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## Wombs, Wizards, and Wisdom: Bilbo's Journey from Childhood in The Hobbit

Rory W. Collins

University of Canterbury, [rwc33@uclive.ac.nz](mailto:rwc33@uclive.ac.nz)

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## Wombs, Wizards, and Wisdom: Bilbo's Journey from Childhood in *The Hobbit*

### Abstract

In *The Hobbit*, J. R. R. Tolkien constructs middle-aged Bilbo Baggins as a sheltered and emotionally immature 'child' during the opening chapters before tracing his development into an autonomous, self-aware adult as the tale progresses. This article examines Tolkien's novel qua bildungsroman through both a literary lens—considering setting, dialogue, and symbolism, among other techniques—and via a psychological framework, emphasizing an Eriksonian conception of development. Additionally, Peter Jackson's three-part film adaptation of *The Hobbit* is discussed throughout with ways that Jackson succeeds and fails at portraying Bilbo's childlike attributes noted. I argue that Tolkien presents a sophisticated account of Bilbo's childish persona growing into a mature adult worldview, and that Jackson appropriately reflects much, though not all, of this development in his films.

### Keywords

The Hobbit, J. R. R. Tolkien, literature, fantasy, film, psychology, psychoanalysis, development, Erik Erikson

### Cover Page Footnote

Rory W. Collins is an undergraduate at the University of Canterbury in New Zealand, triple-majoring in English, Philosophy, and Psychology with a minor in Statistics. He extends his gratitude to Jane Comeau, Daniel Bedggood, and an anonymous reviewer for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this work.

Wombs, Wizards, and Wisdom:  
Bilbo's Journey from Childhood in *The Hobbit*

Rory W. Collins

Childlikeness may characterize individuals of any age. Though Bilbo Baggins is hardly an adolescent in years, J. R. R. Tolkien portrays him as a naive 'child' throughout the early stages of *The Hobbit*. As Bilbo's journey proceeds, however, he matures on multiple levels, gaining awareness of his own psyche alongside increased social proficiency. Consequently, the text can be suitably read through a psychoanalytic lens to investigate how Bilbo's development is represented and glean insights into the nature of psychological processes.<sup>1</sup>

Previous scholars—including a number of student researchers—have interpreted Bilbo's growth and development primarily using Jungian theories.<sup>2</sup> Dorothy Matthews, in her exegesis of *The Hobbit*, situates the narrative within a long tradition of fantasy stories in which "the hero's quest may be viewed as a mirror of a quest for psychic wholeness as it is undertaken unconsciously by all human beings."<sup>3</sup> Such tales, Matthews asserts, contain familiar elements and motifs resembling Jungian archetypes: primordial images thought to reside in the 'collective unconscious' that represent common psychic experiences. Within Tolkien's novel, she identifies Gandalf as fulfilling the Wise Old Man archetype,<sup>4</sup> Gollum as the Devouring Mother,<sup>5</sup> and the ring as the Circle.<sup>6</sup> Recent research has largely followed Matthews' lead. Lýdia Rezničáková contends that Bilbo's adventure can be seen "not only as the quest for treasure...but also as the search for maturity"<sup>7</sup> and—citing Matthews

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<sup>1</sup> Dorothy Matthews, "The Psychological Journey of Bilbo Baggins," in *A Tolkien Compass*, 2nd ed., ed. Jared Lobdell (Peru, IL: Open Court, 2003), 28; Lýdia Rezničáková, "Tolkien's *The Hobbit*: Bilbo's Quest for Identity and Maturity," Bachelor's thesis (Masaryk University, 2013), 6.

<sup>2</sup> Zineb Bouabdallah and Nesrine Graine, "The Unlikeliest of Heroes: The Remarkable Evolution of Bilbo Baggins Through J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*," Master's thesis (University of M'Sila, 2019); Pontus Brandt, "The Jungian Hobbit: Bilbo's Individuation Process in the Archetypal Hero Story *The Hobbit*," Bachelor's thesis (Lund University, 2018); William H. Green, *The Hobbit: A Journey into Maturity* (New York, NY: Twayne Publishers, 1995); Ann-Louise Lundqvist, "There and Back Again: The Hobbit Bilbo as a Hero," Bachelor's thesis (Jönköping University, 2007); Matthews, "The Psychological Journey of Bilbo Baggins"; Rezničáková, "Tolkien's *The Hobbit*."

