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**The Heroism of Sam and Frodo
in *Lord of the Rings***

B.A. Essay

**Eva Hjaltalín Ingólfssdóttir
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University of Iceland
School of Humanities
Department of English

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Eva Hjaltalín Ingólfssdóttir

Kt.: 260582-4029

Supervisor: Matthew Whelpton

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Abstract

There are many kinds of hero in *The Lord of the Rings* and not all of them are what would be considered typical. This essay focuses on Sam and Frodo and whether or not they are heroes and then what kind of heroes they would be. I argue that they are both a version of a fairy tale hero but that maybe surprisingly Sam is a more typical example than Frodo as Sam is a fairy tale fool hero. Frodo is more of a saintly hero. This is a distinctly Tolkienian kind of hero where fairy story and Catholicism meet. It is also my opinion that neither Sam nor Frodo could truly be the hero of the story on their own. Through their partnership they are allowed to function heroically and I assess their relationship in a socio-historical context.

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1. Introduction

The Lord of the Rings by J.R.R. Tolkien is probably one of the most read and written about books in literature. This is a grand adventure in a madeup world but not one that has been made in any haste but carefully explored and thought out. This adventure, like most others, has its heroes which are as many and versatile as can be imagined. The main hero of the book is though normally considered to be the ring bearer, Frodo. He, along with his devoted friend Sam, goes all the way to Mordor to destroy this cursed Ring. He has his failings and is often on the verge of failing in his task but his friend Sam is always there to pick him up and help him along the way. Many have wondered if Frodo deserves being talked about as the hero of the story or if in fact it might be Sam that is the real hero.

What will be discussed here is what heroism really is and how those two characters fit into the description of heroes. I find them both to be a version of a fairy tale hero but Sam even more so since he is more typical of the fairy tale fool hero. Although Frodo is a version of the fairy tale hero he is more typical for a saint hero. I argue that neither one of them could have completed the mission without the other and that their relationship is critical to the success of their task.

In the second chapter we look at different kinds of hero archetypes and discuss in particular the fairy tale hero and how their task fits into the typical quest of fairy tales. We will also look at how Sam and Frodo fit into this archetype. In the third and fourth chapters we look individually at Frodo and Sam, their failings and their heroism and see how that fits with the typical quest hero and what other kind of heroes they fit if not the typical quest hero. In the fifth chapter we look at the relationship between those two hobbits and how that is essential for their quest. The heroism of each of

them depends on the other even though they are not the same type of hero and therefore their relationship is critical for assessing their heroism.

2. Heroism

In literature we can find many different kinds of heroes. The hero of an old Saga is not the same hero that we find in a detective story written in the last few years. The characteristics and workings of that hero would be completely different from the other one. Then we have the epic hero, fairy story hero and the spiritual hero which are all something we'll be looking at in this chapter, given that Tolkien was heavily influenced by fairy tales in his work and *Lord of the Rings* is a fantasy. It is therefore natural to assume that the hero in question would be the so called quest hero and therefore we will start by looking at that kind of hero.

2.1 The Quest

Following W.H. Auden in his essay *The Quest Hero*, I will start by explaining what a quest really is. The quest itself is not a trivial thing. Looking for something you lost or an address you want to find would not be considered a quest but rather it means to look for something that you have no experience of (or not yet at least). The hero can imagine what it will be but whether the hero's imagining resembles the truth or not will only be revealed at the end of the journey (Auden 1968: 40).

Auden lists six elements which are essential in a typical quest (Auden 1968: 44):

1. A Precious Object and / or Person to be found and possessed or married.
2. A long journey to find it, for its whereabouts are not originally known to the seekers.

3. A hero. The precious Object cannot be found by anybody, but only by the person who possesses the right qualities of breeding or character.
4. A Test or series of Tests by which the unworthy are screened out, and the hero revealed.
5. The Guardians of the Object who must be overcome before it can be won. They may be simply a further test of the hero's *arete* [excellence of any kind], or they may be malignant in themselves.
6. The Helpers who with their knowledge and magical powers assist the hero and but for whom he would never succeed. They may appear in human or in animal form.

When these elements are compared to *The Lord of the Rings* it is obvious that some of them apply and some not. Since here we will focus on the main purpose of the journey, to destroy the Ring, that is what we will focus on here. Some of these things might apply to other parts of the story, the other stories that are told as well (stories of the Ents etc.) but if it does not concern Frodo or Sam it will be omitted here.

There is no physical object or person to be found in the story. They already have the Ring and their purpose is to destroy it. Their journey is to destroy it rather than finding it and they go almost directly to where they have to do that, starting by seeking advice in Rivendell and continuing to Mordor from there, even though they have no idea what horrors await them on their way there. They however, although indirectly and in different measures, find something. They find freedom for themselves and other creatures on Middle Earth even though Frodo might be too damaged to enjoy it as much as Sam can (Tolkien 1991: 998-1008). The third element involves the hero where in this story the object could then not be destroyed by anybody other than the hero but that is not exactly what happens in the end. What

does happen though is that the saint-like Frodo who has carried the Ring this far and been damaged by it is helped to get rid of it by Gollum (Tolkien 1991: 925). Frodo probably sees Gollum as a person that he could become if he does not get rid of the Ring. Frodo sees what could possibly be his future in Gollum.

