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**Tolkien's *The Hobbit*: Bilbo's Quest for
Identity and Maturity**
Bachelor's Diploma Thesis

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*I declare that I have worked on this thesis independently,
using only the primary and secondary sources listed in the bibliography.*

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to provide a detailed analysis of selected phenomena that can be found in *The Hobbit* by J. R. R. Tolkien. Notwithstanding the fact that *The Hobbit* was generally relegated to children literature, its individual layers should be scrutinised more profoundly because it may help the understanding of the human psyche. Besides its overall complex psychological depth, *The Hobbit's* mythopoeic background is also rich enough to be fully appreciated by an adult reader. Tolkien is generally acclaimed to be the leading figure of fantasy literature.

As far as the organisation of this thesis is concerned, the first introductory chapter focuses on the significant events in Tolkien's life, the publication of *The Hobbit* as well as fantasy literature in general. The aim of this chapter is to familiarise the readership with basic biographical details and briefly introduce Tolkien as a very successful scholar and writer of both fictional and non-fictional pieces of literature. Further on, some significant events that led to the publication of the first and subsequent editions of *The Hobbit* are presented and commented on. This chapter mentions some of the personal parallels with Tolkien life as well as the development in *The Hobbit's* popularity. To augment the discussion, Tolkien's pioneering essay "On Fairy-Stories" providing the theoretical framework for fantasy as a literary genre is introduced in Subchapter 1.1. Here, Tolkien comments on his own description of fantasy. To comment on the novel in the wider context, Subchapter 1.2 examines then some common features of fantasy literature in general. It attempts to summarise some aspects that many fantasy novels share.

Chapter 2 elucidates the development of Bilbo's personality and illustrates his psychological development on various situations. Subchapter 2.1 comments on the personal traits Bilbo Baggins inherits from his ancestors and the analysis of two

prominent sides of the protagonist's personality is presented: the Tookish, adventurous traits and the Baggins characteristics related to comfort and delicious food. Subchapter 2.2 centres around the impulses that trigger the shifts between the Tookish and Baggins sides of the protagonist's personality. Several other impulses that can be detected in various places in *The Hobbit* are also discussed. Three turning points of Bilbo's quest for maturity are analysed in Subchapter 2.3. These include the incident with the trolls, the adventure with Gollum, the monster, and the spider's attack. Finally, Subchapter 2.4 comments on the reconciliation that is finally brought to two sides of Bilbo's personality. Towards the end of the story, Bilbo's impulses are counterbalanced, and he is depicted as a brave and mature person.

Chapter 3 investigates several factors that contribute to the enormous popularity of *The Hobbit*. Subchapter 3.1 first closely looks upon Bilbo's features that can be characterised as anti-heroic. The ordinariness of the main character and the anticlimactic turn of events as the story nears its end are dealt with. Subchapter 3.2 focuses on Bilbo's adventure as a symbolic psychological development of a common man. Runes as the device of evoking the credible atmosphere for the story within which everything is presented as 'real' are discussed in Subchapter 3.3. This image helps the reader to establish the connection needed in order to identify with Bilbo. Last but not least, Subchapter 3.4 pronounces Tolkien's wish to create a mythology for the English nation. It also establishes the link between artificial myths (such as those created by Tolkien) and their importance for an individual nation. Tolkien borrows from some of the Celtic and Anglo-Saxon features of folklore to have a profound appeal to the English reader. These include similarities between Anglo-Saxon and Celtic runes, riddles, wizards, magical objects and animals.

The conclusion summarises the points examined and discussed as well as the most important findings included in the thesis.

1. J. R. R. TOLKIEN AND FANTASY

Tolkien was born in Bloemfontein, South Africa, on 3 January 1892 to Mabel neé Suffield and Arthur Tolkien, who was making his living in the Bank of Africa. Tolkien and his brother Hilary came back to England in 1895 and the year after, when his father passed away, the family rented a cottage at Sarehole Mill, Birmingham, where the boys remained for the period of four years. When he reached his schooling age, Tolkien began to attend King Edward's School. During this early stage of his life, he also faced his mother's death. Mabel Tolkien died of diabetes in 1904. Following this event, the siblings were taken into the care of their Aunt Beatrice and moved to her house in Stirling Road. When sixteen, in 1908, Tolkien met the love of his life, Edith Bratt. In December 1910 his talent was met with success and he won the Exhibition at Exeter College, Oxford. Autumn 1911 marks Tolkien's first term at Oxford University. Tolkien took Honour Moderations in February 1913 and was awarded a Second Class. In the summer of the same year he began to read for the Honours School of English Language and Literature. Later he was formally betrothed with his true love, Edith, and on 22 March 1916 they got married. Despite the outbreak of WWI, Tolkien was determined to complete his degree course. Thanks to his persistence and enthusiasm he was finally awarded First Class Honours in the final examination in 1915. Tolkien also participated in the warfare of WWI. He travelled to Somme in June 1916 as a second lieutenant and returned to England in November of the same year. Although his injuries were not lethal or permanent, he tremendously suffered from the loss of his friends.

For the rest of his days, the professional success pervaded his life. After the war, he was invited to join the staff of the New English Dictionary. Following this achievement, Tolkien began his professional career working as a freelance tutor in 1919. One year later he was appointed Reader in English Language at Leeds University

and subsequently was given a job of a teacher there in the autumn of 1920. He became professor there in 1924. *The Hobbit* was published in 1937. To his highest academic accomplishments one can undoubtedly count his election as Professor of the English Language and Literature at Oxford in 1945, specialising in Old and Middle English. His most notable work of fantasy literature, that grasped the imagination of millions of readers worldwide, *The Lord of the Rings* was issued between 1954 and 1955. After such an admirable professional career and after publishing many works of fiction as well as scholarly papers, Tolkien retired from his professorship in 1959. The death of his beloved wife Edith in 1971 was soon followed by his own in 1973. The couple had four children, John (1917-2003), Michael (1920-1984), Christopher (born in 1924) and Priscilla (born in 1929).

Tolkien was a prolific writer of both, fictional and scholarly texts. The list of Tolkien's most significant published works, for example, include: *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (1925), "The Oxford English School" (1930), "Beowulf: the Monsters and the Critics" (1937), *Beowulf Criticism* (1937), *The Hobbit: or There and Back Again* (1937), "On Fairy-Stories" (1945), *The Fellowship of the Ring: being the first part of The Lord of the Rings* (1954), *The Two Towers: being the second part of The Lord of the Rings* (1954), *The Return of the King: being the third part of The Lord of the Rings* (1955), *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil and other verses from the Red Book* (1962), "English and Welsh" (1963), *Tree and Leaf* (1964), or "Tolkien on Tolkien" (1966). A vast array of works was published posthumously, for example, *The Father Christmas Letters* (1976), *The Silmarilion* (1977), *Unfinished Tales* (1980), *The Monsters and the Critics & Other Essays* (1983), *Roverandom* (1998) and *The Children of Húrin* (2007).¹

As far as the origins of *The Hobbit* are concerned, it was started as a children's story and almost suffered the fate of an unfinished script. There are many personal parallels between a hobbit as a fictional character and Tolkien himself and he was well aware of this bond (Carpenter 179). "I am in fact a hobbit, in all but size" (Tolkien qtd. in Carpenter 179), commented Tolkien himself on the similarity. These similarities could be traced back when exploring *The Hobbit*. Firstly, the local inhabitants called his Aunt Jane's Worcestershire farm "Bag End", the name allocated to Bilbo's dwelling. However, as implied by Carpenter, the village of Hobbiton itself "with its mill and river is to be found ... in Warwickshire" (180) in Sarehole Mill, Birmingham, where Tolkien spent four years of his early childhood (1896-1900). Tolkien also suggested the parallel between rustic English people that although short of imagination, similarly to the hobbits, possess a great deal of courage.

The writer's son, Christopher Tolkien, remembers the following account related to the origin of the novel: "Daddy ... read it to John, Michael and me in our Winter "Reads" after tea in the evening" (Carpenter 181). In the 1920s, while being busy with his teaching career, Tolkien was thus playfully creating fairy tales in order to entertain his children. It was for them that *The Hobbit* evolved, an episode after episode, a character after character. Although the question of the precise beginning of writing can be a contentious one, Carpenter, who bases his assumptions on Christopher Tolkien's memories, declares that it is about 1930 when Tolkien began to write *The Hobbit*, but he left it unfinished (183).

The manuscript of *The Hobbit* was only later read by Susan Dagnall of the Allen & Unwin publishing company and thanks to her suggestion Tolkien finally finished the text. It was accepted for the publication and subsequently released on 21 September 1937. *The Hobbit* was immediately reprinted in 1937, then in 1942 and

1946. Four colour plates, of which Tolkien was particularly fond of, were added to the second impression. The second edition was published in 1951 and was reprinted many times. In 1938, it was also released by the Houghton Mifflin Company of Boston and New York. Since then, the novel has been reprinted by an immense number of publishers and was translated into over forty languages. The first edition of *The Hobbit* was sold out by Christmas. It was received gratefully by reading audiences. It also earned enthusiastic reactions from many critics outside the UK and when the American edition was issued it was awarded the prize for best juvenile book of the season (Carpenter 186).

The second revised edition was published in 1951. The increase in the sales also reflected the publication of the *LOTR*² trilogy within the span of two years (1954 and 1955). This trilogy brought Tolkien a large number of fan-letters, especially from the US.

