

Odysseus and characteristics if a warrior hero essay examples

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Introduction

For almost three thousand years, Homer's *Odyssey* is among the oldest surviving piece of ancient literary work that was able to transcend through time and still able to capture the imagination of the contemporary readers. Among the most prominent characters in the story is the warrior named Odysseus, which would be the focus of this discussion. Odysseus is a depiction of a renowned warrior known for his cunning, bravery, and shrewdness, which encompass the ideal characteristics of a hero. However, different cultures have a variety of description of a hero, but the common denomination in all of them is the hero's act of valor and bravery. This leads to defining the characteristics of a hero, his features, acts, and beliefs. Finally, examples will be given to compare Odysseus to the described characteristics of a hero. It is apparent from the descriptions provided by Finley in "The World of Odysseus" that heroes are ubiquitous men that always pursue honor and glory.

What is a Warrior Hero?

According to Finley (1954), a warrior hero is in constant pursuit of glory and honor without a clear definition of what is honor is the road to glory is all about. For most part, the heroes of the ancient literature encompass the single-mindedness inherited from relics of Homeric thoughts, "for the latter everything pivoted on a single element of honor and virtue: strength, bravery, physical courage, prowess (Finley 19)". These elements are what describe a warrior hero, someone with almost godly strength, almost no weakness, but one that is cowardice in facing failure to achieve heroic

persuasion. Finley (1954) made assertions on the concept of a warrior hero from the examples of Homer praying to Zeus that his son may become just like him as valiant, ruled with might, braver than his father return from war bring back the spoils stained with the blood of men. These examples from asserted by Finley (1954) described the warrior hero's lack of responsibility and concerns only his drive for honor and victory (Finley 20).

On the other hand, Homer's depiction of the hero age demonstrated the understanding of subsequent standards of respect in which the word hero itself is not of virtues of might and prowess, but a terminology to identify the class of aristocracy. A warrior hero that exists in Homer's thoughts is that of the head of noble families in which the mother is called the hero's wife, the daughter as the hero's daughter, the son as the hero's son and the father as the hero himself. These definitions are explicitly expressed in the Odyssey "Athena instructed Telemachus, summon the Achaean heroes to an assembly (Iliad 481 as cited in Finley 20)".

The Basic Features of a Warrior Hero

Contemporary depictions of heroes are consisting of men with unworldly strength, agility, and abilities that no other man possesses. The mighty hector for instance can hurl a stone that even two of the strongest men in our time could hardly lift above ground. In the best of one's imagination, the basic feature of a warrior hero is that of a heavily muscled man suited with thick iron and bronze armor holding equally heavy shield and sword. Another notable feature of a hero is someone that was able to achieve the grandest of social status by performing deeds worthy to be sung in the great halls of

the land. A hero can be easily identified by the highest honors open to man and this includes immortal glory for undying fame and god-like immortality. These features are described in the lines of the Odyssey “ How could I forget godlike Odysseus, pre-eminent among all mortal men for his intelligence and offerings to the immortal gods (Homer 90)“.

Although the Homeric depiction of heroes may sound mythical, the described features appeared to be consistent in a number of ancient literary texts, which encompasses protagonist heroes bearing the same description of nobility, and divine strength. Finley (1954) denotes “ the fairy-tale wanderings of Odysseus and the struggle for power in Ithaca (Finley 25)“, by which he means the unrealistic adventures of Odysseus can only be achieved by possessing features attributed to unworldly strength, power and prowess. The common notion of heroes in contemporary imagination is somewhat the same as what Homer has in the telling of the Odyssey.

Comparing Odysseus to Finley’s Hero Description

Finley’s work focuses on the elements of Homer’s Odyssey with reference to other ancient literary arts. Among the subjects of discussion is about the exploration of the context heroes and their characteristics particularly Odysseus. In the Odyssey, Odysseus was depicted as a protagonist that was able to achieve the hero status by embarking on numerous adventures filled with myth and wonders. Odysseus encompasses the characteristics of a typical hero as described by Finley, which are apparent in the lines of the Odyssey. For example, in the Odyssey, Odysseus was the only hero due to his aristocracy statute. However, Finley also acknowledges that heroic

character is not just limited to social standing, but also of physical prowess and strength. In Homer's words Odysseus was god-like "The gods pitied Odysseus, all except Poseidon, who kept up his anger against godlike Odysseus and did not relent until he reached his native land (Homer 8)". Having compared to gods means possessing similar attributes of strength and power, a very typical of heroes in both ancient literature and of contemporary fictions. However, Finley has a different notion of heroes based on his statements "there are always men called heroes: and that is misleading, for the identity of label conceals a staggering diversity of substance (Finley 19)".

Comparing Homer's description of Odysseus and Finley's view of heroes as someone blindly in pursuit of fame and glory constitutes an apparent contradiction. Older and contemporary cultures are consistent when it comes to describing someone god-like. This includes divine attributions and cosmic power. In Odysseus's case, he has the same qualities of a god, but only lives in a mortal vessel. This means as a hero, Odysseus is both divine and fragile, but Finley has a variety of visions about heroes, which includes single-mindedness when it comes to pursuing victory. In addition, Finley believes that heroes such as Odysseus have a misleading perception of honor and undertakes a rather typical road to glory. Furthermore, Finley appears to describe Homeric heroes (Odysseus) as men hungry for the blood of their enemy and does not care for social consequences of their action. Finley made his assumption based on the words of heroes such as Odysseus and stated, "there is no social consequences in these words, no trace of the Decalogue, no responsibility other than familial, no obligation to anyone or

anything, but one's own prowess and one's drive to victory and power (Finley 19)".

Finley appeared to have the same view of a hero in his description as always victorious and highly glorified, but Homer expressed differentiation of Odysseus's heroic nature. For example, " But my heart is torn for skillful Odysseus, ill-fated man, who has had to suffer such misfortune for so many years, a long way from friends (Homer 10)". The lines means a hero such as Odysseus is not always endowed with glorified victories, that heroes are as vulnerable as the rest of other people. Despite the differences in the descriptions by Homer and Finley, certain qualities remained the same for heroes such as Odysseus. For instance, in Homer's accounts Athena prayed to his father Zeus to free Odysseus from Calypso's captivity. In Athena's words, " son of Cronos and father to us all, ruling high above, if the immortal gods now find it pleasing for the wise Odysseus to return back home. Then let's send Hermes, killer of Argus, as our messenger, over to the island of Ogygia, so he can quickly tell that fair-haired nymph our firm decision that brave Odysseus will now leave and complete his voyage home (Homer 11)". In these lines, Athena mentioned Odysseus being brave and wise, which is similar to Finley's hero description (see Finley 19).

Conclusion

Homer and Finley have both gave an explicit analogy of what a hero is supposed to look and feel like. Odysseus may not be the typical hero that takes on dangerous conquest for glory and honor he still embodies the characteristics of a hero measured in bravery, strength and achieved victory.

Perceptions about heroes vary according to ages, but the features and qualities remained the same, the only difference is the context of values and purpose they represent.

Works Cited

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