The tests mentioned are obvious and they do screen out the unworthy or those that have another purpose on this journey as is seen when Frodo and Sam leave the Fellowship. There are guardians that they need to overcome in order of destroying the Ring which are all the orcs, Shelob and of course Sauron himself. The sixth element is one of great importance to this story and that is the helpers in the story, both knowledgeable and magical, who help Frodo through his journey and there is no doubt that without them he would not have finished his journey.

When looking at these elements of a typical quest one automatically thinks of Frodo since he is the one that begins the journey with the Ring but those might just as easily apply to Sam so we should take a better look into the quest hero itself.

2.2 The Quest Hero

As Auden points out (Auden 1968: 46) there are two types of quest heroes. One is the epic quest hero whose *arête* and superiority is visible to everyone and that description does not apply to either Frodo or Sam but Aragorn would be a good example of this kind of hero. The other kind is very common in fairy tales and that is the hero that is not an obvious hero. It can be the youngest son, the weakest, the one that everybody thinks is the least likely to succeed but turns out to be a hero and does things that other, even stronger men, have failed doing. He owes his success to his various kinds of helpers but the only reason he is able to get their help is because he is humble enough to take advice and kind enough to help strangers.

This kind of hero description would apply to both Frodo and Sam although Sam is the more obvious choice for this kind of hero. Neither one of them is an obvious hero but they both turn out to be one but could perhaps not have been able to do that without one another. They both know their shortcomings and seek and take advice from those who they think know better. The kindness is also obvious in Frodo who spares Gollum's life against the will of others, including Sam, which later turns out to be the thing that saves Middle Earth. This kindness Frodo shows seems to suggest that he is a hero that reminds us of a saint. He sacrifices himself for the good of others. He is saint-like in his kindness and self sacrifice although he does not come out on top in the end. He does not die so that others can worship his heroic death but he cannot either return to society and live a normal life there but has to leave Middle Earth with the elves to try and find some peace in his mind. He is not the hero that returns to his people bringing with him the saving knowledge or token he has gained beyond the boundaries of his own land that Joseph Campbell recounts in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Moorman 1968: 202). But that is an accurate description of Sam. He is the one that comes back to the Shire with a gift from Galadriel that helps him reflower and rebuild it (Tolkien 1991: 1000).

Sam could be looked at as the fool hero who gives the reader comic relief and although one could say that he does so in the beginning he turns out to be so much more than that in the course of the book. Tolkien did not want to be ironic about heroes (Shippey 2005: 81) and it can easily be seen that there are characters in his story that give us much more comic relief than Sam ever does as he is the co-hero with Frodo. Pippin and Butterbur are characters that give us much more comic relief than Sam.

In the following two chapters we will look at Frodo and Sam separately and see how they fit into the form of the quest hero and how they failed and succeeded in their individual journeys.

3. Frodo

Most readers of *The Lord of the Rings* consider the hero of the story to be the hobbit Frodo who carries the Ring throughout the story. In the beginning Frodo does not seem to be very interested in leaving his peaceful home in Hobbiton. In that, he fits very well into the form of the quest hero of fairy tales as described earlier in that he is not a typical, epic hero.

From the beginning of the story he worries that he might lose the Ring (Tolkien 1991: 51). He is scared and the Ring has obvious power over him so he tries to get Gandalf to take the Ring himself (Tolkien 1991: 58-60). On a number of occasions he cannot resist the urge to put on the Ring even though he is well aware of how much danger he is putting himself and his companions in by doing so (Tolkien 1991: 191, 392, 924). Frodo accuses Sam of being a thief after Sam gets him away from the Orcs. Sam is reluctant to give him the Ring back because he has of course had it for a while and the effects of it are strong but mostly because he does not want to burden his master with it but Frodo demands it (Tolkien 1991: 890-891). That shows obviously how much he can change from the effects of the Ring itself and how quick he can be to attack those he is in other times certain are his friends. The Ring also overpowers him on a few occasions and if it were not for his companions at the time he would not have made it but been overwhelmed by the Ring completely. The most serious examples of this were first when he was walking with Sam and Gollum

before they entered Shelob's lair when his mind suddenly darkened and he ran away without being able to control himself in any way (Tolkien 1991: 689). This happens again at the end by the Crack of Doom where Frodo decides to keep the Ring for himself (Tolkien 1991: 924).

Frodo is also in no physical shape whatsoever and tries to conceal that by saying Sam must have packed the bags unevenly (Tolkien 1991: 69). This also becomes clear later when the Ring has worn him down for a long time and Frodo does not have the physical ability to carry the quest on without help. He is very close to death when he almost falls asleep in the snow with the Company and even starts hallucinating before Gandalf gives the Halflings *miruvor* to drink that helps them (Tolkien 1991: 282-283). Towards the end of the journey things get worse and he feels like the Ring is dragging him down and becoming too heavy for him. He even admits this to himself and wonders how long he can keep going since he is extremely tired (Tolkien 1991: 690). Shortly thereafter he even weeps with weakness (Tolkien 1991: 692). Later he is ready to give up but what stops him is that he will not allow Sam to help him carry the Ring and says he could not part with it now since it has so much control over him (Tolkien 1991: 916). On the last leg of the journey he asks Sam to hold his hands so he will not put the Ring on. By this time Sam has also started carrying Frodo (Tolkien 1991: 921). This might be a place where Tolkien writes from his own experience from the war which will be discussed further in the chapter about the relationship between Sam and Frodo.