So-called “campus cult” embodies another milestone in the development of Tolkien’s fiction popularity. Its origin dated back to 1965 when an unauthorised edition of *LOTR* was released by Ace Books in the US. American students were showing their interest in the novel already in the fifties, but the affair united Tolkien’s enthusiastic followers in “The War for Middle-Earth” as it was called by the press (Carpenter 232). As described by Carpenter, Tolkien adopted the habit to write numerable replies to fan-letters already few years before, but now he used correspondence with several dozens of his fervent admirers to spread the information about the unauthorised character of the Ace Books edition, recommending it not to buy it. The response was immense, American readers demanded “often in forcible terms” that booksellers remove it from bookshelves (232). The Tolkien Society of America was formed in 1960s and the individual branches eventually grew into Mythopoeic Society, devoted to the works of

literature by Tolkien, as well as those by C.S. Lewis and Charles Williams (Carpenter 233). The spreading of the ‘campus cult’ is usually associated with the “emphasis on the protection of natural scenery against the ravages of an industrial society” that largely “harmonised with the growing ecological movement” (Carpenter 232). Tolkien strongly opposed damaging of nature. “Destruction of landscape,” that was inflicted on Oxfordshire by constructing wartime aerodromes “moved him [Tolkien] to profound anger” (Carpenter 129). Ecological movement in 1960s also embraced rejection of industrialisation that is portrayed in Tolkien’s fiction. Simultaneously with the enthusiastic followers, the academic interest was raised. Numbers of essays and volumes of Tolkien criticism appeared in the US and the UK. *The Hobbit* begun to lose label of literature for children, too. Although the novel has been traditionally relegated to the juvenile readership, as claimed by Matthews, it should be “analysed more closely for deeper levels of meaning, for it is the kind of story that has provided the most profound insights into the human psyche” (30).

Since the advent of the Internet a vast number of websites interested in Tolkien’s fiction were created and they continue to exist with a huge number of followers. At the turn of the millennium the screen versions of *LOTR* trilogy were filmed by Peter Jackson. The new wave of Tolkien fandom spread quickly all over the world. The film versions were awarded 17 Oscars altogether. The shooting of movies inevitable resulted in the increased interest in Tolkien’s works of fantasy. The most recent turning point was the shooting of *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey* that was released in December 2012. It was enthusiastically embraced by both Tolkien’s and Jackson’s fandom.

1.1 “On Fairy-Stories”

In this widely recognised essay, Tolkien examines nature, origins and functions of the so-called “fairy-stories”. Firstly, Tolkien draws attention to the imperfect usage of the term ‘fairy-story’ because works that are labelled as these rarely include fairies at all. In this respect, the term does not overlap the definition of a fairy as a diminutive fantastic creature. Instead, the term ‘fairy-story’, as Tolkien suggests, depends upon the definition of ‘Faerie’ that can be described as:

the realm or state in which fairies have their being. Faerie contains many things besides elves and fays, and besides dwarfs, witches, trolls, giants, or dragons: it holds the seas, the sun, the moon, the sky; and the earth, and all things that are in it: tree and bird, water and stone, wine and bread, and ourselves, mortal men, when we are enchanted. (FS 4)

Although Tolkien criticises the incorrect and misleading usage of the term ‘fairy-story’, he continues to use it throughout the whole essay. In this thesis the term ‘fantasy’ is used instead, because of the clearer implication it bears nowadays and because it has a wider occurrence now than in the 1930s. Tolkien also proposes another term ‘sub-creation’ that he explains as a creation of a unique secondary world that must follow the rules of “inner consistency” (FS 15). Tolkien further defines ‘fantasy’ as an essential quality of the fairy-story that embraces “both the Sub-creative Art in itself and a quality of strangeness and wonder” (FS 15). As suggested by Swinfen, the current usage of ‘fantasy’ varies and it usually evokes the sub-creative art itself as well as the kind of novels it produces (5).

Tolkien tries to reveal types of literature that disguise themselves as fantasy but that, in his view, do not meet requirements to be labelled as fantasy. These include travel stories, dreams and beast-fables. Although travel stories often refer to marvels,

these are necessarily “marvels to be seen in this mortal world” and thus no link to the Faerie is established (FS 5). Stories that utilise dreams to explain marvels are also excluded, because genuine fantasy should be presented as true and it cannot “tolerate any frame or machinery suggesting that the whole story ... is a figment or illusion” (FS 5). The beast-fables that do not involve human beings and their heroes and heroines are depicted exclusively as animals, also lie outside the Faerie (FS 6). While Tolkien unequivocally omits beast-fables in his categorisation, Swinfen inclines to the view that “modern animal fantasy in most instances is set in the primary world” (13). In this respect, Swinfen violates Tolkien’s dictum about the necessity of sub-creation that is strictly divided from the primary world.

As Tolkien writes of fairy-stories origins, “the history of fairy-stories is probably more complex than the history of the human race” (FS 7). He only briefly comments of this complexity, pointing out that they are “very ancient indeed” (FS 7). Although he suggests three aspects that play their role in producing a fairy-story, namely invention, inheritance and diffusion, he concludes that “it is now beyond all skill ... to unravel it” (FS 7) and thus to solve the issue of fairy-stories. The features of various myths are intermingled and get blended together in such a complex fashion that it is now impossible to determine their precise origin.

Tolkien also reveals his dissatisfaction with fantasy literature that is traditionally relegated exclusively to the juvenile audience. He claims that fantasy should not be dismissed as a childish fancy. He refutes the treatment of children as a “special kind of creature, almost a different race” hence his discontent about perceiving children as a class ignoring their individuality (FS 11). The vindication of the right of adults “to read fairy-stories as a natural branch of literature” is also present in the essay (FS 11). Tolkien displays the need to discuss the matter because fantasy literature in the

1930s tended to be in particular associated with children. Swinfen suggests that because of the present widespread popularity of the genre among adult readership, fantasy might now hardly seem to need any defence (1). Thanks to the complexity of secondary worlds, they “operate on adult level of meaning” and thus ought to be fully accepted by any adult readership (Swinfen 1-2).

Tolkien concludes his description with unique functions of fantasy: its ability to offer Recovery, Escape and Consolation. In describing the genre’s ability to offer Recovery, Tolkien asserts that fantasy assists the reader to regain the fresh, clear view of the primary world, the ability to “clean our windows, so that the things seen clearly may be freed from the drab blur of triteness or familiarity” (FS 19). Tolkien emphasises that fantasy usually deals with ordinary things (for example stone, wood, iron or tree) that are positioned into a new setting, relationship or environment. Thanks to the liberation of imagination of the writer those objects can gain new unique qualities and their meaning can be reshaped. Escape is characterised as liberation from habits and conventions of the contemporary world where many men are disgusted by men-made things. Fairy-stories offer an escape from “noise, stench, ruthlessness,” of industrialisation but also from dangers of life such as “hunger, poverty, pain, sorrow, injustice, death” (FS 11). In the discussion of his notion of Consolation, Tolkien gives prominence to the so-called “Consolation of Happy Ending” which is an essential aspect of a sophisticated fairy-story. Tolkien coined the new term to describe this quality: ‘eucatastrophe’ that is characterised as a “sudden joyous “turn” ... sudden and miraculous grace: never to be counted on to recur” (FS 22). Tolkien lists happy ending together with eucatastrophe as necessary qualities of fantasy.

Although Tolkien does not mention his works of fiction in the essay explicitly, it is possible that he proposed that description in order to fall into the category he

described. He intended to be viewed according to the rules he established. The features depicted in “On Fairy-Stories” are inextricably linked with *The Hobbit*. Tolkien manages to sub-create a secondary world with a considerable skill and variety. The events in *The Hobbit* are described as if ‘real’. Tolkien also subverts some of the mythical features. He elevates minute faeries to the high nation of Elves, but, on the other hand he does not turn Bilbo into a heroic character capable of slaying the dragon, for example. His own unique and original contribution to fantasy literature are the hobbits themselves. Tolkien also confutes this notion of children as the only target audience of fantasy literature. The complexity of his secondary world called Middle-Earth, in which *The Hobbit* is set, together with the deep psychological level provide the space for the adult reader to evoke awe and wonder. As it nears its climax, it also “assumes the tone of a heroic chronicle” (Swinfen 99) that can also appeal to an adult reader. Eucatastrophe is also present as the story nears its end: the sudden arrival of the eagles in the nick of time during The Battle of Five Armies. The unexpected unity of the dwarves, elves and men in the battle against the common enemy that unpredictably attacks them also fits the description of eucatastrophe.

1.2 Fantasy Literature

There are many attempts to define the genre and the current usage varies widely. As Gottesman acknowledges: “[the] genre is among the slipperiest of literary terms, as any examination of genre theories and their histories will suggest” (vii). It proves troublesome to discover what exactly is implied by the term as the usage differs. The broadest definitions include the reference to image-making as an ability of the human mind. The *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* lists three meanings of ‘fantasy’: “a pleasant situation that you imagine but that is unlikely to happen”;

“product of your imagination” and “the act of imagining things; a person’s imagination” (554). Thus, the reader turns to the most acknowledged and thorough dictionary in a vain attempt to define the term fantasy as a literary genre. Except for definitions that define the term as a product of person’s imagination, *Macmillan Dictionary* also clarifies its meaning as a part of literature. Fantasy is defined as “a story that shows a lot of imagination and is very different from real life”. In terms of literature, *Merriam-Webster’s Encyclopedia of Literature* treats the term fantasy from the point of view of its dissimilarities from reality and seems to provide the most satisfactory description of fantasy. It describes fantasy literature as an “imaginative fiction dependent for effect on strangeness of setting (such as other worlds or times) and characters (such as supernatural beings)” (403).