<sup>3</sup> Matthews, "The Psychological Journey of Bilbo Baggins," 30.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Rezničáková, "Tolkien's *The Hobbit*," 20.

throughout—endorses the claim that various figures in *The Hobbit* correspond to distinct archetypes.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, Pontus Brandt focuses almost exclusively on Jung’s archetypal concepts when discussing the novel. Brandt’s interpretation coincides with earlier psychoanalytic readings regarding Gandalf’s role as the Wise Old Man,<sup>9</sup> but diverges with respect to Gollum. Rather than consider Gollum a portrayal of the Devouring Mother, Brandt sees Gollum as an expression of Bilbo’s ‘shadow,’<sup>10</sup> which in Jungian theory refers to the unknown, repressed, and predominantly negative components of a person’s psyche.<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, says Brandt, Bilbo’s encounter with Gollum reveals the difficulty he faces integrating his shadow into conscious awareness: an essential first step in Jung’s individuation process.<sup>12</sup> In each of these analyses, archetypes and Jungian psychology more broadly are central to how Bilbo’s quest is interpreted as a journey of socioemotional development.

There are several limitations posed by the existing literature’s reliance on Jungian thought. In particular, scholars have criticized Jung’s notion of archetypes for being unscientific<sup>13</sup> and excessively reductive.<sup>14</sup> Thus, despite their coherence, past readings of the text may rely too heavily on cognitive frameworks which only loosely resemble psychological growth as it typically occurs. Furthermore, different theoretical frames necessarily highlight different properties of phenomena under study. Though previous critical appraisals have shrewdly unpacked some components of *The Hobbit*, there may be certain aspects which lend themselves better to alternative, non-Jungian readings. In order to extract the most psychological import, we should utilize a range of perspectives on socioemotional maturation when interpreting the narrative. As Walter Veit aptly summarizes, “model diversity is a feature, not a bug.”<sup>15</sup>

In light of this, the present analysis instead uses Erik Erikson’s stage-based conception of psychological development as its theoretical base. Erikson maintained that individuals must navigate a series of distinct psychosocial challenges in their progression from infancy to late adulthood.<sup>16</sup> In what follows, I explore how Bilbo is presented throughout the tale as growing from an initial state of childlike immaturity into a self-aware and autonomous adult.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 30–31.

<sup>9</sup> Brandt, “The Jungian Hobbit,” 6.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>11</sup> Carl Gustav Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, trans. R. F. C. Hull, in *The Collected Works of C. G. Jung*, vol. 9, pt. 1, ed. Herbert Read, Michael Fordham, and Gerhard Adler (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959), 123, 265.

<sup>12</sup> Brandt, “The Jungian Hobbit,” 9–11.

<sup>13</sup> R. S. Percival, “Is Jung’s Theory of Archetypes Compatible with Neo-Darwinism and Sociobiology?,” *Journal of Social and Evolutionary Systems* 16, no. 4 (1993): 460, [https://doi.org/10.1016/1061-7361\(93\)90018-M](https://doi.org/10.1016/1061-7361(93)90018-M).

<sup>14</sup> Douglas Holt and Douglas Cameron, *Cultural Strategy: Using Innovative Ideologies to Build Breakthrough Brands* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 171.

<sup>15</sup> Walter Veit, “Model Pluralism,” *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 50, no. 2 (forthcoming): <https://doi.org/10.1177/0048393119894897>.

<sup>16</sup> Erik H. Erikson, *The Life Cycle Completed: A Review* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 1982), 55.

Much of Bilbo's psychological growth, I argue, concerns developmental themes Erikson recognized as typical during adolescence due to the difficulty Bilbo faces forging a robust personal identity and securing his role within the dwarf group. Additionally, research into *The Hobbit* often focuses on either its written or filmic version in isolation.<sup>17</sup> Given that many contemporary readers may engage with Tolkien's original novel as well as Peter Jackson's cinematic reimagining of the narrative, it is important that both of these textual forms are given sufficient critical attention. This article integrates discussion of Jackson's film trilogy throughout, noting points of intersection and divergence with Tolkien's novel regarding Bilbo's journey from childhood.

