some dream of glory' (12).

Joseph Campbell says of the hero: 'A hero ventures forth from the world of common clay into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive

Does Frodo have a literary ancestor in Beowulf? Robert Goldberg makes what is, on the face of it, an unlikely sounding case.

victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.' (from *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, qtd. in Lubin, 7)

We will return to Campbell's description to see if, indeed, each of our heroes really is a hero. More to

our point, though, is to determine if Frodo is an Anglo-Saxon hero.

Beowulf is an Anglo-Saxon poem, and its hero is an Anglo-Saxon hero. Tolkien, Frodo's creator, says,

'An author cannot of course remain wholly unaffected by his experience, but the ways in which a story-germ uses the soil of experience are extremely complex, and attempts to define the process are at best guesses from evidence that is inadequate and ambiguous' (LotR, 'Foreword' 10-11).

Tolkien's experience included a deeply embedded knowledge and understanding of *Beowulf*. His paper, *Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics*, is one of the most pivotal works in Anglo-Saxon scholarship, and in particular the study of *Beowulf*. Whether intended or not, in many regards Tolkien grounded *LotR* in *Beowulf*. Others have discussed the relationships between *LotR* and *Beowulf*, but here we address their relationship only in terms of the Anglo-Saxon heroic ideal.

What, then, is this Anglo-Saxon heroic ideal? What are the its characteristics? According to the *Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Volume 2, the heroic ideal was 'simply...excellence' (2). This notion of excellence was originally associated with kings, or tribal chiefs. In its essence, the leader of the group 'strove to do better than anyone else the things that an essentially migratory life demanded: to sail a ship through a storm, to swim a river or bay, to tame a horse...but always and above all, to fight' (2). Three key qualities displayed in the successful king are courage, generosity (the successful king was a giver of gifts, a ring-giver), and loyalty (which worked in both directions). While achieving the heroic ideal had practical implications for the successful king, it would also result in something more permanent: enduring fame, a sense of immortality.

These three traits are clearly visible in some key Anglo-Saxon poetic texts, in addition to *Beowulf*. These poems include 'The Wanderer,' 'The Dream of the Rood,' 'The Battle of Maldon,' and 'Caedmon's Hymn.'

The Norton Anthology implies, and these poems demonstrate, that the Anglo-Saxon hero was first, and foremost, a warrior. And, these characteristics of courage, generosity, and loyalty stem from the role of warrior. The warrior who was 'most excellent' would ascend to the position of chief through his demonstration of near super-human courage and through his generous giving of gifts. In this manner, he would gain unswerving loyalty from his thanes, while also displaying his

References to Beowulf are generally from Robert Goldberg's translation, based on the Fr. Klaeber edition, 1950.

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loyalty to them (this is the idea of the *comitatus*). We must first demonstrate that Beowulf does have these characteristics. To accomplish this, we will also discover additional traits of the Anglo-Saxon heroic ideal, namely:

The Boast (the ‘*gilpcwilde*’)
Strength
Appearance
Heroic quest

The characteristic of the ‘boast’ is, more accurately, a ‘sub-trait’ of the characteristic of ‘courage,’ while the traits of ‘strength’ and ‘appearance’ are ‘physical characteristics.’ The ‘heroic quest’ is the purpose of the hero. Although I list these as ‘additional traits,’ they still play a vital role in defining the Anglo-Saxon heroic ideal, and in portraying Frodo as Tolkien’s version of the Beowulfian hero.

Findings

Beowulf, our Anglo-Saxon hero, clearly fills the roles of the hero-warrior and the hero-king. In roughly the first 2000 lines of the poem, the poet introduces us to a warrior. In the final nearly 1200 lines, we see Beowulf as a king. As we will see, in both cases he clearly displays the three primary traits of the Anglo-Saxon heroic ideal: courage, generosity, and loyalty.

Our primary focus, though, is not to determine if Beowulf fits the mould of the Anglo-Saxon heroic ideal; rather, it is to see if Frodo also fits this mould. If he does, in what respects do the characteristics differ from those seen in Beowulf? In other words, how, and to what extent, has Tolkien reshaped the traits within the character of Frodo? Why has Tolkien reshaped these characteristics? The answers to these questions may offer us a glimpse of Tolkien’s rationale for writing *LotR*. For our immediate purpose, though, we will see his indebtedness to and love for Beowulf and Anglo-Saxon literature.