Although the definitions may vary, most critics agree that fantasy is a type of fiction that “evokes wonder, mystery or magic—a sense of possibility beyond the ordinary, material, rationally predictable world in which we live” (Mathews 1). Manlove puts the matter succinctly when he introduces his concept of genre: “a fiction evoking wonder and containing a substantial and irreducible element of the supernatural” (qtd. in Bechtel). In *Fantasy: The Liberation of Imagination*, Mathews asserts that fantasy as a fully distinct literary genre may be best thought of as “a fiction that elicits wonder through elements of supernatural or impossible”. He accentuates that fantasy emerges as a counterpoint to realistic mainstream fiction (Mathews 3). On contrary to Mathews, who charts the development of fantasy from the antiquity to modernity focusing on individual authors, Swinfen approaches the matter from the thematic point of view. She enlists characteristic aspects that many modern fantasy novels share. These features include: the marvellous that is perceived as the core of work, morality and critique of contemporary society that is the purpose and the creation

of a secondary world within the borders of inner consistency that is essential to establish the reader's wonder. Swinfen also stresses the ability of fantasy to unlock person's imagination. From readers' point of view, they "may be more easily convinced of the marvellous 'reality' of a secondary world ... a new corpus of values may more easily be presented" (92). From the writers' point of view, they is free to establish new rules and is completely free to construct his own secondary-world without restricting realities and conventions of the primary world (76). Although definitions described above vary, every theory includes the sense of wonder and presence of marvel or magic.

Tolkien occupies an ambivalent position in the course of the literary scene. On the one hand, he is highly praised by scholars and the readership. On the other hand, some critics, for example Swinfen, persist that some other writers may "surpass him in imaginative power" (1). Academics also tend to disagree about the pioneering work of Tolkien. From one point of view, Tolkien is acknowledged as a leading protagonist of fantasy literature that developed fully only after his fiction was issued. For example, Olsen claims that "fantasy literature was far from the literary mainstream in the early twentieth century" and Tolkien had to try hard to be successful as a writer (35). From the other point of view, Tolkien is described merely as a follower of a literary tradition of fantasy that "was already deeply embedded in the English literary tradition" (Swinfen 2). Mathews also confirms that Tolkien was writing at the point when fantasy was already "*a fully distinct genre* in England and the United States" (20). All of these critics, however, are unanimous in their claim that Tolkien substantially contributed to the popularisation of the genre as well as to the formation of modern fantasy as the distinct and mainstream literary form.

2. BILBO'S QUEST FOR IDENTITY

The central pattern of the novel is the quest for treasure. But more importantly, the story also represents Bilbo's quest for maturity. In other words, in the beginning "Bilbo's personality is out of balance and far from integrated. His masculinity is being repressed so that he is clinging rather immaturely to a childish way of life" (Matthews 33). This thesis considers Bilbo's journey not only as the quest for the treasure, in which Bilbo is not particularly interested in as can be seen towards the end of the story, but also as the search for maturity, in which courage and honest behaviour towards his companions create significant parts of the rites of maturation. By allowing the Tookish side to prevail Tolkien illustrates one of the fundamental features of the human character: the curiosity and the need to seize the opportunity. Bilbo is first presented to the reader as a quiet and plain creature who enjoys comfortable life, being highly content about peaceful and untroubled direction of his life situation and who is apparently "settled down immovably"³ (H 5). Adventures or any changes that would threaten to reduce his numerous portions of meals a day are seen strictly unwelcome by him. Although reluctantly and more from politeness than from free will, Bilbo is being drawn in the adventure and he finds "himself doing and saying things altogether unexpected" (H 4). In these introductory passages the shifts between the Baggins and the Tookish side are clearly pronounced.

2.1. Bilbo, the Hobbit: Comfort versus Adventure

As far as Bilbo's predecessors are concerned, the reader is acquainted with Bilbo's family situation very early in the story. Bilbo is the son of Bungo Baggins and Belladonna Took. As Matthews pertinently points out "the potential for tension lies between the Baggins and the Tookish side of his nature" (H 33). The Baggins branch of

his family may be best characterised as follows: “people considered them [the Bagginnses] very respectable, not only because most of them were rich, but also because they never had any adventures or did anything unexpected ...” (H 4). There are numerous instances when the Baggins qualities are prevailing. These can be loosely categorised in the two groups: physical comforts and contempt of adventure.

Bilbo’s primary concerns seem to be purely physical comforts as the reader can easily detect his most beloved activity, eating, immediately from the beginning of the novel. These notions repeatedly reappear throughout the whole story. Hobbits are particularly interested in eating, “they are inclined to be fat in the stomach” (H 4) and they usually dine twice a day. Also the way of equipping his dwelling with “perfectly round doors ... with a shiny yellow brass knob in the exact middle” (H 3) and polished chairs reflects a one-dimensional way of living, securing one’s comfortable living conditions.

Again and again the reader is reminded of Bilbo’s homesickness and reduced comfort: “he felt more tired than he ever remembered feeling before. He was thinking once again of his comfortable chair before the fire in his favourite sitting-room in his hobbit-hole, and of the kettle singing. Not for the last time!” (H 55). Indeed, the phrase “not for the last time” is repeated several times in the novel, always in connection with Bilbo expressing discomfort.

As stated above, Bilbo is drawn into the adventure hastily and not exactly from his own will. He more or less succumbs to the order of Gandalf, a legendary wizard, whose authority Bilbo does not dare question in any case. The narrator comments on this event in the following way: “To the end of his days Bilbo could never remember how he found himself outside, without a hat, a walking-stick or any money, or anything that he usually took when he went out” (H 36). Although the Tookish side of Bilbo’s

personality is ready to prevail by setting on the perilous adventure and putting his own life in danger in the search of maturity, the Baggins part does not disappear completely and is pronounced throughout the whole novel.

In his first dialogue with Gandalf, Bilbo clearly scorns the whole concept of adventurous quests as he proclaims that hobbits are “plain quiet folk ... with no use for adventures” and he labels them as “nasty disturbing uncomfortable things! Make you late for dinner!” (H 7). Matthews supports this argument: “Bilbo is noticeably annoyed when Gandalf arrives with the dwarf visitors since he would prefer to live what appears to be a somewhat withdrawn, self-centered life” (33). When the dwarves pay him a visit, or from Bilbo’s perspective, a rather rude and uninvited storm into his hobbit-hole, he strives hard to perceive the situation as absolutely normal: “Gandalf sat at the head of the party with thirteen dwarves all round: and Bilbo sat on a stool at the fireside, nibbling at a biscuit (his appetite was quite taken away), and trying to look as if this was all ordinary and not in the least an adventure” (H 15). The fear of peril is instilled into the very depth of Bilbo’s character.

From Bilbo’s mother side, however, Bilbo inherits rather different characteristics. The Took are unfavourably rumoured to be “not entirely hobbitlike” (H 5), and, what is even more disturbing, they once in a while “would go and have adventures. They secretly disappear and the family hushed it up” (H 5). The rumour that “one of the Took ancestors must have taken a fairy wife,” (H 5) circulates the hobbit community and it adds to splendour and mystery that surrounds this branch of Bilbo’s family. From his mother’s side Bilbo is related to a far more adventurous family than the Baggins. Because of the adventures that defy the patterns of required and socially accepted behaviour, the other inhabitants preserve hostile feelings towards them.

These innate family traits very much mirror in Bilbo's personality. While the Bagginses represent a settled way of life, the Tooks are inclined to be in favour of far more adventurous tendencies. And although Bilbo "looked and behaved exactly like a second edition of his solid and comfortable father" he also "got something a bit queer in his make-up from the Took side" (H 5). Both of these different set of features merge in his personality, notwithstanding his disapproval or acknowledging, and the closer the end is, the more the Tookish side is visible.

On the verge of the beginning of his quest, Bilbo is far from being intellectually mature, as he expresses a kind of childlike and little feminine behaviour. He is more or less only interested in tidying up the house, cooking, eating and chatting with the visitors (but only those invited and expected ones). None of the scholars seems to have observed, however, that his feminine behaviour may be connected to the absence of females in his life. Bilbo is orphaned and does not have a wife either and as a consequence features and chores that are traditionally attributed to women, tend to prevail in his personality. The hobbit's maturity is questionable, because he is primarily concerned with physical comforts. Bilbo suppresses the Tookish tendencies to boldly pluck up the courage to discover what life might have in store for him (Matthews 33). If it had not been for the adventure, Bilbo would probably continue his sheltered life, would never embark on such a dangerous journey with his life at stake. Olsen comments on the matter: "Bilbo may adhere to the Baggins point of view, but his Tookish heritage does give him a tendency towards that other, adventurous life, a tendency that is lurking beneath the surface when Bilbo meets Gandalf" (23). Bilbo would try hard to maintain the status quo although the Tookish inclination cannot be suppressed fully and it provides the main impetus for a change.