There are many cases that show how, if alone, Frodo would have utterly failed his mission all the way from the beginning like when Sam has to save him from drowning in the Old Forest just after their Journey has begun (Tolkien 1991: 115). That is not to say that any one other person in the book might have succeeded in it

either. In the end Sam also saves Frodo by dragging him away from the path of Orcs (Tolkien 1991: 910).

These are all examples of great peril, there are more things than trees and Orcs that can kill you but Frodo does not seem to be aware of that since he does dangerous things sometimes or does not heed to the danger that is present. He is for instance irresponsible when he talks to others about Galadriel's ring (Tolkien 1991: 379) which could prove dangerous when talking to the wrong people. Later when walking with Sam he gives no thought to what they are going to eat although Sam does but that might be because of their master and servant relationship which will be discussed further in the fourth chapter. He does not seem to realize that he will not be able to complete this mission if he is malnourished and when they acquire food he offers some of it to Gollum even though Gollum himself is very capable of getting his own food and even eating things the hobbits would never eat (Tolkien 1991: 607-608). Later Sam has to have a word with Frodo about the fact that they have to eat less than they do now since the food will not last otherwise (Tolkien 1991: 906). Frodo also falls asleep when Gollum accompanies them despite the danger that could present itself with him that close to the Ring but Sam stays awake to protect Frodo since he does not trust Gollum (Tolkien 1991: 635).

What has been written in this chapter shows Frodo in a somewhat negative light but he is far from being a completely flawed person. He has many great attributes that helped him a great deal on his way to destroy the Ring. He is not the only one that needs to be saved. He also saves his friends and companions on a few occasions and starts by saving his old friends, Sam, Merry and Pippin from the Barrow-wight (Tolkien 1991: 138). On two occasions he saves Sam from imminent danger after they have left the Company, once from Gollum (Tolkien 1991: 600) and

once from the perils of an opening in the tunnels in Shelob's lair where he uses his last bit of strength to drag Sam away (Tolkien 1991: 703). He also stops Sam from going on before consulting and preparing properly (Tolkien 1991: 592) but wants him to follow him carefully. Shortly thereafter Sam wants to wait with going down a cliff but Frodo feels the Eye searching for them and urges him on (Tolkien 1991: 595). Frodo is a good person and does not want to leave his friends behind in danger but Glorfindel explains to him that his friends would not be in danger if it was not for him (Tolkien 1991: 206) which might be a part of the reason he decides to go out on his own but after he offers to take the Ring Sam will not accept that he goes without him and the other hobbits seem to see it as a reward to get to go there while Frodo looks at it as a punishment (Tolkien 1991: 205). Later Frodo decides to leave the Company and continue his quest alone, both because he felt he could not trust some in the Company and because he does not want to put his hobbit friends that he loves so much in more danger and is sure that at least Sam will understand that (Tolkien 1991: 392).

Sam admits later that he might have confused Frodo's kindness towards Gollum with blindness when he sees Frodo threaten him (Tolkien 1991: 626) but later Frodo saves Gollum again when Sam wants Faramir's men to shoot him but Frodo tells them not to and decides to take him under his protection, which Sam completely disagrees with (Tolkien 1991: 669-675).

Frodo shows the courage of a real life hero on many occasions and refuses to give up even though his companions are ready to do so. He is determined to finish his quest no matter what although once he seems only not want to return because returning to Rivendell would shame him too much (Tolkien 1991: 287). He also says to Sam that they must go on when Sam and Gollum are ready to admit defeat at The

Black Gates of Mordor. Frodo is determined that he must finish his mission or die trying (Tolkien 1991: 627). Despite the obvious effect the Ring has on him he also manages to fight the Ring and win when the Wraith-lord arrives on the stairs of Cirith Ungol (Tolkien 1991: 691). That is probably when he shows most strength against the Ring which he normally does not seem to have any control over. He is also very courageous when standing against the spider and using Galadriel's Phial and his sword scaring it off (Tolkien 1991: 705). The time comes when Sam has no hope left but Frodo says they must continue (Tolkien 1991: 903). Towards the end when he can no longer walk he allows Sam to carry him but his will is still there, as strong as ever (Tolkien 1991: 914).

A hero is still a human being and it might be considered a strong point that a hero can still admit their weaknesses, especially when seen in the light of this quest hero that Frodo seems to be, the unexpected hero, and Frodo can certainly do that. He admits that he is terrified on more than one occasion but he still knows what he has to do (Tolkien 1991: 384, 388). He even admits to Faramir that he is weary, full of grief and afraid (Tolkien 1991: 653) but Faramir tells him that Frodo speaks with skills in a hard place (Tolkien 1991: 654). When with him Frodo does not falter and spill his secrets so he can be trusted not to do so at any point (Tolkien 1991: 649).

The decision Frodo takes to continue with the Ring from Rivendell is taken from him feeling he has to do so since the task has fallen on him. No one can help him take this decision but to his credit he is completely committed to follow this through once he has taken the decision to carry on (Auden 1968: 55). The main issue with Frodo is that he in fact has heroism thrust upon him. He accepts the Ring because it has come to him by chance and because the ones he considers his superiors are afraid that the Ring will lure them into evil (Bradley 1968: 117).