### First Encounters

Detailed descriptions of Bilbo's home environment on the very first page present him as a sheltered and childlike individual from the outset. Tolkien writes that a hobbit-hole, by definition, "means comfort."<sup>18</sup> Bilbo's abode is furnished with "panelled walls," "floors tiled and carpeted," and "polished chairs," among other luxuries.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, the Shire is lush with gardens, meadows, and a river.<sup>20</sup> Critics have noted the uterine symbolism of such a secure environment, which Matthews describes as "womb-like in its isolation from the shocks of the world."<sup>21</sup> Many other scholars share this view.<sup>22</sup> Tellingly, Tolkien describes Bilbo's front door as being "like a porthole" at the end of a "tube-shaped hall like a tunnel."<sup>23</sup> Jackson captures this metaphorical sense of Bilbo's surroundings in his film. The Hill is shown covered in bright green grass with a variety of flowers in feminine shades of pink, yellow, and white growing from fertile soil.<sup>24</sup> This protective, hospitable environment

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<sup>17</sup> For notable exceptions, see Janet Brennan Croft, "Barrel-Rides and She-Elves: Audience and 'Anticipation' in Peter Jackson's *Hobbit* Trilogy," accepted manuscript (Rutgers University, 2015): <https://doi.org/10.7282/T3VX0J9T>; Frank P. Riga, Maureen Thum, and Judith Kollmann, "From Children's Book to Epic Prequel: Peter Jackson's Transformation of Tolkien's *The Hobbit*," *Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature* 32, no. 2 (2014): <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore/vol32/iss2/8>.

<sup>18</sup> J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, 5th ed. (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2013), 3.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Matthews, "The Psychological Journey of Bilbo Baggins," 30.

<sup>22</sup> Murat Arslan, "There and Back Again: The Quest and Self-discovery in J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*," *Journal of History Culture and Art Research* 4, no. 2 (2015): 137, <https://doi.org/10.7596/taksad.v4i2.448>; Brandt, "The Jungian Hobbit," 8; William H. Green, "The Four-Part Structure of Bilbo's Education," *Children's Literature* 8 (1980): 134, <https://doi.org/10.1353/chl.0.0634>; William H. Green, "Where's Mama? The Construction of the Feminine in *The Hobbit*," *The Lion and the Unicorn* 22, no. 2 (1998): 188, <https://doi.org/10.1353/uni.1998.0024>; Ewen Mackenzie-Bowie, "Bilbo Baggins – A Very Private Hero," *ICL Journal* 1 (2013): 47, <http://www.icl.ac.nz/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/ICL-Journal-Volume-1-2013.pdf>.

<sup>23</sup> Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, 3.

<sup>24</sup> *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey*, directed by Peter Jackson (New Line Cinema/Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 2012), DVD.

thereby characterizes Bilbo as an individual reliant on maternal care; he has not yet even left the womb, much less grown up.

When Bilbo first meets Gandalf, their interaction strengthens the portrayal of him as a child. Bilbo's initial greeting is youthful and exuberant—"Good morning!"<sup>25</sup>—and he struggles to conceal his excitement after learning the wizard's identity,<sup>26</sup> commenting on Gandalf's reputation for telling "wonderful tales" and making "particularly excellent fireworks."<sup>27</sup> Tolkien's narrator quips that "Mr. Baggins was not quite so prosy as he liked to believe."<sup>28</sup> Gandalf, by contrast, has characteristically adult features such as a "long white beard" and "bushy eyebrows."<sup>29</sup> He sees through Bilbo's polite facade when attempting to make him leave by repeating "good morning"<sup>30</sup> and takes decisive authority on the matter of Bilbo's journey: "I will go so far as to send you on this adventure."<sup>31</sup> Unlike Bilbo, Gandalf is shown to carry an aura of prestige: he is not only an adult in age but reputation too.<sup>32</sup> Again, Jackson reflects this feature of the text in his film, using an over-shoulder shot combined with contrasts in body language to show Gandalf as the more powerful individual. Presenting Gandalf as a dignified, almost parental figure highlights Bilbo's immaturity at this stage of the text.