By minutely describing all of the traits of Bilbo's family, Tolkien also suggests that people are inherently bestowed with deterministic characteristics. By depicting the inner fight between the two sides of Bilbo's personality, Tolkien does not only indicate that the tension is impossible to avoid but he implies that it is impossible to deny one's family roots as well. Tolkien gives Bilbo the opportunity to find out which side will be changed and how his identity will develop. The rivalry is depicted throughout the whole novel and Bilbo is frequently switching between the two natures.

2.2. Triggering of Change

Bilbo's first response is not a stern disapproval when he first encounters Gandalf, but the remembered wonder. The more adventurous side of his personality is awoken and he almost forgets the good manners, being fascinated and completely thrilled by the legends that are accompanying Gandalf's reputation:

Gandalf, Gandalf! Good gracious me! Not the wandering wizard that gave Old Took a pair of magic diamond studs that fastened themselves and never came undone till ordered? Not the fellow who used to tell such wonderful tales at parties, about dragons and goblins and giants and rescue of princesses and the unexpected luck of widows' sons? Not the man that used to make such particularly excellent fireworks! I remember those! (H 8)

This monologue is in sharp contrast to the previous Bilbo's speech permeated with a considerable dismay about the notion of adventure that is being proposed by Gandalf. The juxtaposition of the two types of behaviour is also suggested in the text itself when the narrator claims that "You [the reader] will notice already that Mr. Baggins was not quite so prosy as he liked to believe ..." (H 8). Here, the legends that Gandalf is surrounded by evoke sparks in Bilbo's eyes and the thrill about the myths is aroused.

The psychological quest of Bilbo Baggins is inextricably linked with Gandalf who provides the impetus for the reluctant hobbit to leave his sheltered life into hazardous adventure. The world of legends, myths and magic is embodied in Gandalf and Bilbo cannot help bursting into an uncontrolled stream of excitement. As proposed above, despite the protagonist's sudden ardour, the adventure, of which Bilbo has shown a high level of astonishment, is strictly refused when offered to himself: "Sorry! I don't want any adventures ..." (H 9). It is clear that Bilbo favours his comfortable life at home and is not yet able to acknowledge the part of his innate qualities that are connected to the adventure and from which this sudden astonishment stems. "The womblike peace and security," writes Matthews of Bilbo's mundane reality "is disturbed by Gandalf" (33). Despite this, the character of Gandalf initiates the process of Bilbo's quest for identity and functions as the impulse for the Tookish side to rouse.

Another example of factors that participate in Bilbo's psychological transformation and inclining to the Tookish side of his character is certainly represented by the amazement expressed over the song the dwarves are singing in the beginning of the story. The song function in the story is informative and its primary purpose is to acquaint the reader with the circumstances under which the quest is being held as well as its goal: to take possession of the treasure, stolen from their forefathers. At this point, Bilbo "forgot everything else" (H 17) and is mesmerised by the magic world that slowly begins to approach him:

As they sang the hobbit felt the love of beautiful things made by hands and by cunning and by magic moving through him, a fierce and a jealous love, the desire of the hearts of dwarves. *Then something Tookish woke inside him*, and he wished to go and see the great mountains, and hear the pine trees and the

waterfalls, and explore the caves, and wear a sword instead of a walking stick.

(emphasis added, H 19)

By inclusion of the phrase “then something Tookish woke inside him” the narrator deliberately draws the reader’s attention to Bilbo’s attraction to the world of legends. Simultaneously, the shift towards the Tookish side is accentuated. Fantastic stories about foreign races and treasures have been so far considered remote and to Bilbo they have been merely legends that can never happen to him. On the other hand, Bilbo slowly commences to be the part of one of such stories. Only a few sentences later, however, the reader encounters the disapproval of the journey that is being discussed. The move towards the Bagginnses labelled as being “plain, quiet folk” (H 7) can be detected: “He shuddered; and very quickly he was plain Mr. Baggins of Bag-End, Under-Hill, again” (H 20). As aptly put by Matthews, Bilbo once again “repressed this more spirited side of his personality in favour of the Baggins impulses” (33). Bilbo consciously subdues the fervour for the legends and gives preference to the good respectable manners because of the society’s antipathetic attitude to change.

Another situation where the tension between the Tookish and the Baggins nature is visible is the discussion with the dwarves. Thorin Oakenshield, the leader of the dwarves’ company, is apprising others of the quest to plunder the dragon’s treasure. The company seems to be carefully listening to their leader, both because of the solemnity of the situation and because of the authority of the esteemed leader. When the risks are being presented, however, Bilbo is no longer able to pretend serenity and calmness. Upon the utterance of the mortal danger Bilbo shows his alarm: “Poor Bilbo couldn’t bear it any longer. At *may never return* he began to feel a shriek coming up inside, and very soon it burst out like the whistle of an engine coming out of a tunnel...” (H 21). The main hero of *The Hobbit* is thus overwhelmed by the fear and the possible

danger that may be involved, too. Here, his child-like immature character fully reveals itself, trembling with fear even when the threat is only spoken about and not actually experienced. As the story continues, the hobbit overhears Gloin, one of the Thorin's companions, speaking. "One shriek like that in a moment of excitement would be enough to wake the dragon and all his relatives, and kill the lot of us ... As soon as I clapped eyes on the little fellow bobbing and puffing on the mat, I had my doubts," (H 22) speculates Gloin, who openly shows discontent about Gandalf's choice of their thirteenth member of the group. This time Bilbo, however, is not intimidated but boldly nerves himself to stand up for his reputation. As the narrator adds, "The Took side had won. He suddenly felt he would go without bed and breakfast to be thought fierce" (H 22). Bilbo resolutely decides not to let the others underestimate his courage. He responds with boldness and the spontaneous outpourings of bravery ensue: "Tell me what you want done, and I will try it, if I have to walk from here to the East of East and fight the wild Were-worms in the Last Desert" (H 23). As the debate continues, the little hero is "so far still Tookishly determined to go on with things" (H 27), and is particularly excited about the map that is revealed. Bilbo is so thrilled that he accidentally exclaims aloud "Hear, hear!" (H 32), disrespectfully interrupting Gandalf's talk. For the first time, the more adventurous part of his character clearly prevails.

Although during the discussion with the dwarves the Tookish side seems to assume its place, Bilbo concludes his involvement in it by letting the Baggins side predominate. He is careful not to affront his quests and he suggests that they stay overnight, however, he manages to implant a very surprising ending: "And well, don't you know, I think we have talked long enough for one night, if you see what I mean. What about bed, and an early start, and all that? I will give you a good breakfast before *you* go" (emphasis added, H 32). By the inclusion of "you" that is emphasised in the

previous sentence, Bilbo inconspicuously excludes himself from the participation in the quest. This is, of course, not left unnoticed by Thorin, who swiftly comments that “Before *we* go, I suppose you mean” (H 32). Bilbo rejects the whole concept of adventure, as endorsed by the narrator: “The Tookishness was wearing off, and he was not now quite so sure that he was going on any journey in the morning ... Bilbo went to sleep with that [the song of the dwarves] in his ears, and it gave him very uncomfortable dreams” (H 33). Notwithstanding previous stimuli that incite Bilbo’s transformation into a bolder mature person, the Baggins part of himself cannot be repudiated, because the shift has not yet fully materialised. Because of the dwarves’ early departure in the morning, Bilbo is largely relieved and is left in the firm conviction that he is to maintain his previous life and respectable demeanour. Yet, “in a way he could not help feeling just a trifle disappointed. The feeling surprised him” (H 34). The Tookishness thus begins to manifest itself again.

Additional impulses can be noticed further in the novel. This includes, for example, Bilbo’s interest in moon runes when the company visits Elves in the secret valley of Rivendell. Bilbo is not only astonished by the Elves but he also shows an extraordinary level of wonder about the moon letters, an ancient script that is discovered on Thorin’s map of the dragon’s lair. The fellows consult matters about the quest and seek advice from a wise master of the Elves, Elrond. So far, the discussion is being held between Gandalf, Thorin and Elrond, and Bilbo is left unnoticed because of the low respected position in the group. Bilbo does not intervene in the debate. This ancient script, however, arouses Bilbo’s interest, the Tookish side is woken and he, similarly as it has been done previously, suddenly interrupts serious dialogue between Gandalf, Thorin and Elrond. Bilbo cannot help himself asking about the moon letters as he “loved maps ... and he also liked runes and letters and cunning handwriting” (H 63).

Moon letters thus embody another stimulating factor that triggers Bilbo's attraction to the adventure.

The Tookish and side of Bilbo's character is also supported by certain mentions of his predecessors from his mother side. Old Took, Bilbo's grandfather and a friend of Gandalf, is mentioned quite early in the story. "Indeed for your old grandfather Took's sake, and for the sake of poor Belladonna, I will give you what you asked for," (H 8) declares Gandalf when he first meets Bilbo. Here, Gandalf remembers his old friend as an adventurous fellow and thus indirectly encourages Bilbo's psychological change from a childlike character towards a more mature person. Another instance may be a reference to Old Took's great-grand-uncle Bullroarer, "who was so huge (for a hobbit) he could ride a horse" (H 22). He is the most legendary of all Bilbo's forebears, famous for having fought with "the ranks of the goblins of Mount Gram in the Battle of the Green Fields, and knocked their king Golfimbul's head clean off with a wooden club" (H 22). During the dialogue with the dwarves Bilbo proudly refers to this notable ancestor when his more adventurous side ventures to vindicate his participation in the quest and not to be perceived merely as a grocer: "I had great-great-great-grand uncle once, Bullroarer Took" (H 23). Although the main character is prevented from finishing the sentence by Gandalf's utterance, "that was long ago" (H 23), Bilbo's pride in his courageous ancestry is clearly distinguishable and serves then as one of the triggering factors of the Tookish side as well.