This hero of ours also appreciates the help of others and admits that he perhaps could not have got this far without his friends. He says to Sam he could not have got this far without him which shows Frodo's strength as person (even though Sam thinks he is joking but that is more a reflection of Sam than Frodo) (Tolkien 1991: 697). He does thank Sam for finding him the mail-coat among the dead bodies but Sam's response is always the same; he tries to make light of matters and cheer his master up (Tolkien 1991: 897). One can say that when Frodo allows Sam to keep Sting he passively puts himself in the hands of Sam where he allows Sam to completely take care of his every need (Bradley 1968: 121).

What obviously shows that he is supposed to be considered the main hero of the story is where he brings Aragorn his crown (Tolkien 1991: 946), only the hero of the story would get that task.

After our heroes return to the Shire Frodo stays there for a while but there is really no way for him to ever return wholly back since he bears forever his three wounds for his folly, over-confidence and pride. His wound for folly he got on Weathertop from a knife, the wound for over-confidence he got from a sting of Shelob in her lair and he then got his finger torn off for pride in the Mount of Doom (Bradley 1968: 124).

4. Sam

Sam seems to be a very childish and naive character in most chapters in the book although on some occasions he seems to have keen insight into other people and the world itself. It is therefore difficult to present him as a hero since he seems to fluctuate between behaving like one and not.

The reason he might seem so naive in the beginning may be so his transformation in the journey is more obvious because although he would seemingly

follow his master to the end of the Earth he does not seem very adventurous. That might be the reason Frodo does not want to take him along but it is Gandalf that decides he should go with him (Tolkien 1991: 62-63). But as we see throughout the story Sam's weaknesses become his strength and his love for Frodo conquers every other emotion so the scenario in which he would not have followed Frodo to the end of the world would never have happened. Sam is so often depicted as a simpleton that one starts to believe he really is. While Frodo, Pippin and Merry all have bad dreams in the house of Tom Bombadil, Sam sleeps like a baby which might be a suggestion of him not having any clue of what they are getting themselves into (Tolkien 1991: 126) but it also shows how rooted Sam is in the Earth since that seems to be the only thing that prevents the Ring from affecting you (as with Tom Bombadil himself). Later we also find out that he has no idea how to read a simple map and he seems unable to fathom how far they have to travel to get to Mordor (Tolkien 1991: 278). When Sam and Frodo use the rope Sam had been so clever to bring to get down a cliff the reader finds out that Sam had not realized that he would not be able to take the rope with him any further (Tolkien 1991: 597) which seems also particularly stupid. Sam also later gets them in danger when, despite having already mentioned it himself, he forgets to put out his fire that starts smoking when they are trying to lay low (Tolkien 1991: 642). Last but not least is the occasion when Sam accidentally mentions the Ring to Faramir. For that he is scolded by Frodo and Sam starts apologizing so profusely that he sounds like a small, dull-witted child (Tolkien 1991: 665). It is traditional in quest literature that the hero should have a comic relief but even though Sam is witty he is not really a figure of comedy. According to Bradley he is far less a comic figure in the story than for example Pippin (Bradley 1968: 117-118).

In some parts of the story one can't help but wonder if his seeming stupidity and ignorance might be some sort of a defence mechanism that he uses when under stress, and he is under enormous stress on this journey. At one point he starts thinking about elephants and right away becomes blissfully oblivious (Tolkien 1991: 632) which might just be his way of dealing with everything that is happening. Later he manages to forget all about Mordor while thinking of unfamiliar plants and trees, even though that does not last long (Tolkien 1991: 637).

It seems Sam's intelligence increases throughout the book with a few lapses back into ignorance. Frodo first finds out that Sam knows the letters and some poetry but reading was not really a necessity in his line of gardening work so this is a bit surprising. He also realizes that they might have to go to Mordor to finish this mission (Tolkien 1991: 181-182). Shortly after Frodo finds this out he also finds out that Sam writes poetry but is so level-minded that he would never want to become a wizard or a warrior (Tolkien 1991: 203). This might also have a lot to do with his status in society which will be better explained in the following chapter. Sam seems to think of things no one else does, like bringing a rope with him since it might be needed alongside with his amazing connection to all animals (Tolkien 1991: 273). He first throws an apple in Ferny's face before leaving with the horse that he mistreated (Tolkien 1991: 177) and later has a very difficult time leaving the pony to get into Moria with the Fellowship (Tolkien 1991: 301).

Out of all the intelligent men in the Fellowship, Sam is the only one that realizes Frodo's plan when he is about to go out on his own and he does not hesitate to follow him (Tolkien 1991: 396). He has the courage to speak up and explain Frodo, to read his heart and even disobey Aragorn (and is the only one to do so in the entire story) (Bradley 1968: 118). That will not be excused with a great friendship because,

as will be explained further in the next chapter, their relationship was more of a master/servant relationship while two of his closest friends were there at the time. That relationship between them might also explain why later Sam is the one who gives thought to food while Frodo seems not to worry about that at all (Tolkien 1991: 607). But that can also be explained simply by his love of food since he is also ready to risk exposure to enemies just to stew some rabbits (Tolkien 1991: 639). What perhaps might come as the biggest surprise when it comes to Sam's intelligence has to be when he is contemplating and obviously has deep philosophical thoughts on war which one would not think he was capable of in the beginning of the book (Tolkien 1991: 646). The same goes with a speech he makes about adventures later that seems in a way not fitting for him (Tolkien 1991: 696-697).