In speaking of the task for Frodo, Sale notes, ‘it will take heroism of some kind...to hold onto the Ring, to take it to Mordor, to give it up there’ (204). Clearly, it will take a Beowulfian type of heroism. Frodo will show himself to be this type of hero by displaying extreme, near super-human courage, by inspiring and showing loyalty, and by being generous with gifts both physical and intangible.

Before showing how our heroes fulfill the Anglo-Saxon heroic ideal, we shall see some basic comparisons. Obviously, both Beowulf and Frodo set out on an improbable, if not impossible, heroic quest to save a land from a great terror. How they set out, however, is different. Beowulf sets out in splendour, with fanfare, in broad daylight. He knows where he is going, and into what danger he is leading his men. On the other hand, Frodo ‘leaves stealthily, keeping away from the high road when he can’ (Sale 204). Frodo knows that he ‘is in danger and must go on a long journey’ (205), but that is all he knows. He knows he must take the Ring away from the Shire, but he does not know where to go. Only on the advice of Gandalf does he set out towards Rivendell. It will not be until he arrives there will he find out the true nature of his quest, and just how perilous it will be. Finally, in the battles with Grendel and Grendel’s dam, Beowulf alone can be victorious. Similarly, only Frodo can ultimately see the Ring destroyed. In neither case can their companions help them, though fate may intervene to provide some assistance.

Courage

Lubin says, ‘courage is the victory of will – of self-control –

over normal (or natural) responses, particularly the self-control of the hero when confronting dangers and, the ultimate danger, death’ (10). Writing about the poem Beowulf, Tolkien says we see ‘something more significant than a standard hero, a man faced with a foe more evil than any human enemy of house or realm’ (Beowulf: Monsters). Beowulf must be courageous to perform all of his feats, from the swimming contest with Brecca to fighting Grendel and Grendel’s dam and to confronting his final challenge, the dragon.

Beowulf consistently demonstrates an overwhelming self-confidence, which can first be seen in his ‘decision, preparation, and setting out’ on his voyage to Heorot to challenge Grendel (Beowulf, Chapter 3, p. 8). Before Beowulf is to set out, the elders of the tribe must read the omens, but Beowulf does not wait; in his confidence, he and his thanes set out while the elders are still reading the omens. Others see his courage, and speak of it. When Beowulf initially enters Heorot, Wulfgar notes, ‘*Wen’ ic pæt gefor wlenco, nalles for wræcsidum, / ac for higeprymum Hroðgar sohton*’ (‘I think that for your daring courage you have sought Hrothgar, not because of exile, but because of your greatness of heart.’) (ll. 338-39).

Most prominently, Beowulf’s displays his confidence in a speech act that seems to be a requirement of the Anglo-Saxon hero. One scholar notes, ‘Germanic warriors of the early Middle Ages commonly took an oath to avenge their leader or die in the attempt’ (Renoir, 237). ‘The Battle of Maldon’ demonstrates ‘the importance of formal, public promises to perform heroic actions, to fulfill the obligation of membership in a heroic society’ (Clark). After their lord had fallen in battle, warrior after warrior made a boast to avenge his lord, or die in the attempt. The first to speak was Ælfwine, who said, ‘Remember the speeches we have spoken so often over our mead, when we raised boast on the bench, heroes in the hall, about hard fighting. Now may the man who is bold prove that he is’ (ll. 212-15) (translation, Norton Anthology, 85).

Beowulf makes a formal speech, or boast, called the ‘*gilpcwilde*,’ three times prior to his fight with Grendel. In his first boast, Beowulf keeps things relatively simply, when he says ‘*Ac ic him Gêat sceal / eafod and ellen ... ungeara nu, / gupe gebeodan*’ (‘But soon now I shall show him the strength and courage of the Geats in battle’) (ll. 601-03). Next, he shows his resolve, and the depth to which his courage will lead him:

<i>‘Ic pæt hogode,</i>	<i>Pa on holm gestah,</i>
<i>sebat gesæt</i>	<i>mid minra secga gedright,</i>
<i>pæt ic anunga</i>	<i>eowra leoda</i>
<i>willan gewirhte,</i>	<i>opðe on wæl crunge</i>
<i>feondgrapum fæst.</i>	<i>Ic gefremman sceal</i>
<i>eorlic ellen,</i>	<i>opðe endedæg</i>
<i>on pisse meoduhealle</i>	<i>minne gebidan!’</i> (632-38)

(I was resolved when I set out on the sea, sat down in the sea-boat with my band of men, that I should entirely fulfill your people’s will, or else in death fall, fast in the fiend’s grasp. I shall perform a manly deed of valor, or I have lived to see my last day in this mead hall.)