2.3. Trolls, Gollum, Spider: Stages towards Maturity

Bilbo's initial incapacity for burglary is demonstrated early at the onset of the quest when Bilbo is sent by the dwarvish company to inspect a suspicious fire ahead. However, his intention to snatch money from trolls is left unfulfilled and Bilbo is caught

by them almost instantaneously. Bilbo undertakes an unnecessary risk and because of this fault, all dwarves are trapped and nearly eaten by the trolls. In this story Bilbo exhibits to be rather incompetent. And it is because of Bilbo's immature persona that the character of Gandalf plays a decisive role in the early stages of the quest. Gandalf helps the hobbit when in need. This proves the case during the early conflict with trolls when Bilbo depends on Gandalf. As surveyed by Matthews, Gandalf may be perceived as "a projection of the Jungian archetype of "wise old man" since he resembles the magic helper of countless stories" (34). As Matthews goes on "the most prominent force in the early events is luck, or chance. It is only through chance that the key to the trolls' cave is found, thus providing unearned access to the magic swords so necessary for later trials" (34). Thus the swords are found by sheer luck and Bilbo can hardly be given credit for this discovery. Moreover, Bilbo unreasonably forgets to mention finding the key they are looking for. When given to them, the dwarves respond in annoyance: "Why on earth didn't you mention it before?" (H 51). In addition, Bilbo again rudely interrupts Gandalf's talk and is prevented to speak by Gandalf's exclamation: "Don't interrupt!" (H 52) uttered in the way as if scolding an adolescent. Bilbo disappoints the dwarves in this part of their adventure and he is not shown any signs of respect yet.

In spite of Bilbo's foolishness, the most important thing about the incident with the trolls is Bilbo's "conscious choice to accept and try to live up to the title that Gandalf gave him [the burglar], a choice that is, from one point of view unexpected" (Olsen 46). The inner fight between two sides of Bilbo's personality is still apparent. Although Bilbo "was very much alarmed, as well as disgusted; he wished himself a hundred miles away ...", yet he somehow "could not go straight back to Thorin and Company emptyhanded" (H 43). Bilbo accepts the title and role of the burglar for the first time in the novel examined because he desires to live up to Gandalf's

recommendation and he also wants to earn his companions' respect. Notwithstanding his foolish actions, the episode with the trolls is "indeed the official beginning of Bilbo's adventuring career" (Olsen 47) as well as the turning point in his mental transformation.

One of the most crucial incidents in *The Hobbit* happens when Bilbo falls unconscious and is separated from the group of the dwarves underground within the realm of goblins. Here, Bilbo is forced to depend on himself. Flummoxed, abandoned and desperate Bilbo is contemplating his further action. The question of whether or not he should summon the courage to face unknown dangers that may be waiting in the darkness surrounding him arises. Bilbo is, however, encouraged by the beauty of his elvish blade he possesses since the incident with the trolls. At this point in the story the Tookish side of his personality prevails, his interest in legends is aroused and Bilbo feels comforted: "it was rather splendid to be wearing a blade made in Gondolin for goblin-wars" (H 82). No longer the unsure, immature being he has been, he suddenly exclaims: "Go back? Not good at all! Go sideways? Impossible! Go forward? Only thing to do! On we go!" (H 82). For the first time in the novel Bilbo finds the courage, which he does not even know he possesses, to face the problem rather than to give up. This point marks an important landmark in his psychological quest.

The danger he willingly chooses to confront is Gollum, slimy and fearsome creature living nearby an underground lake beneath the Misty Mountains. Matthews asserts that Gollum's association with water fits Jung's Devouring-Mother archetype, the "predatory monster which must be faced and slain by every individual in the depths of his unconscious if he is to develop as a self-reliant individual" (35). When Bilbo finally escapes from Gollum and goblins and joins the dwarves, his personality is, indeed, changed. Bilbo being missing, the dwarves and the wizard consider the rescue.

The fact that they are not in favour to save Bilbo is only a natural outcome of his incompetence demonstrated above. Gandalf is again positioned as the hobbit's protector, being the only one who defends him. Bilbo earns the dwarves' respect when he appears all of a sudden without their detection, a deed much more attributed to a burglar than a grocer. The new respect for Bilbo's capacities is visible and the dwarves are aware of the metamorphosis of his personality. They are delighted to see him and "Bilbo's reputation went up a very great deal with the dwarves after this. If they had still doubted that he was really a first-class burglar, in spite of Gandalf's words, they doubted no longer" (H 109). The newly gained respect results in Bilbo's increased confidence and self-esteem and the hobbit begins to realise his potential. As claimed by Matthews, the two sides of his character "have been brought to new harmony. His Baggins impulses are beginning to be counter balanced". The transformation is, however, not completed. This sudden change must be "stabilised through reinforcing experiences" (37). Throughout the rest of the novel the reader encounters further stages of Bilbo's psychological journey.

The incident with a spider can be viewed as another significant scene as far as the process of maturing is concerned. The responsibilities that are allocated to Bilbo shift from minor tasks, like climbing a tree or helping when crossing over an enchanted river, to name a few examples, to more demanding ones. Bilbo often finds himself abandoned and isolated from the other dwarves. Resolved that there is no good trying to do anything during the night, he falls asleep, dreaming about "bacon and eggs and toast and butter" (H 180). This temporary inaction almost takes hold of him as Bilbo is endangered by the spider's attack. Bilbo not only ventures to set himself free, but he also seizes the opportunity and finds the courage to slay his adversary: "Bilbo came at it before it could disappear and stuck it with [his] sword right in the eyes" (H 181). After

this confrontation, the narrator deliberately draws attention to the internal change that occurred in Bilbo's inner self:

The spider lay dead beside him, and his sword-blade was stained black. Somehow the killing of the giant spider, all alone by himself in the dark without the help of the wizard or the dwarves or of anyone else, made a great difference to Mr. Baggins. He felt a different person, and much fiercer and bolder in spite of an empty stomach, as he wiped his sword on the grass and put it back into its sheath. (H 181)

According to Matthews, from this point on Bilbo displays "self-esteem needed to fulfil his responsibilities as a mature and trustworthy leader" (40). Bilbo now "genuinely feels fierce" (Olsen 158). Thanks to Bilbo's cleverness, the dwarves are released from the spiders' captivity. As commented by the narrator, the flummoxed dwarves "knew only too well that they would soon all have been dead, if it had not been for the hobbit" (H 192). Bilbo earns respect of the dwarves and is now perceived as a leader. Bilbo thus leads them in the battle with the spiders and they even forget about Thorin, their highly respected leader, who is missing. This can be interpreted not only as the fact that they temporarily substitute Thorin for Bilbo as far as the authority in charge is concerned, but also as the fact that they now regard Bilbo as a respectable peer whose abilities are no longer questioned.

2.4. New Balance Achieved

During the episodes with Smaug, the dragon guarding a treasure, the novel reaches its climax. Matthews observes that "this last series of events marks the final stages of Bilbo's quest for maturation" (40). Bilbo is aware of the shift in his personality and the final obstacles in his quest demand both physical and moral courage.

The Tookish and Baggins sides of his personality begin to complement each other. It is also noteworthy that Bilbo already readily distinguishes between the hobbit he used to be and “esteemed Mr. Baggins, who has proved himself a good companion ... a hobbit full of courage and resource far exceeding his size” (H 246) as Thorin praises him. “Tolkien makes it clear that Bilbo is facing his most demanding trial of physical courage by daring to descend alone into the dragon’s lair” (Matthews 41). However, the Baggins part of his personality does not disappear completely and the internal conflict is still present: ““Now you are in for it at last, Bilbo Baggins,” he said to himself. “You went and put your foot right in it that night of that party, and now you have got to pull it out and pay for it! Dear me, what a fool I was and am!” said the least Tookish side of him’ (H 248). It is interesting that Tolkien chooses the crucial ordeal to take place before the confrontation with the dragon itself as terrified Bilbo “fought a real battle in the tunnel alone, before he ever saw the vast danger that lay in wait” (H 249). While descending deeper to The Lonely Mountain, Bilbo finally overcomes his fear and from this point on, “Bilbo’s physical courage is unquestioned” (Matthews 41).

To resolve the conflict between the dwarves, the Elves and the men, Bilbo needs more than a physical courage that is demonstrated while entering the dragon’s lair. It is more of a moral boldness that assumes its place when “the beginnings of a plan had come into his little head” (H 309). Both Matthews and Olsen agree that Bilbo’s decision to use the Arkenstone as a negotiating element is made consciously regardless of the possible loss of friendship as well as respect by the dwarves. Although Bilbo faces a moral dilemma, he does what he believes would bring peace to all participants of the conflict. During the final process of his psychological maturation, Bilbo “has learned to think for himself and to have the courage to follow a course he knows to be right – in spite of possible repercussions” (Matthews 43).