Soon after, when conversing with the dwarves about the perilous journey ahead, more childlike elements of Bilbo's psyche rise to the surface. Tolkien writes that after Thorin details the risks of their travels, Bilbo "began to feel a shriek coming up inside, and very soon it burst out like the whistle of an engine" before quivering on the rug "like a jelly that was melting."<sup>33</sup> A vast body of psychological research shows that children only develop sophisticated emotional regulation strategies as they age.<sup>34</sup> Thus, Bilbo's outburst reveals his puerility in this respect. His initial encounter with the dwarves also exhibits the psychological conflict common to adolescence Erikson coined an "identity crisis."<sup>35</sup> Erikson proposed that throughout the duration of their life, a healthy individual should successfully negotiate eight different psychological stages.<sup>36</sup> Many of his works concentrate heavily on the importance of personal identity

<sup>25</sup> Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, 6.

<sup>26</sup> Rezníčáková, "Tolkien's *The Hobbit*," 24–25.

<sup>27</sup> Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, 8.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>32</sup> Bilbo has inherited some degree of honor from his paternal heritage. Tolkien explains that "The Bagginses had lived in the neighbourhood of The Hill for time out of mind, and people considered them very respectable" (*Ibid.*, 4). However, this pales in comparison to Gandalf's notoriety throughout Middle-earth.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>34</sup> Ross A. Thompson, "Emotional Regulation and Emotional Development," *Educational Psychology Review* 3, no. 4 (1991): 270, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23359228>.

<sup>35</sup> Erik H. Erikson, "Youth: Fidelity and Diversity," in *Youth: Change and Challenge*, ed. Erik H. Erikson (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1963), 11.

<sup>36</sup> Erik H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, 2nd ed. (London: Vintage, 1995), 245–46.

formation to proper development.<sup>37</sup> In particular, the fifth stage—which usually manifests during the teenage years—centers around individuals navigating the conflict between having a stable sense of identity and feeling confused about their role within groups and society.<sup>38</sup> Bilbo, it seems, is still in this developmental stage given he struggles to reconcile the quiet, order-loving aspects of his paternal lineage with the adventurous, sensation-seeking traits inherited from his mother, Belladonna Took. As Tolkien writes: “something Tookish woke up inside him, and he wished to go and see the great mountains.... He shuddered; and very quickly he was plain Mr. Baggins of Bag-End, Under-Hill, again.”<sup>39</sup> In two senses, then, Bilbo’s first encounter with the dwarves reveals a childlike psychology beneath his middle-aged character.

These subtle details are lost in Jackson’s rendition, however. Though the film shows Bilbo collapsing in fear after hearing of the danger ahead, it does so in a slapstick way, emphasizing the ‘thud’ sound as he hits the floor and omitting any shriek.<sup>40</sup> By downplaying Bilbo’s emotional response in favor of a cartoonish joke, Jackson neglects the psychological depth Tolkien conveyed. Further, in this part of the film, Jackson omits Bilbo’s inner conflict between his Baggins and Took ancestry,<sup>41</sup> despite it being paramount to Tolkien’s characterization of Bilbo as a child. Of course, Jackson inevitably must condense Tolkien’s text somewhere, and his insinuations of Bilbo’s childlikeness in other scenes ensure the hobbit is not outright misrepresented. Still, it is unfortunate Jackson misses such an ideal opportunity to present Bilbo’s conflicted psychological state, choosing instead to direct more like a ‘conjurer of cheap tricks’ than the sophisticated Tolkien reader he proved himself in *The Lord of the Rings*.

### Journey to the Mountain

Several events on the group’s journey East reinforce Bilbo’s childlikeness while also alluding to his gradual maturation. Matthews observes that at the beginning of their expedition, Bilbo is “like a typical young adolescent” in being unsure

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<sup>37</sup> Erik H. Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 1980), 94; Erikson, *The Life Cycle Completed: A Review*, 72; Henry W. Maier, *Three Theories of Child Development*, rev. ed. (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1969), 57.

<sup>38</sup> Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, 235; Erik H. Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (London: Faber & Faber, 1968), 128; Richard Stevens, *Erik H. Erikson: Explorer of Identity and the Life Cycle* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 50.

<sup>39</sup> Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, 19–20.

<sup>40</sup> *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey*.