In his final boast, Beowulf says:

<i>No ic me an herewæsmun</i>	<i>hnagran talige</i>
<i>gupfeorca,</i>	<i>ponne Grendel hine;</i>
<i>forpan ic hine sweorde</i>	<i>swebban nelle,</i>
<i>alder beneotan,</i>	<i>peah ic eal mæge;</i>
<i>nat he para goda,</i>	<i>pæt he me ongean slea,</i>
<i>rand geheawe,</i>	<i>peah ðe he rof sie</i>

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nipgeweorca; ac wit on niht sculon
secge ofersittan, gif he gesecean dear
wig ofer wæpen, ond sipðan witiġ God
on swa hwæpere hond halig Dryhten
mærdo deme, swa him gemet pince. (677-87)

(I claim myself no poorer in warlike stature, of warlike deeds, than Grendel himself claims; therefore I will not put him to sleep with a sword, deprive him of life, though I surely may; he knows no good tools with which he might strike against me, hew my shield, though he is strong in fight; but in night we shall forego the sword, if he dare seeks war without weapon, and then may wise God, the Holy Lord, on whichever hand assigns glory, as it seems proper.)

An important characteristic of this type of vow is that, prior to making these final boasts, Beowulf says he is 'wæltrow' and 'gupe gefysed' (ll. 629, 620), 'slaughter-fierce' and 'impelled toward battle.' In his initial boast, he appears calm and in control, but in the last boast his attitude or mental state seems to have changed, as he appears now to be a bloodthirsty savage. With this view of Beowulf's 'courage,' we must now ask, 'How will Frodo approach his 'battle'? Can a meek, mild hobbit evolve into a warrior with a lust for blood? Does he need to evolve to this degree to demonstrate his courage?

As with Beowulf, Frodo must also be 'something more significant than a standard hero' (Tolkien, *Beowulf: Monsters*), since he must face an evil far greater even than the evils Beowulf faces; he must face the ultimate evil of Sauron, and to do that, Frodo must confront his own inner demon, the power of the Ring. Does Frodo have the necessary courage? Recall Lubin's definition, which states, 'courage is the victory of will – of self-control...when confronting dangers and, the ultimate danger, death' (10). An article published on mythome.org website describes Frodo, along with Uncle Bilbo, as 'ordinary in every sense of the word.' But, Frodo is far from ordinary, even among hobbits.

Throughout *LotR*, and most notably in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, Frodo displays both courage and fear, characteristics that would be familiar to humans. When Gandalf tells Frodo that the Ring must be destroyed, Frodo reacts: "I do really wish to destroy it!" cried Frodo. "Or, well, to have it destroyed. I am not made for perilous quests" (I.94-95). Yet, in face of acknowledging the quest he must undertake, Frodo responds, "I should like to save the Shire....But this would mean exile, a flight from danger into danger, drawing it after me....But I feel very small" (I.96). Despite his fears, Frodo is determined to set out on his own, to save his home, his people. This seems to begin to fulfill Lubin's definition of courage as 'the victory of will.' And, Frodo's courage is put to the test repeatedly.

While Beowulf fearlessly faces all manner of evil, Frodo shows an all too mortal fear. He does not appear to have the necessary courage to be a hero, let alone a version of an Anglo-Saxon hero. In their first real battle with the Black Riders, fear overcomes the Hobbits. Pippin and Merry fall to the ground; Sam shrinks to Frodo's side; and 'Frodo was hardly less terrified than his companions; he was quaking as if he was bitter cold' (I.262). Despite his fear, though, and giving into the temptation to put on the Ring, 'Frodo threw himself forward on the ground, and he heard himself crying aloud: *O Elbereth! Gilthoniel!* At the same time he struck at

the feet of his enemy' (I.263). Frodo overcame his will to cower in fear, and he struck a blow at the enemy.