Sam is an altruistic man. In the beginning when Frodo accuses him of making Frodo carry the heavier bag, Sam is more than ready to carry more if that is what his master wants (Tolkien 1991: 69) and when leaving the pub with Strider he offers to carry the weight for two people (Tolkien 1991: 174). He admits to himself that he never thought they could finish their mission but he still intends to stay with Frodo till the end (Tolkien 1991: 624). While getting closer to the end of their mission they come upon a stream but Sam decides he has to drink first of the water in case it was poisonous. It would be better if he died than Frodo (Tolkien 1991: 899).

Like Frodo, Sam also gets scared at times, which shows his human side. Sometimes it seems to be that he has some kind of sixth sense that often saves them from danger. He does get scared being at The Prancing Pony, does not want to stay there and they later get into trouble there (Tolkien 1991: 149). He gets a warning feeling of dread when the Black Riders are up in the sky and recognizes the menace

(Tolkien 1991: 631) and when Frodo leaves his bed to talk to Faramir Sam wakes up by instinct of watchfulness (Tolkien 1991: 668).

The whole time Frodo and Sam travel with, or nearby, Gollum/Sméagol Sam is on his guard. He first wants to get Gollum and feels angered and disgusted by him (Tolkien 1991: 599). He distrusts him and wants nothing more than to kill him (Tolkien 1991: 609). Later his so called sixth sense seems to warn him not to let Gollum know that he overheard a conversation between Gollum and Sméagol (Tolkien 1991: 620) which in that case was probably the wise thing to do. Earlier Frodo had to save Sam from Gollum (Tolkien 1991: 600) so he was obviously a dangerous creature even to Sam. He always doubts Gollum's good intentions and doubts that there is another way into Mordor like he says (Tolkien 1991: 625) but follows Frodo no matter what. He might begin to think he is alone in his distrust of Gollum and therefore gets quite surprised when Frodo threatens Gollum and sees that he probably confused kindness with blindness thinking that Frodo could not see the evil in Gollum (Tolkien 1991: 626). Sam gets more stressed when he sees a green gleam in Gollum's eye (Tolkien 1991: 629) and after that does not dare to fall asleep since he does not trust him (Tolkien 1991: 635). Throughout this time he is suspicious of Gollum and even threatens him with physical abuse (Tolkien 1991: 640) but his violent hatred of Gollum seems bit out of character for this jolly and nice hobbit. The reason for that might be because one night he awakes and sees Gollum trying to tenderly stroke Frodo's cheek but misunderstands it as Gollum wanting to harm his master. He verbally attacks Gollum who at that time completely closes up and hardens even more towards others. He was trying to be good but still gets reprimanded. Sam even wants Faramir's men to shoot Gollum on sight later which they probably would have done had it not been for Frodo who offers to take Gollum under his protection

against Sam's wishes (Tolkien 1991: 669-675). Their showdown comes in Shelob's lair where the two fight which causes Sam to forget about his master for a minute (Tolkien 1991: 710). After that he once more saves the Ring when Gollum tries to steal it (Tolkien 1991: 908). In a way Sam was right about the intentions of Gollum but had he got his way and they would have got rid of Gollum as he wanted, the mission would of course never have been finished.

As for heroic actions, Sam has his fair share of those and he begins straight away when in the Old Forest where he saves Frodo from drowning (Tolkien 1991: 115) and when the Fellowship is at the entrance of Moria and gets attacked by a monster in a lake with huge tentacles, Sam is the one who attacks it to try to save Frodo and he pushed the others away as well (Tolkien 1991: 301). In a joint effort with Gollum, he manages to stop Frodo when the Ring takes hold of him on the stairs of Cirith Ungol (Tolkien 1991: 689). In Shelob's lair Sam attacks Shelob without fear and with fury she had never seen before (Tolkien 1991: 711) even though one can assume she has met with brave men before him. Later he also courageously attacks an orc leader (Tolkien 1991: 886). He manages to drag Frodo out of a line of orcs so that they are both saved (Tolkien 1991: 910). While Frodo has heroism thrust upon him one might say that Sam achieves heroism undesired and unrecognized. He does not care for heroic deeds but only wants to guard Frodo and remain by his side (Bradley 1968: 117).

One of Sam's greatest faults is that he is impulsive and often takes rash decisions which tend to get him into trouble. After Sam and Frodo have left the Fellowship he starts off before consulting and preparing which could lead him into trouble but fortunately for him, Frodo manages to stop him (Tolkien 1991: 592). When they then need to go down a cliff Sam gets himself into trouble by leaning out

dangerously far for his master although he manages to save him with the piece of rope he brought along (Tolkien 1991: 594). Sam cannot manage to keep his thoughts to himself when they stay with Faramir and his men but instead gives them a piece of his mind (Tolkien 1991: 650).