Throughout the novel, the tension between the Tookish and Baggins elements within Bilbo's character are brought into balance. Bilbo does not gain any eternal glory, but rather his own self-knowledge, courage to meet challenge and knowledge of his own identity (Matthews 43). Tolkien avoids any simple resolution in turning Bilbo into a heroic character, capable of murdering dragon: "the interplay between these two very different aspects of Bilbo's nature is very complex and Tolkien will steadily resist bringing it to a simplified resolution" (Olsen 27). Although the references to Bilbo's discomfort cease to occur as the story nears its end, they do not diminish entirely. Bilbo still dreams about "eggs and bacon" (H 316). The Tookish side is, however, not necessarily incompatible with his love for home. "By giving expression to his Tookishness, he has found a new harmony and balance," (43) comments Matthews. Thorin recognises this interplay in his final assessment and tribute to the hobbit: "There is more in you of good than you know, child of the kindly West. Some courage and some wisdom, blended in measure. If more of us valued food and cheer and song above hoarded gold, it would be a merrier world" (H 333). Bilbo's circular journey of 'there and back again,' "complicates and enriches our (illusorily) stable notions of "reality" by transforming, rather than deconstructing the world," in which Bilbo lives (Bechtel).

3. IDENTIFICATION: ASPECTS OF POPULARITY

The main argument for such an immense popularity of the novel examined is that the reader can easily identify with *The Hobbit*. As suggested by Rogers, the hobbits are the race par excellence both in *The Hobbit* and later in *LOTR*. She argues that Tolkien deliberately uses their point of view and moreover, Tolkien obviously “likes them very much indeed, and without evading their shortcomings in his portrayal” (Rogers 75). In his letter to Rogers Tolkien declares that “I am in fact a hobbit”, drawing attention towards personal parallels that can be found between his portrayal of hobbits and his own personality.

3.1. Antiheroism: Ordinariness and Anticlimax

From the wider perspective, it is unusual for the author to choose ordinary and not exactly hero-like qualities for the protagonist of the story. It also seems in contrast to the author himself when one studies Tolkien’s professional career and specialisation. As described by Carpenter, Tolkien showed an unusual level of interest in medieval languages, myths and legends such as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* ever since he was a child (42-43). Tolkien was enchanted by Arthurian heroic legends as well as Andrew Lang’s *Red Fairy Book* which includes the story about Sigurd who bravely slays the dragon. Lately, when Tolkien became respected professor he turned his professional focus on *Beowulf*, the heroic Anglo-Saxon poem, as asserted by Šedivá (5). Tolkien’s long tenure at Oxford and the fact that he was constantly studying Anglo-Saxon background leads to the assumption that he was influenced by the area he thought about and knew so well in detail. It is widely known that his highly praised lecture, *Beowulf: the Monsters and the Critics*, is considered a “landmark in the history of criticism of this great Western Anglo-Saxon poem” (Carpenter 143). Because

Tolkien's professional interest lies in the heroic characters capable of audacious deeds, at first glance, it seems strange that his Bilbo is endowed with such anti-hero qualities.

As Olsen describes the character of hobbits: "the world of hobbits is a quiet and simple world, a world of ease and comfort, containing nothing very strange or alarming" (18). Such a description can be viewed as the very antithesis to the heroic deeds of Sir Gawain, Sigurd or Beowulf. At the beginning of the story, Bilbo's tranquil, predictable world and the contempt for adventure, is juxtaposed to the bold nature of the dwarves that are resolutely determined to reclaim their possession. The character of Bilbo can be interpreted as the accumulation of mundane ordinariness and therefore a common person can easily identify with him.

Bilbo's actions towards the end of the story seem to be anticlimactic. Tolkien only occasionally describes events that do not involve Bilbo directly in order to equip the reader with the concise history necessary for the understanding of the plot and actions of the individual races and groupings. Towards the end of the story the attention is shifted away from Bilbo, however. The Battle of Five Armies unexpectedly takes place without any interference from Bilbo because he is hit by a stone and falls unconscious. Some truly critical questions arise when the reader gets to the incident with the dragon and the remaining passages of the story. Matthews records several such questions on the dissatisfaction from his students expressed over both anticlimactic and puzzling character of the final part of *The Hobbit*: "Why," they ask, "did Tolkien have rather uninteresting character, rather than Bilbo, kill Smaug? Why is Bilbo, the previous center of interest, knocked unconscious so that he is useless during the last Battle of Five Armies?" (42). Notwithstanding the fact that Bilbo emerges as an audacious leader during his transformation, slaying the dragon would be more likely to be "a deed of a savior of a culture hero, such as St. George, or the Red Cross Knight, or Beowulf." (42).

Except for the fact that Bilbo actively participates in the Arkenstone negotiations that terminate his psychic transformation, he does not fulfil the awaited and foreseeable pattern of the heroic conclusion of the story.

3.2. Identification: Everyman

Bilbo's anti-heroic qualities may work against the massive popularity of *The Hobbit*. However, they rather contribute to its attractiveness. Matthews believes that "the significance of this tale lies in fact in the very obvious anti-heroic manner in which Tolkien chooses to bring Bilbo's adventures to a conclusion." He adds that as a consequence Bilbo "emerges as a symbol of a very average individual, not as a figure of epic proportion" (Matthews 42). Because of this it is more likely for the reader to identify with the protagonist.

It is necessary to note that many scholars previously attributed qualities of Bilbo to the English. For example, Rogers asserts that to the essential qualities of hobbits that includes the smallness, provinciality and comfort-favouring, some people tend to emphasise that hobbits are also "utterly English". Also Tolkien perceived hobbits as the "representation of all that he loved best about England" (Carpenter 192). Rogers, however, refutes this argument, claiming that Bilbo's humanness "reflects mankind in general rather than the English in particular" (75). Bilbo can be viewed as the representative of the people in general rather than of a particular nation.

Bilbo and hobbits in general, are therefore easy for the reader to identify with. "We are all in some way small, provincial and comfort-loving – and we see ourselves as such. At first we like to imagine ourselves as heroes but experience makes us sceptical. We become convinced that, in fairness, we are not heroes," (76) comments Rogers. The tension between the Tookish and the Baggins side of Bilbo's personality can be easily

identified in a common man. Although there are some adventurous impulses, people tend not to give a response to them for the fear of discomfort or peril. Matthews draws attention to the “most universal human response” that *The Hobbit* arouses and gives an explanation reflecting Jung’s ideas that “men respond to these stories because they are in effect one story, monomyth expressing in metaphor a psychic experience shared by all mankind.” Matthews also adds that the perilous quest may be perceived as “a poetic image for Everyman’s passage through life”. In this light, imaginary creatures can be viewed as externalisations of psychic phenomena” (Jung qtd. in Matthews 32). The idea of acquiring the physical wholeness rather than slaying the monstrous dragon seems more probable for every human being, aptly represented by Bilbo.

3.3. Credibility: Runes and Riddles

In his influential treatise “On Fairy Stories” Tolkien highlights that it is important for the sub-creator to evoke the mood of credibility so that the reader can perceive something as true: “You [the reader]... believe it, while you are, as it were, inside” (FS 12). Swinfen asserts that Tolkien’s work is notable for “the extreme lengths to which the author is prepared to go, to establish credibility” (233). There are several aspects that contribute to this illusion of reality in *The Hobbit*, for example runes on the dust jacket. The novel opens with an introductory note written by Tolkien that deals with the usage of language forms for *dwarf* and *goblin* as well as runes used for the Thrór’s map of The Lonely Mountain. The runes of the dwarves are represented by English runes in *The Hobbit* which are “known now to few people” (H 1). His creation of the secondary world cannot be diminished to a mere physical description, but by an “underlying philosophical purpose and the compilation of a massive substructure” (Swinfen 233) of history, myth and language. Tolkien introduces the reader to the

Middle-Earth by evoking the atmosphere of real facts. Such an introduction makes the story more believable and it also partakes in the popularity of the book.

The image of Bilbo writing his memoirs also contributes to the strong bond between the reader and Bilbo and it also has a “powerful psychological effect on us as readers” (Olsen 305). The reader discovers that the book is derived from Bilbo’s own diary thus creating “a sense of continuity with Bilbo himself” (Olsen 306). This is accentuated in Tolkien’s usage of Anglo-Saxon runes in the prologue of the novel that can be perceived as “The Hobbit Or There And Back Again Being the record of a year journey made by Bilbo Baggins of Hobbiton compiled from his memoirs by JRR Tolkien and published by George Allen and Unwin Ltd.” (Olsen 306). Olsen goes on to suggest that similarly to his other works of fiction, Tolkien presents himself not as a compiler or creator of the book, but as a transmitter of Bilbo’s memoirs. As Tolkien presents in his essay “On Fairy-Stories”, “what really happens is that the story-maker proves a successful “sub-creator.” He makes a Secondary World which your mind can enter. Inside it, what he relates is “true”” (FS 12). The usage of the runes therefore evokes the illusion of a secondary belief that adds to the credibility of the story.

As Igarashi asserts, there are ninety-five preserved Old English riddles (336). However, according to Olsen, Tolkien composes poetry for his riddles himself, although some features may be based on other riddles he read elsewhere (93). In his text, Olsen provides an in-depth analysis of each of 10 riddles that are present in *The Hobbit*; he proposes that riddles of Bilbo and Gollum reflect their everyday life experience as well as their attitude to life. In his riddles, Bilbo evokes friendly and peaceful images, for example when he proposes teeth, sun on the daisies, eggs and a cosy domestic scene of a person sitting on a stool. On the other hand, Gollum’s riddles are described in the darker tone and they arouse much more cheerless images: the sinister mountain, wind,

darkness, fish and time. All of those denote daily life that fearsome creature leads underground and it reflects darkness, despair and corruption. While Bilbo's riddles recall "the bright and comfortable world", Gollum's riddles reflect "miserable experience of life" (Olsen 104-5). Thus, Old English riddles can be compared to those in *The Hobbit* because they also "offer a glimpse into everyday Anglo-Saxon existence" (Igarashi 337).