<sup>41</sup> After Bilbo regains consciousness, Jackson has Gandalf reminding Bilbo of his maternal heritage by responding to Bilbo’s claim “I am a Baggins of Bag-End!” with “You are also a Took” (Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, 8). However, this scene shows little internal conflict on the part of Bilbo, as Tolkien’s novel does. It appears more an attempt by Gandalf to pressure Bilbo into enlisting in the dwarves’ quest than an encouragement to reconcile the disjunct components of his personality.

of his role.<sup>42</sup> Throughout the first few altercations, Bilbo proves inexperienced in combat and contributes little. His efforts against the trolls are mediocre, and during the goblin raid, Bilbo's only assistance is producing a "very loud yell" which warns Gandalf, much like a child might call to a parent.<sup>43</sup> Tom Shippey notes that up to this point, "Bilbo has done nothing which might seem impossible for a child-reader imagining a similar situation."<sup>44</sup> Numerous scholars judge Bilbo's interaction with Gollum a significant stage marking his development beyond childhood.<sup>45</sup> However, this reading seems misguided. Bilbo shows some cunning wordplay but, as Tolkien writes, he is eventually "saved by pure luck" when he accidentally answers Gollum's riddle.<sup>46</sup> Bilbo is still out of place as a burglar, feeling "terrified"<sup>47</sup> and "desperate"<sup>48</sup> during his escape from Gollum. It is only later on when Bilbo faces the spiders that he feels "a different person, and much fiercer and bolder," showing clear emotional maturation.<sup>49</sup>

There are notable differences between how Tolkien and Jackson portray Bilbo immediately after his escape from the goblins' lair. In Tolkien's version, when the dwarves scramble up the trees, Bilbo "could not get into any tree, and was scuttling about from trunk to trunk, like a rabbit that has lost its hole" before Dori helps him up.<sup>50</sup> When they finally escape on the eagles, Bilbo "just managed to catch hold of Dori's legs,"<sup>51</sup> which, as some critics delicately phrase it, is "not the most elegant way to escape imminent death."<sup>52</sup> Jackson's film presents a more self-reliant Bilbo in these scenes who climbs a tree and escapes on his own eagle.<sup>53</sup> Crucially, Jackson has Bilbo single-handedly save Thorin from death by tackling an Orc: a clear example of both physical and intellectual development from his earlier childlike self. Thus, although Jackson does not quite portray Bilbo here as a mature adult, he does appear to exaggerate the minimal developmental advances Tolkien suggests Bilbo has made so far.

### Beyond Childhood

It is only on reaching the Lonely Mountain that Bilbo manifests obvious maturity. Notably, Bilbo faces a profound psychological challenge as he

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<sup>42</sup> Matthews, "The Psychological Journey of Bilbo Baggins," 31.

<sup>43</sup> Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, 71.

<sup>44</sup> Tom A. Shippey, *J. R. R. Tolkien: Author of the Century* (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001), 23.

<sup>45</sup> Brandt, "The Jungian Hobbit," 9; Matthews, "The Psychological Journey of Bilbo Baggins," 32; Shippey, *J. R. R. Tolkien*, 23.

<sup>46</sup> Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, 92.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 116–17.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>52</sup> Riga, Thum, and Kollmann, "From Children's Book to Epic Prequel," 114.

<sup>53</sup> *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey*.



approaches Smaug.<sup>54</sup> Tolkien describes “the least Tookish part of him” soliloquizing on his employment as a burglar before entering the tunnel: “Dear me, what a fool I was and am!”<sup>55</sup> By doing so, Tolkien shows the Baggins-Took conflict within Bilbo’s psyche approaching its climax. His internal struggle continues inside: “He fought the real battle in the tunnel alone, before he ever saw the vast danger that lay in wait.”<sup>56</sup> Though there is little elaboration on how Bilbo resolves his psychological strife, it is clear he has done so by the time he enters Smaug’s domain. Tolkien reveals this through dialogue when Bilbo cryptically introduces himself: “I am he who walks unseen.... I am the clue-finder, the web-cutter, the stinging fly.... I am the friend of bears and the guest of eagles. I am Ringwinner and Luckwearer; and I am Barrel-rider.”<sup>57</sup> His self-description shows an awareness and appreciation of his unique contribution to the group so far; he not only accepts his role but revels in it. Andrew Hallam notes that earlier in the text, others gave Bilbo names, but now he “takes an active role in shaping his identity.”<sup>58</sup> Jackson retains this crucial piece of Bilbo’s dialogue in his film.<sup>59</sup> Viewed within an Eriksonian framework, this episode marks the point where Bilbo finally resolves the psychological struggle of identity versus role confusion.