On this long journey Sam wishes many times that he could just go home or he has no hope for good results of this mission. The first time would perhaps be when he looks into the mirror of Galadriel but he decides he must carry on (Tolkien 1991: 353-354). When they finally get to the gates of Mordor he thinks that all is over since they cannot get through and he seems to be quite happy with it although Frodo refuses to give up (Tolkien 1991: 623). After Frodo is taken and Sam realizes he is left alone he gets terrified but still decides to try to finish the mission himself although he has no faith in himself whatsoever (Tolkien 1991: 713-715). He has so little confidence in himself that he tells himself not to trust his own head since that is not the best part of him (Tolkien 1991: 723). When he realizes his master is still alive he regains his strength and goes after the orcs (Tolkien 1991: 724). He thinks his task of saving Frodo is impossible but still goes ahead with it (Tolkien 1991: 880). He continuously doubts his errand with Frodo but continues because that is what his master wants which is more understandable in relation to their relationship which will be further discussed in the next chapter. He applies himself as much as possible to this task and to his master and even carries him for a long time so they can get closer to the end. Frodo asks Sam to hold his hands so that he does not put the Ring on and Sam feels urgency and continues carrying him (Tolkien 1991: 921).

In the end Sam convinces Frodo not to wait for the end on the mountain but keep going instead. He caresses Frodo's hand which perhaps describes their relationship very well (Tolkien 1991: 929) but they were also holding hands in

Shelob's lair when they were scared out of their minds. This is perhaps not typical of the master-servant relationship which will be described better in the next chapter.

When it comes to the Ring which plays a major part in crushing Frodo's spirit Sam is not as affected by it so readers cannot help but wonder why on earth he was not the one chosen to carry it. That question will play a bigger part in the next chapter but Sam's connection to the Ring will be described here. He takes the Ring when he thinks his master has fallen and decides to finish this mission himself (Tolkien 1991: 715). He later puts the Ring on for fear that the guards might notice him. He then removes the Ring to be able to see more clearly and has no problem taking it off, no desire to keep it on for longer (Tolkien 1991: 878-879) but shortly thereafter Sam is tempted by the Ring but what makes him withstand the temptation is his great love for his master but also his hobbit sense. He knew he was not large enough to bear this burden and says he only needs his garden but not a realm and others to command. He realizes that this is a trick of the Ring (Tolkien 1991: 880-881). A little later he does come close to putting the Ring back on but does not do it (Tolkien 1991: 884). When it is time for Sam to give the Ring back to Frodo he is a bit reluctant to do it. That has without a doubt something to do with the attraction of the Ring and also how he feels about his master in that he does not want to burden him with carrying the Ring. Frodo does demand it of him and calls Sam a thief for it which further shows the effect the Ring has had on Frodo (Tolkien 1991: 891). Sam fights with despair but realizes that all he can really do is accompany Frodo to the Crack of Doom and die there with his master. He manages to fight the temptation of leaving Frodo and the quest because he knows that without his persistent courage Frodo cannot complete it (Bradley 1968: 122). That is a sign of a real hero. After the Ring is gone Sam does not despair like his master but rather gets him to continue. Sam does not want to give up but Frodo has

lost all hope so without Sam Frodo would have died at the Crack of Doom (Bradley 1968: 123).

Sam seems to be appreciated by the people around him even though he is sometimes made to look a tad stupid. Aragorn asked him to guard Frodo after he was hurt and trusted him completely with that task (Tolkien 1991: 193). Frodo admits to Sam that he could not have gone this far without him although Sam thinks his master is joking (Tolkien 1991: 697) and Frodo does thank him for saving him later on but instead of taking it as a proper compliment Sam decides that he needs to cheer Frodo up and even gives him his cloak (Tolkien 1991: 897).

Despite his major part in this journey which many readers do not think is any less than Frodo's part, when Aragorn leads them up to his throne in the end Frodo is on his right side but Sam on his left which is a significant thing. A song has been written about them which Sam is delighted by and he feels that all his dreams have come true but what shows the great distinction between them (as will be discussed in the next chapter) is that there is no mention of Sam in the title of the song (Tolkien 1991: 933).

When back in the Shire the reader can see that Sam has achieved real maturity and he longs to put down roots in the Shire and raise a family. He is the only character who truly passes the heroic age into the modern world. He makes the difficult choice and compromise that needs to be made to live in the world of today and live an ordinary life. He is however torn between his loyalties between his family and Frodo. Frodo can in fact never return wholly but Sam has (Bradley 1968: 124-125). And as Marion Zimmer Bradley says in her essay *Men, Halflings and Hero Worship* "The only way to achieve maturity is to leave behind the Third Age with its dreams and

desires, its emotions and needs and glories; the only way to remain forever young is to die young.“ (Bradley 1968: 127)

5. Relationship between Sam and Frodo

The relationship between Sam and Frodo starts out as one of service. Sam always refers to Frodo as his master and although Frodo does not refer to Sam as his servant it is obvious that they are not equals. When Frodo's friends are mentioned, Sam is not counted as one of them (Tolkien 1991: 41-42) and Sam is not even invited to his farewell dinner (Tolkien 1991: 67). Sam is in fact Frodo's employee as he himself says (Tolkien 1991: 44).