Apart from its content, the riddles can be analysed with regard to their internal structure. Igarashi observes that as it is case with most riddles in general, "Anglo-Saxon enigmata are often viewed in terms of metaphor" (337). In this respect, the puzzles depicted in the novel resemble those of Anglo-Saxon origin. For example, the metaphor in the egg riddle is obvious: "A box without hinges, key and lid, yet golden treasure inside is hid" (H 89). It clearly utilises physical resemblance of box "without hinges, key or lid" and the smooth eggshell, and similar colours of yolk and "golden treasure".

Another possible source for the riddle contest includes the collection of Old Norse poems titles *Elder Edda* that "had a profound appeal to Tolkien's imagination" (Carpenter 73). The last and decisive riddle "What have I got in my pocket?" (H 92) accidentally proposed by Bilbo parallels the one described in *Elder Edda* (Lindow 134). Here Odin engages in a riddle contest while in disguise. No one can answer the final riddle "What did Odin whisper into the ear of Baldr before he was put on the funeral pyre?" (Lindow 134). Therefore, similarly to Bilbo asking about his own pocket, Odin himself is the only one who can possibly know the answer to intriguing riddle.

3.4. Mythology: the English

The combination of realism as the mainstream focus of imagination and the "relative absence of universal folkloric and mythic traditions in England," provided the

space for fantasy to bloom in the countries that were “nearly starved for fantasy” (Mathews 3, 20). During his professional career that spanned thirty-nine years, Tolkien scrutinised folklore and myths of many countries and was particularly interested in myths of the Nordic races. According to Carpenter, Tolkien acclaimed Finnish collection of oral folklore and mythology *The Kalevala* as one that had profound appeal to his imagination (67). During his undergraduate years, he wished that “we had more of it left – something of the same sort that belonged to the English” (Carpenter 67). Therefore, it can be claimed that Tolkien’s profound desire to create a more substantial mythology for England dwelt inside him. Later, he resolved to create an complex mythology which he could “dedicate simply: to England; to my country” (Carpenter 97). One may argue that the Arthurian cycle represents the myths that are deeply embedded in the English nation. Tolkien, however, objected to Arthurian legends which were unsatisfactory to him as myths because they “explicitly contained the Christian religion” (Carpenter 171). While there are dozens of studies that refer to Christianity in Tolkien’s fiction, God remains hidden beneath the surface of Tolkien’s fiction (Carpenter 99). For example, Smith emphasises the role of myths and shared historical memories as a uniting element of ethic basis for national identity (20-21). *The Hobbit*’s style thus is idiosyncratic, enriched by archaism and numerous poetic inversions that attempt to recreate the aura for an ancient myth. Tolkien incorporated many Celtic or and Anglo-Saxon fragments of “fair elusive beauty” (Carpenter 98). Beorn, the man capable of turning into bear, is another aspect that may flourish the English imagination. Olsen observes that “the description of his hall and the drawing that Tolkien made of inside of Beorn’s house closely resemble the meads halls of Anglo-Saxons, the homely and highly social gathering places of the Anglo-Saxon warrior clans” (131). Another

such elements are, for example, the Elves and birds that occur in *The Hobbit* to appeal to the English.

At present, a courageous protagonists' search for treasure, something that belonged to them once, something connected with their ancestors constitutes the core of fantasy fiction. The link between the dwarves and nomadic peoples, which relate both to the Celtic and Anglo-Saxon cultures, may be also established. There is a close connection with "adventurous journeys" which create a fundamental part of individual regional and mythical folklore. Any nation tends to cherish a journey of an ordinary hero, the one it can easily identify with, the one whose courage and luck helps him outwit their enemies as it is in Bilbo's case. The myths in the culture of an ethnic nation are important as they create a significant core of the traditions and customs, the crucial part of the so-called "ethnic identity" of nations as proposed by Smith (20-21).

3.4.1 Merlin-like Gandalf

When searching for some Anglo-Saxon and Celtic features, one has to note a considerable resemblance between Gandalf and Merlin: a legendary figure best known as the wizard from the Arthurian legends. Merlin, of course, uses his magic to help young Arthur defeat his enemies and establish the Round Table. De Rose introduces the prototype of a wise old man or woman that can be frequently found in mythology, legends, and popular literature. Primarily, such a magician functions as a protective figure bestowed with wisdom and knowledge that comes to the aid of the hero in his or her journey or quest ("Wise Old Man" 342). He adds that "perhaps Merlin was the model for the wizard Gandalf, who guides the hobbit" on his perilous quest ("Wise Old Man" 345).

There are several similarities between Merlin and Gandalf. Importantly, it is their position as an advisor who helps the protagonists (Bilbo and Arthur) during the early stages of their maturation. Gandalf “sounds the call to adventure and motivates the reluctant hobbit to leave his home, helps him in early stages of his venture into perilous realms, and then leaves him when he can stand alone” (Matthews 34). When Bilbo faces his trials, he is left alone without any help of Gandalf: he kills the spider by himself, faces Gollum on his own and also in the final episode he resolves the conflict regardless of Gandalf’s help. Merlin also tutors and is the greatest counsellor of Arthur, but Arthur and Modred decide the future of the kingdom through a man-to-man struggle without Merlin’s interference.

3.4.2 Magical Objects and Dragon

Another fairy-tale aspect that can be found in the novel is the ring of invisibility. Tucker asserts that “magic invisibility has fascinated people since ancient times” and that there are many other objects that grant invisibility (160). As far as the resemblance with the epic of King Arthur is considered, there are similarities in the ring of the moon goddess Luned that makes invisibility possible (Tucker 161).

It may be useful to note that the ring in *The Hobbit* does not fully overlap with the Ring of Power that Tolkien proposed in *LOTR*. He needed to establish some link between the two novels, so he decided on Bilbo’s magic ring and during creation of *LOTR* he resolved that “Bilbo’s ring will be much more than just a very useful invisibility ring” (Olsen 88); the ring was also attributed a corrupting and enchanting power and he positioned it in the center of the story (Olsen 88). In *The Hobbit*, however, the ring is neither sinister nor ominous. Therefore, neither the significance of its finding nor the corruptive power is not very much commented on in *The Hobbit*.

Thanks to its invisibility, the ring in *The Hobbit* is used as a helpful instrument. It provides advantage when Bilbo eludes the underground dangers of the goblin realm and Gollum's place of living. It also assists in Bilbo's fight with spiders as well as it keeps Bilbo hidden from being discovered by Woodelves when the dwarves are held prisoners, for example. Although the ring is found accidentally, it has profound impact on Bilbo's gaining respect by the dwarves.

Except for the aspect of invisibility that is particularly useful in peril, Matthews also draws attention to Jung, who considers the circular shape, which is in this particular novel represented by the ring, the indicator of the integration of various aspects of personality. When applied to *The Hobbit*, the ring also serves as "the indicator of possible psychic wholeness" (Matthews 35). The finding of the ring creates a symbolic dimension for the process of Bilbo's individuation.

There are three swords portrayed in the novel: Orcrist (the Biter), Glamdring the Foe-Hammer (the Beater) and Sting that belongs to Bilbo. Both Matthews and Olsen perceive their acquisition of a paramount importance to the hero's psychic development. One of the most iconic scenes in Arthurian tales are the ones describing how Arthur draws the enchanted sword from the stone and thus proves to be a rightful king. "The unsheathing of the sword is a pivotal moment" (Olsen 156) in Bilbo's encounter with the spider and with the aid of his sword he kills the spider and thus proceeds his transformation. Similarly as Salus suggests symbolic value of this scene as a rite of passage for Arthur (12), Matthews discerns the acquisition and usage of Bilbo's sword as "vestiges of the coming-into-manhood ritual" (31). Therefore, the connection between *The Hobbit* and Arthurian legends can be well established.

De Rose claims that the motif of a dragon of a tremendous size that often devastates the land or guards a treasure is nearly universal and very common in folklore

literature. He also lists the most famous dragon-slayers in the Western canon that include Saint George and the Arthurian knights, too ("Mythical Animals" 67).

Tolkien matches the pattern of depicting the dragon as the “arch-figure of diabolical evil” (Birkalan and Garry 74), typically portrayed in folklore literature. As is frequent it with many fairy-tales, Bilbo partakes on the perilous journey to recover the ancestral treasure from the dragon. When Bilbo first encounters Smaug, the dragon is described in a macabre way: “There he lay, a vast red-golden dragon, fast asleep; a thrumming came from his jaw and nostrils, and wisps of smoke ...” (H 249). Their confrontation, however, does not copy the expected outcome of folklore literature. This pattern of “hero slaying the dragon” (Rahn qtd. in Birkalan and Garry 77) is subverted and the beast is killed by a minor character instead. Tolkien follows the tradition of western folklore literature as far as the wicked character of the beast is considered, but on the other hand, no heroic climax for Bilbo is created.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was to comment on selected phenomena that can be found in Tolkien's *The Hobbit*. This novel tells the story of Bilbo Baggins who participates in the perilous journey to repossess the golden treasure that was stolen from the company of dwarves led by Thorin Oakenshield with the help of Gandalf, the wizard.