As with Beowulf, in keeping with the heroic ideal, Frodo also makes his formal vow, or boast, to perform a heroic deed. The Council of Elrond determines that the only course of action is to take the Ring to Mount Doom, to cast it into the Crack of Doom, thereby destroying it by the very fire in which it was forged. Frodo's vow, unlike Beowulf's, is simple. Frodo is not 'slaughter-fierce' or 'impelled to battle.' He simply says, 'I will take the ring, though I do not know the way.' Yet, in the ears of those at the council, particularly Elrond, this boast had as much power and force behind it as did Beowulf's boast.

In Frodo's physical acts of courage and his boast, we have examples of Tolkien reshaping the heroic ideal, taking the larger than life Beowulf, and creating a hero who is more normal, from a human perspective. While Beowulf impresses us with his strength, his fearlessness, and his confidence, Frodo impresses by being relatively normal, quiet, and frightened, yet a hero through and through. And though he is a hobbit, a creature of fantasy, he is as normal as people who understand their own mortality. While Beowulf is not afraid to die, most humans have an innate fear of death. However, we do not need to be overly concerned with Frodo's apparent weaknesses. As Strider says to Sam, 'Your Frodo is made of sterner stuff than I had guessed' (I.265).

Much more could be said of Frodo's courage, particularly as he approaches Mount Doom, and the trials he faces along the way, from members of the fellowship as well as enemies, from his confrontation with Boromir to his confrontation with Shelob. Yet, it is at the end of Frodo's journey, at the Crack of Doom, where we must rethink our view of his courage. Yes, he goes into the Crack of Doom to cast the Ring into the only fire that can destroy it. But, does he do it? Does he have the strength of will, the courage? In the end, is it not simply a matter of fate? The only way the Ring ends up in the fire of Mount Doom is when Gollum bites off Frodo's ring finger, and falls into the fiery pit. Is this courage? Yet again, it may be another element of Tolkien's reshaping of this aspect of the heroic ideal. While Beowulf sticks to his decisions to confront first Grendel, then Grendel's dam, and finally the dragon, Frodo seems to back down from his vow. Perhaps fate is part of the reshaping of the heroic ideal; perhaps fate creates true heroes.

Generosity

Generosity is an important trait for the Anglo-Saxon heroic ideal. The king or tribal chief is a ring-giver, and the best of ring-givers inspires the greatest loyalty in his thanes. The *Beowulf* poet admonishes young listeners, as lines 20-23 can be translated, 'So ought a young man to bring it about by good and ready gifts of treasure, while he is young, that willing companions will stand by him in aftertimes when war comes and help their chief' (Garmonsway, 141). Furthermore, 'generosity is the condition of success in every community' (141). In these verses, the *Beowulf* poet says it is important to be generous, and though he says to be generous with the giving of gifts, he may also mean to be generous in other ways.

When Beowulf defeats Grendel's dam, the only things he takes with him back to Heorot are the head of the monster and the hilt of the sword with which he slew her, because the blade



The field of Cormallen

Lorenzo Daniele

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melted (l. 1614). The poem states that Beowulf saw many other treasures (ll. 1612-13), but he may not have been able to swim if he had too many treasures. Yet, we could argue that Beowulf was generous in giving of himself. He came to Heorot to kill Grendel; Grendel's dam was an added bonus. But, in the greatness of his heart, he slew the mother after she sought revenge for Grendel's death. And, before Beowulf leaves Heorot, he promises Hrothgar that he will be ready at once to aid him if ever Hrothgar needs him (ll. 1822-30).

Beowulf is, of course, a generous ring-giver, as well. Upon his return to his lord, Hygelac, Beowulf shares the story of his battle with Grendel, and tells how Hrothgar, a very generous gift-giver, rewarded Beowulf with gold-plated objects and many treasures (ll. 2101-03). After recounting the battle with Grendel's dam, Beowulf announces that he will give the treasure to his lord, his only close relative (ll. 2148-49). After Hygelac's death in battle, the poem only says that Beowulf 'ruled well for fifty winters – he was a wise king' (l. 2208-09). The poet says little more of Beowulf's generosity, except when Wiglaf, a loyal thane, reminds the other warriors of 'he who gave us rings' (l. 2635). This is at the point where Beowulf is about to be killed by the dragon. In one final display of ultimate generosity, after the dragon mortally wounds him, Beowulf gives Wiglaf a gold neck ring, apparently naming Wiglaf his heir and successor, as Wiglaf is now the last of the Wægmundings (ll. 2809-14).