In our times it is hard to imagine a person like Sam who seems to be incredibly devoted to his master. He refuses to leave his master and at one point curls up at his feet like a dog (Tolkien 1991: 81). He takes care of his master's needs as when he demands they leave food for Frodo even though his good friend Pippin wants them to eat it (Tolkien 1991: 84). In Rivendell Sam begs to serve his master but is refused this since he is also a guest of honour which Sam is not used to and wants nothing more than to serve his master (Tolkien 1991: 221). Sam is ready to follow his master wherever he goes so when Frodo offers to take the Ring Sam does not hesitate to go with him (Tolkien 1991: 264). Sam constantly fears for Frodo's safety but does not necessarily heed his own. He goes ahead of him in dangerous situations in order to protect him whether it be down slopes (Tolkien 1991: 592-593) or saving him from orcs after they take him from Shelob's lair (Tolkien 1991: 889). He also drinks the water first in case it is poisonous so that Frodo will not be killed (Tolkien 1991: 899). Sam worries about Frodo and that the weight of the Ring is wearing him down (Tolkien 1991: 616). He never actually thinks he can finish this mission but intends to

stay with his master till the end (Tolkien 1991: 624) since he thinks of Frodo as the wisest person in the world with the possible exceptions of Gandalf and Bilbo (Tolkien 1991: 626). He stays awake for many nights to watch over his master, carries his burdens, lends him his clothes to keep warm and gives him the last sip of water and last morsel of food when they travel through Mordor (Tolkien 1991: 907, 912). He sincerely loves his master and sees light in him (Tolkien 1991: 638).

Even though Sam sometimes disagrees with his master he does not argue with him. Sam does not want to take Sméagol with them from Faramir's camp but Frodo always has the last word in decision making (Tolkien 1991: 775). Sam is so loyal that even when he thinks his master has fallen he decides to try to finish his mission and then come back to him where he lies and die there with him (Tolkien 1991: 716). He realizes that his place is with his master even though he does not know what good it will do (Tolkien 1991: 718). When going through Mordor he seems to lose all hope but will still willingly die with his master in the end (Tolkien 1991: 913). His life seems to depend totally on his master since when he hears that his master is still alive he regains his strength to go after the orcs (Tolkien 1991: 724). He has no doubt about his duty to save his master or perish in the attempt to do so (Tolkien 1991: 877). When he thinks there is a chance of saving Frodo he forgets his perils and runs into Mordor (Tolkien 1991: 879). His biggest help in resisting the power of the Ring is his love for his master (Tolkien 1991: 880). His love makes him not worry about the orcs but yearns to see his master's face or feel the touch of his hand (Tolkien 1991: 887) and therefore sees red when he sees an orc whipping his master and attacks him without thought of danger (Tolkien 1991: 889). Because of this love and the endless happiness Sam feels when his master lies in his arms and he kisses his forehead (Tolkien 1991: 889) some have considered their relationship to be homoerotic. There

is a good deal of material about those two that could possibly be interpreted in that way although it is far more likely that this is just the kind of friendship and companionship that those two hobbits share. That sort of friendship and relationship will be explained a bit later in this chapter. They often seem to understand each other without the use of words (Tolkien 1991: 602), Sam wakes up thinking he heard his master calling when Frodo is in danger of Gollum stealing the Ring (Tolkien 1991: 619) and he also wakes up by instinctive of watchfulness when Frodo leaves his bed to talk to Faramir (Tolkien 1991: 668). Sam also knows exactly how Frodo feels and notices Boromir's behaviour when he wants the Ring (Tolkien 1991: 394) and is the only one that realizes Frodo's plan to leave the Fellowship. They also hold hands on more than one occasion, in Shelob's lair (Tolkien 1991: 702) and Sam also holds Frodo's hand while he is sleeping (Tolkien 1991: 901). When they get closer to the Crack of Doom, Frodo asks Sam to hold his hands to make sure he does not put the Ring on and Sam continues carrying Frodo (Tolkien 1991: 921). He would swap hands with Frodo if he could but they are happy to be together in the end (Tolkien 1991: 926). When Sam convinces Frodo not to wait for the end on the mountain but keep going Sam caresses Frodo's hand (Tolkien 1991: 929). The reason why their relationship might seem homoerotic for readers today might be because Sam's love for Frodo is almost only shown through his servility but Sam's devotion to him is mostly a response to his kindness to him (Kleinman 2005: 147). Sam admires Frodo and loves him through his service and Scott Kleinman describes well why their relationship is unsettling to the modern reader:

...is that they continue to behave in dominant and
submissive roles as the plot progresses. Sam is

never able to place himself on an equal footing
with Frodo... (Kleinman 2005: 148).

Although Sam's opinion of his master does not seem to change throughout the story the same cannot be said about Frodo's opinion of Sam. In the beginning when Frodo ponders whether to take his friends on this journey he makes it quite clear that Sam is not one of them (Tolkien 1991: 85). On the journey he gets to know Sam better, finds out that he writes poetry and is levelheaded. When Frodo wakes up in Rivendell he first asks about Sam and then his other friends and finds out that Sam has not left his side (Tolkien 1991: 213). When they break away from the Fellowship Frodo calls Sam a nuisance but is happy to allow him to come with him when he has made sure that Sam understands the danger (Tolkien 1991: 397). Later he even calls Sam dearest hobbit and friend of friends but Sam shows his respect as if Frodo were a king by bending over his hand (Tolkien 1991: 610). Frodo later admits that he would not have got far without Sam but Sam thinks he is joking (Tolkien 1991: 697). Frodo trusts Sam completely and asks him to lead him since he has lost all hope (Tolkien 1991: 907).