Tolkien equips the reader with one of the earliest conceptualisations of fantasy literature in his influential essay "On Fairy-Stories". Firstly, he expresses his confusion about the origin of the term 'fairy-story' because works labelled in this fashion rarely include fairies at all. Secondly, he coins several new terms in order to help him describe aspects of fantasy: Faerie, sub-creation and eucatastrophe. He describes Faerie as the land in which fairies live, sub-creation as a demanding process that results in the creation of secondary world and the so-called "eucatastrophe" that may be thought of as a good catastrophe: an unexpected joyous turn of events, which is another essential quality of a fairy-story. Tolkien objects to the inclusion of travel stories, dreams and beast-fables in fantasy literature because they are not primarily concerned with creating a kind of unique secondary world. Concerning the origins of fantasy, Tolkien argues that it now becomes impossible for any scholar to trace back their original form and meaning. Tolkien objects to the claim that fantasy literature should solely aim at children and concludes that sophisticated sub-creation should be fully appreciated also by the adult readership. He then focuses on the three qualities of fairy-stories: Recovery, Escape and Consolation. He proclaims that Recovery helps the reader to regain a clear and fresh view on life, in the sense of viewing the world in the same way a child does: as if everything is brand new. Escape provides the way to eliminate social conventions and habits that people adopted. Consolation of Happy Ending is also an essential aspect

of a fantasy text. Its most frequent form, eucatastrophe, ought to be present in every sophisticated fairy-story. Concerning 'fantasy' itself, the current usage of the term 'fantasy' varies, and some scholars such as Mathews, Manlove and Swinfen, include in their definition supernatural elements or a marvel as demonstrated above. In addition, while some of the critics praise Tolkien as a founding father of fantasy literature (Olsen), others suggest that he is merely a follower of an already long established tradition of the genre (Swinfen, Mathews).

There is an obvious discrepancy between the image of Bilbo at the beginning of *The Hobbit* and his final depiction in the novel examined. Initially, there are two contradictory sides of Bilbo's personality. From the Baggins side, any adventure or loss of his comfort is simply too dreadful to contemplate. From the Tookish side, Bilbo inclines to undertake adventurous journeys. Bilbo himself is the product of a combination of these two elements and they intermingle in his personality. The author clearly depicts the inner fight between these two sides of Bilbo's personality. The factors described below act as a catalyst for clinging to the Tookish side of Bilbo's personality and they are responsible for the psychological transformation of Bilbo. Four issues are vital here: the character of Gandalf who acts as an ultimate mentor, the dwarvish song that mesmerises Bilbo, the discussion with the dwarves in which Bilbo ventures to stand up for his reputation and the closing of the chapter where he lets the Baggins impulses to predominate. There are also three turning points: although his initial attempt to pick pockets of the trolls ends in failure and the dwarves are nearly eaten because of his mistake, the significant two events that occur later embody Bilbo's transformation into a bold leader capable of audacious deeds. Bilbo does not only outwit Gollum in the riddle-game, he also kills the giant spider all by himself and thus he saves the lives of the dwarves, too. The transformation of Bilbo's personality is thus

beginning to take hold. In the adventure with the terrifying dragon, Smaug, Bilbo's combination of both, physical and mental courage is expressed. The Arkenstone heist and Bilbo's negotiations with the dwarves' foes are also pivotal moments for Bilbo's development. Bilbo is now aware of his deeds and he fully assumes the responsibility for his actions, even when the possible loss of his friends is likely to follow. His transformation is complete now. The Baggins side continues to manifest itself, however, it does not prevail, but it is now more balanced by the Tookish impulses. Tolkien thus brings the two elements together so that they can interact.

There are several factors that contribute to *The Hobbit's* popularity. Bilbo's depiction as a comfort-loving ordinary person that enjoys his undisturbed mundane reality may be easily attributed to an average human being and therefore it is easy for the reader to identify with the protagonist. The mythical qualities of the novel analysed could also be seen as a crucial contribution to its popularity. Tolkien desired to create a unique mythology for the English nation, because he felt such myths scarce in the Anglophone literary tradition and therefore he included some of the Celtic and Anglo-Saxon features in *The Hobbit*. Gandalf, the wizard, that resembles magician Merlin from the Arthurian legends, magical objects and Smaug, the dragon, can be also connected with common motifs of folklore literature. Anglo-Saxon runes and riddles evoke the ancient atmosphere and contribute to the credibility of the secondary world essential for the reader. The Celtic inspirations for Tolkien's fiction are also visible: Beorn, the Elves and birds. Therefore, Tolkien's many a figment of imagination seemed to be almost scientifically based on his professional and informed knowledge of some ancient myths of the English people in connection with a number of Celtic and Nordic elements in them, depicted with scholarly precision.

NOTES

1. The first three paragraphs of Chapter 1 are based on Carpenter's *J. R. R. Tolkien: A Biography*.

2. *LOTR* refers to the frequently used abbreviation of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy by Tolkien.

3. Page numbers in the text refer to J. R. R. Tolkien. *The Hobbit*. Film Tie-in Ed. London: HarperCollins, 2012. Print, (H). There are, undoubtedly, some differences between the first issue of the novel (1937) and the version that is discussed in this thesis. Nevertheless, this issue is analysed because it has an incomparably wider circulation nowadays than the original issue that is rarely available.

4. The phrase "must have taken a fairy wife" refers to "married an elf". Tolkien frequently used the words "fairy" and "elf" interchangeably in his early writing, but later he settled on the use of "elf" almost exclusively (Olsen 22).

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RESUMÉ

Cílem této práce je prozkoumat vybrané jevy, které se objevují v knize *Hobit* spisovatele J. R. R. Tolkiena. Právě tato kniha je hlavním předmětem této práce.

Tato práce je rozdělena do tří hlavních kapitol. Kapitola 1 se zaměřuje na informace z Tolkienova života, na jeho profesní zájmy a okolnosti vydání jeho knihy *Hobit*. Kapitola také nabízí autorův pohled na fantasy jako literární žánr, a to prostřednictvím analýzy jeho eseje *O pohádkách*. Následuje (pokus o) bližší vysvětlení termínu „fantasy“. Hlavním tématem Kapitoly 2 je psychologický vývoj hlavní postavy knihy, Bilba Pytlíka. Bilbo se mění z osoby, jejíž hlavním zájmem je především osobní komfort, v odvážného a vyspělého vůdce. Kapitola 3 se zaměřuje na aspekty, které stojí za popularitou *Hobita*.

Dvě strany Bilbovy osobnosti, pohodlí milující Pytlík a odvážný Bral, s koncem příběhu naleznou vzájemný soulad. Tato proměna je založena na třech klíčových momentech: incidentu s troly, setkání s Glumem a zabití pavouka. Tato změna Bilbova postavení v příběhu se objevuje v momentu, kdy se Bilbo stává vyspělým vůdcem. Přestože má Bilbo mnoho vlastností, které nepřísluší hrdinovi, jako je tuctovost nebo pohodlí milující povaha, může být považován za symbol průměrného jednotlivce. Stejně tak i jeho dobrodružná výprava může být symbolem psychického vývoje obyčejného člověka. A právě proto je pro čtenáře jednoduché ztotožnit se s hrdinou knihy. Bezčetné keltské a anglosaské folklorní prvky, jako například runy, hádanky, kouzelníci, medvědi, ptáci či elfové, jsou předurčeny k nalákání anglického čtenáře. Příběh může být zajímavým i pro jiné národy, jež mají v oblibě dobrodružství, protože ta představují základní prvek každého folkloru.

SUMMARY

The aim of this thesis is to explore a few selected phenomena that can be found in *The Hobbit* by J. R. R. Tolkien that constitutes the primary source for this essay.

As far as the structure of the thesis is concerned, it is divided into three main chapters. Chapter 1 focuses on Tolkien's biographic sketch, professional interests as well as the publication details of *The Hobbit*. It also examines Tolkien's view of fantasy as a literary genre by analysing his essay "On Fairy-Stories". This is followed by the attempt to clarify the term "fantasy". The psychic transformation of the main character, Bilbo Baggins, is of paramount importance to Chapter 2. Bilbo undertakes a change from a person whose only concern is to secure his physical comforts, to a courageous mature leader. Chapter 3 focuses on aspects that can be attributed to *The Hobbit's* popularity.

Two sides of Bilbo's personality, the Baggins, comfort-loving features and the Tookish adventurous impulses are reconciled as the story nears its end. There are three turning points in this process of transformation: the incident with the trolls, confrontation with Gollum and the slaying of the spider. The profound change in Bilbo's position in the story occurs after this part of the adventure as Bilbo evolves to a mature leader. Although Bilbo possesses numerous anti-heroic qualities such as ordinariness and comfort-loving character, he can be seen as a symbol for an average individual. Similarly, his quest may be seen as a symbolic psychological development of a common man. Therefore it is easy for the readership to identify with the hero. Numerous Celtic and Anglo-Saxon folkloric motifs (runes, riddles, wizards, bears, birds and elves for example) are prerequisites for the appeal to the English reader. The story may also attract any nation that cherishes adventurous journeys because these constitute fundamental part of individual folklore.