Identity development is one way Bilbo grows from childhood; another is shifting from a hedonic to a eudemonic value system, as evidenced by his benevolent exchange of the Arkenstone. This moral transformation aligns with Erikson’s conception of a ‘universal ethics’ wholly inclusive of all people,<sup>60</sup> which he argued “can be advanced only by men and women who are neither ideological youths nor moralistic old men.”<sup>61</sup> After negotiating the difficulties of adolescence to develop a more assertive and confident adult persona, Bilbo is ideally placed to promote cooperation among the opposing social groups. Tolkien portrays Bilbo throughout most of the novel as being interested primarily in simple corporeal pleasures.<sup>62</sup> When he first meets Gandalf, Bilbo is standing outside “after breakfast smoking an enormous long wooden pipe,”<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Matthews, “The Psychological Journey of Bilbo Baggins,” 37.

<sup>55</sup> Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, 248.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 249.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 258.

<sup>58</sup> Andrew Hallam, “Thresholds to Middle-earth: Allegories of Reading, Allegories for Knowledge and Transformation,” *Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature* 30, no. 1 (2011): 34, <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore/vol30/iss1/3>.

<sup>59</sup> *The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug*, directed by Peter Jackson (New Line Cinema/Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 2013), DVD.

<sup>60</sup> Mark Bracher, *Social Symptoms of Identity Needs: Why We Have Failed to Solve Our Social Problems, and What to Do About It* (London: Karnac, 2009), 265; Walter E. Conn, “Erik Erikson: The Ethical Orientation, Conscience, and the Golden Rule,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 5, no. 2 (1977): 260, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40017730>; Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, 260.

<sup>61</sup> Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, 260.

<sup>62</sup> Rezníčáková, “Tolkien’s *The Hobbit*,” 21.

<sup>63</sup> Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, 6.

and when the wizard departs, Bilbo is already “finishing his second cake.”<sup>64</sup> During his journey, Bilbo frequently laments his departure from Bag-End, reminiscing about “his comfortable chair before the fire in his favourite sitting-room.”<sup>65</sup> Through such descriptions, Tolkien shows Bilbo’s hedonistic appreciation of physical comforts. Thus, when Bilbo risks forfeiting his share of the treasure by handing over the Arkenstone to pursue peace, he shows significant intellectual and ethical maturity—wisdom, even.<sup>66</sup> He reveals underlying altruistic motives by remarking that he is “merely trying to avoid trouble for all concerned.”<sup>67</sup> Bilbo’s developed outlook is particularly evident in Jackson’s film version when he admits his part in the Arkenstone exchange to Thorin. Martin Freeman’s superb acting shows newfound courage from Bilbo when he shouts: “You are changed, Thorin!”<sup>68</sup> During this scene, Bilbo’s outspoken defense of his decision to hand over the treasure presents a self-assured, autonomous character, much unlike his earlier self. In both the written and filmic versions, then, Bilbo’s part in the Arkenstone affair shows clear development from an egoistic hedonist to a much wiser hobbit.

### Conclusion

Tolkien’s *The Hobbit* is as much about Bilbo’s quest for maturity as it is the dwarves’ quest to repossess their kingdom. At the beginning of the text, Bilbo is characterized as childlike through his womb-like surroundings, contrast with the paternal wizard Gandalf, limited emotional regulation, and affinity for hedonistic pleasures. Throughout the novel, Bilbo reconciles the Eriksonian identity crisis between his Baggins and Took ancestry while also extending his sphere of moral concern: both clear signs of psychological maturity and interpersonal wisdom. Jackson’s film adaptation utilizes many elements within Tolkien’s text alluding to this, omitting some scenes but preserving the essential attributes of Bilbo’s character and his journey from childhood. This maturation is captured most succinctly by Gandalf, who remarks just before Bilbo’s return to Bag-End: “My dear Bilbo!... You are not the hobbit that you were.”<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>66</sup> Later on, Thorin acknowledges this in a compliment to Bilbo: “There is more in you of good than you know, child of the kindly West. Some courage and some wisdom, blended in measure” (Ibid., 333).

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 314.

<sup>68</sup> *The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies*, directed by Peter Jackson (New Line Cinema/Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 2014), DVD.

<sup>69</sup> Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, 347.

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