When this is all over their relationship seems to have changed quite dramatically and they are praised equally (Tolkien 1991: 932). Aragorn, who earlier spoke of Sam as Frodo's servant and talked only of Frodo's bravery in going alone (Tolkien 1991: 409), now leads them both to his throne with Frodo on the right and Sam on the left. A song has been written about them although Frodo is obviously considered more of a hero since there is no mention of Sam in the song title (Tolkien 1991: 933).

Their love seems to be strong and as Marion Zimmer Bradley describes in her essay *Men, Halflings and Hero Worship*, "They reach idealized friendship that passes

the love of women” (Bradley 1968: 116). The reason why their relationship is like this lies in the decisions of the author but his view of service “was profoundly influenced by the Germanic model depicted in Anglo-Saxon poetry” (Kleinman 2005: 138). Therefore Tolkien defines the servant as one whose only responsibility is to serve someone who has no responsibility towards the servant but only to his superiors. The servant has therefore very little personal pride but is filled with love and loyalty. That is an intimate connection between love and loyalty and describes very well the relationship between Frodo and Sam (Kleinman 2005: 139).

Some think that Tolkien is describing the end of the Victorian period with Bilbo’s and Frodo’s spirit of generosity towards their social inferiors by reflecting the growing twentieth-century spirit of egalitarianism so those at the top of the social hierarchy are prevented from exploiting those at the bottom of it. Tolkien did not however eliminate the social divisions of the Victorian service culture from the Shire but makes a scenario where he shows the social hierarchies fall down with the form of subordination without exploitation (Kleinman 2005: 145). Tolkien builds, in his book, his ideal servant and by doing so he makes servitude itself important (Kleinman 2005: 148). Tolkien describes this relationship between a master and a servant from an old Germanic model but remnants of that have lived on through the years, even if they do not show in such an obvious way in his time. He fought in WWI alongside what was considered, and probably still is, the lower classes in Britain, like miners and weavers. Tolkien felt an affinity with these men but military protocol did not allow him to make friends with them since they were not of the same rank but meanwhile the old officers treated him like an inferior schoolboy (Garth 2003: 148-149). It is not unlikely that Sam was based on these men that served others in war and were of lower ranks than others. Tolkien’s best friends were also in the war but their description of

the lower ranks did not show as much camaraderie as Tolkien did. Wiseman calls some of his trainee midshipmen snotties which he describes as the stupidest in the world and most conceited, although he admits he likes them (Garth 2003: 141). Another friend of his, Gilson, describes his soldiers as “dear, stupid, agricultural platoon” (Garth 2003: 154). Gilson does though hope he never has to be in command in the trenches since he did not want to lead the men he loved and who loved him in return into annihilation (Garth 2003: 156).

In this war the officers had so called batmen who without a doubt had some part in Tolkien's characterization of Sam and are described as following:

The batmen performed domestic chores for an officer: making his bed, tidying and polishing, and furnishing his table with the best. This was a practical arrangement, not just a luxury. Officers undoubtedly led a cushier life... A resourceful batman could win a great deal of gratitude and respect. Tolkien, who found it hard to warm to his fellow officers, developed a profound admiration for the batmen he knew. However, the batman was not primarily a servant but a private soldier who acted as a runner for officers in action. As such he had to be both fit and intelligent so that he did not garble the orders or reports. Like any other private, he also fought in the field. (Garth 2003: 171).

Tolkien did deny having written the first stories of his mythology in the trenches (Garth 2003: 186) some 50 years later but he does on at least one occasion admit to

writing a bit there, even though they had just been outlines and ideas (Garth 2003: 187)

6. Conclusion

It is obvious that Tolkien did not have a single definition of a hero in mind when he wrote *The Lord of the Rings* and it can easily be said that there is more than one hero in the book. Sam and Frodo are without a doubt heroes but so are Gandalf and Aragorn since they all influence the outcome of the quest. Tolkien was, unlike many others at that time, not interested in modelling his story on theoretical constructs. His work is steeped in symbolism and Frodo is the main hero but is, as human beings, not without his imperfections and therefore makes his mistakes even as the saint hero is he presented as. Sam is like Frodo but also has a place in society which would never have convinced him to go out and seek this adventure by himself.

The Ring is obviously addictive and since Frodo had more exposure to it he obviously would be more affected by it (just like with addiction it is more likely that you can overcome it in the early stages of use). What one has to consider being the main difference between those heroes is that Frodo had no idea of the Rings awful power when he accepted it but Sam knew and took it anyway after he thinks Frodo has died (Bradley 1968: 120). Frodo has taken on this task and throughout it survives torment, agony and horror but Sam goes through all of this voluntarily since his love for Frodo is so deep. He does it only for his master (Bradley 1968: 124).

Frodo is neither a typical fairy tale hero nor a typical saint hero although the saint hero has the upper hand and he suffers through this quest for the sake of the whole population of Middle Earth. Sam is not quite typical of the fairy tale fool hero

but he comes close to it. Neither one of them could ever have saved Middle Earth or finished their quest without the other one and what is most important in succeeding here is the relationship between those two. If their relationship had been different, between equals or solely a relationship between friends, it would have been a completely different story since it is through their relationship that they thrive and succeed and therefore both become the real heroes of this story.

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