Frodo must also be seen as generous, in order to be viewed as fulfilling the Anglo-Saxon heroic ideal. To honor Bilbo's hundred and twelfth birthday, Frodo gave a party. He invited twenty guests, and 'there were several meals at which it snowed food and rained drink, as hobbits say' (I.70). Of course, at all hobbit birthdays, the one celebrating gives gifts to all in attendance. At the end of the tale, Frodo was also quite generous. When Sam marries Rose, Frodo invites them to live at Bag End (III.377). A generous notion by itself, but Frodo will go further by giving Bag End, and all its possessions, to Sam, as something of an inheritance, much like Beowulf with Wiglaf.

Showing again how Tolkien tweaks the heroic ideal, one source says, 'Frodo's greatest strength is generosity of spirit and power of forgiveness' (Monkeynotes). His most remarkable display of generosity is not the giving of gifts or money. It is the giving of forgiveness, and freedom. On more than one occasion, he saved Gollum from being killed. As Frodo and Sam were making their way toward the Black Gate, with Gollum as their guide, Faramir and his men captured the hobbits, while Gollum avoided the men. That night, Gollum was fishing in the 'Forbidden Pool.' With Faramir's men training their arrows on Gollum, Frodo intervenes, offering his own life to allow Gollum to go free. Frodo asks permission to go down to the pool to get Gollum, and says, 'You may keep your bows bent, and shoot me at least, if I fail. I shall not run away' (II.374). Although Frodo will certainly need Gollum to guide him to Mordor, he demonstrates his generous spirit by volunteering his own life to spare Gollum's.

Frodo also showed trust toward Gollum, by removing the elven rope from his ankle, after Sam tied him up to keep him from running away. Interestingly, at the beginning of the tale, Frodo told Gandalf that he could not even consider Gollum, or Sméagol, to be a hobbit. Frodo hated, despised Gollum, and thought Bilbo should have killed Gollum when he had the

chance. Then, when the opportunity came to Frodo, he demonstrated the same generosity of spirit, the same pity, as Bilbo demonstrated so many years before. Frodo demonstrated the same greatness of spirit toward Saruman, letting him go even though Saruman nearly destroyed the Shire (III.369). Frodo is clearly generous, though not necessarily in the way Beowulf is generous.

Loyalty

The poem 'The Battle of Maldon,' shows the importance of loyalty as it displays 'a powerful record of heroism – of unwavering loyalty and dedication' (Irmo). We need only go back to the discussion of the oath, and read the oath spoken by Byrhtwold at the very end of the poem: 'From here I will not leave / but by the side of my lord / by the man so loved I intend to lie' (ll. 317-19).

Beowulf inspired loyalty in his thanes. He accomplished this first by his impressive feats of strength and courage, such as the swimming contest with Brecca. It is likely that he fought and won numerous battles, winning bounty that he shared with his men. As noted earlier, lines 20-23 indicate that a young man should give 'good and ready gifts of treasure, while he is young, that willing companions will stand by him in aftertimes when war comes and help their chief.' We see that Beowulf commanded a degree of loyalty in the fifteen warriors who sailed with him to Heorot, willing to die in battle against an unknown foe. At the end of Beowulf's life, and near the end of the story, we see a more vivid picture of this loyalty through Wiglaf, the only thane who stood with Beowulf against the dragon, and who became Beowulf's only heir (I.2635).

But, loyalty must extend in both directions. In order for a hero to earn loyalty from others, the hero must first show loyalty to others. Beowulf was loyal to his uncle, Hygelac, who was the leader of his tribe. Though he is now a leader of men, Beowulf is clearly a loyal thane to his lord, Hygelac (l. 2170). He demonstrates this by giving the gifts he received from Hrothgar to Hygelac: as the poet says, 'so should a kinsman act' (l. 2166).

As Beowulf with his uncle, Frodo was immensely loyal to his uncle, Bilbo. Even after Bilbo left the Shire forever, Frodo continued to celebrate Bilbo's birthday, remembering Bilbo's final night in the Shire, the day he turned 'eleventy one.' Though others believed Bilbo to be dead, Frodo loyally and faithfully trusted that he was not yet dead.

Frodo also inspires great loyalty in others, as seen especially in Sam, Pippin, and Merry, but also in the other members of the fellowship. It is not through the giving of gifts or great victories in battle that he inspires such loyalty, but in the greatness of his spirit, in his determination to do whatever he must to see the Ring destroyed. Gandalf instructs Frodo to take with him such companions that he can trust, those he 'would be willing to take into unknown perils' (I.97). Sam, like Beowulf's Wiglaf, is one such companion. He has no desire to face perils, but he will not allow Frodo to be alone (I.126). Sam demonstrates this loyalty after Boromir confronts Frodo about the Ring. Frodo, wearing the Ring, flees, and only Sam figures out what has happened. Sam, who does not swim, jumps in the river to try to reach Frodo, to be with him.

Of course, both Beowulf and Frodo are loyal to their quests. Beowulf makes an oath to rid Heorot of the monster, Grendel.

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He is loyal to his oath. He goes beyond that oath, though, and slays Grendel's dam. After returning home and becoming king upon his uncle's death, a dragon ravages the land. Beowulf, as is the right thing for a hero to do, vows to slay the dragon. He perishes, but stays loyal to his mission to the end. Frodo is also loyal to his quest to deliver the Ring of Power into the Crack of Doom, to destroy it in the fire by which it was forged. In spite of all the obstacles, and with Sam as his only companion, he reaches the Crack of Doom. Fate, in the form of Gollum, helps him to complete his quest.

Additional traits

Is strength a requirement for the Anglo-Saxon hero? Beowulf has near super-human strength. Beowulf is described as '*se wæs moncynnes, mægenes strengest*' ('the strongest man alive') (line 196). In fact, the poet tells us he has the 'strength of thirty men in his grip' (ll. 379-80). His strength allows him to perform incredible feats, such as his swimming contest with Brecca, where he endures days in the ocean, confronting sea monsters. Of course, he demonstrates his strength most vividly by fighting Grendel hand to hand, rather than with a weapon, and in the process tearing off Grendel's arm, dealing the monster a mortal blow.

In addition to strength, the Anglo-Saxon hero has an appearance that sets him apart from other warriors. Beowulf's appearance alone is enough to convince others of his courage. As he and his thanes approach the Danish coast, the coast guard says, 'may his look, his matchless appearance, never belie him' (ll. 250-51).

Frodo Baggins was merely a hobbit of the shire. From the perspective of the race of Man, Frodo was small, seemingly insignificant. Yet, among his own kind, Frodo stood out. At 'The Prancing Pony' in Bree, Mr. Butterbur recounts Gandalf's description of Frodo: 'But this one is taller than some and fairer than most, and he has a cleft in his chin: perky chap with a bright eye' (Tolkien, I. 227). During the early stages after setting out from the Shire, Pippin 'declared that Frodo was looking twice the hobbit that he had been' (I.249). As for his strength, (though it cannot compare to the strength of Beowulf) recall Strider's words to Sam: 'Your Frodo is made of sterner stuff than I had guessed' (I.265), referring to both his physical strength and his strength of spirit to withstand the poison of the Ring Wraith's knife. This seems to be another reshaping by Tolkien, taking a character that may not physically fit the description of a great hero-warrior, and showing that a hero is not one simply by virtue of size and physical strength.

Conclusion

Frodo demonstrates that he possesses the qualities of the Anglo-Saxon heroic ideal, though Tolkien reshaped some of those qualities to fit a different time and a different place. This being so, both stories conclude in a similar, yet different fashion. Beowulf sought and found honour, glory, and fame, and will be forever remembered in song. The poem ends with Beowulf's elegy:

'of world-kings he was the mildest and the gentlest, kindest to his people, and most eager for fame' (ll. 3180-82).

Frodo will also be forever remembered throughout Middle-earth; however, his parting had much less fanfare. He does not die at the end of the story; he is permitted to leave Middle-earth with the elves, and sail across the sea. This is the final reshaping of the heroic

ideal by Tolkien: Frodo is not eager for fame, yet he will still attract fame for the deeds he performed.

It is my contention that both Frodo and Beowulf are heroes in Joseph Campbell's terms. Each 'ventures forth from the world of common clay into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man' (from *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, qtd. in Lubin, 7). Yet, they are both more specifically models of the Anglo-Saxon heroic ideal.

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