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Magić, Antonija

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Preddiplomski studij engleskog jezika i književnosti i pedagogije

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Mentor: doc. dr. sc. Ljubica Matek

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Abstract

The Hobbit is a children's fantasy novel written by a widely respected English linguist and writer John Ronald Reuel Tolkien. Tolkien, famous for his vigorous defence of fantastic literature, wrote a poignant chronicle of a hobbit Bilbo Baggins set in Middle-earth in the years 2941 to 2942 of the Third Age. Although primarily a fairy tale, the book is both complex and sophisticated when all of its intricacies are taken into consideration. The novel depicts rises and falls of Bilbo Baggins who embarks on an unlikely adventure of his life with Gandalf the wizard and a company of thirteen Dwarves. The apprehensive home-loving hobbit agrees to participate in a brave feat because he is motivated by the promised prize – a share of the treasure guarded by Smaug the dragon. The unexpected journey takes the inexperienced Bilbo into the wilderness of pristine woods, impassable mountains, and unexplored caves with dangerous Wargs, giant spiders, deadly Goblins and Orcs, Eagles, Trolls, and a Gollum. Wandering through a maze of danger Bilbo Baggins finds his deeply rooted courage, learns the true extent of his bravery and shows an enviable aptitude for burglary. His story is told in a form of an episodic quest in which the central themes are forms of heroism and personal growth. This paper explores the idea of heroism through the characters in the story, and examines what it means to be a literary and a hobbit hero.

Keywords: J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit*, hero, heroic quest.

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Introduction

The Hobbit is a twentieth century children's fantasy novel written by John Ronald Reuel Tolkien. It is considered to be a seminal work in the context of fantastic literature because, besides being excellently written, it has influenced almost every fiction writer since it was published. Tolkien's influence on the genre, as he was an avid fiction writer and protector, still echoes through the fiction writing world. In a broader context *The Hobbit* is a widely read masterpiece which transcends the boundaries of children's literature. The book was first published in 1937 and has been republished many times since then. The story is set in the years of 2941 to 2942 of the Third Age (before the even more famous *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy). Even though widely labelled as a fairy tale, the novel is of high value not only because of its compelling tale but also because of its complex, layered structure. It contains many names and words originally from Norse mythology. It uses Anglo-Saxon runes, information on calendars and moon phases, and detailed geographical descriptions, all of which are appropriate for the context of Middle–earth. Also, the central plot elements can be traced back to the Old English epic *Beowulf.*

This paper, however, will show how literary scholars classify heroes in literature, and compare *The Hobbit* with the proposed classification. The first chapter explains how *The Hobbit* came to be and explores interpretations and analysis of the book from the points of view of some of the scholars and writers. The second chapter explains what literary heroes are and what the heroic archetypes are. The third chapter is dedicated to the analysis of the protagonist Bilbo from two different aspects: the former being the hobbit as a hero, and the latter the hobbit seen as an anti-hero. In the fourth chapter the character of Thorin Oakenshield is revisited as a hero. Fifth chapter is dedicated to the character of Beorn and his heroic journey.

1. The writing of *The Hobbit*

The creation of the whole Middle-earth universe occupied Tolkien for approximately sixty years. It all started at St. Edward's School where he began to construct new languages in his spare time. After that, Tolkien started to structure a universe that would be appropriate for these languages and a social context in which characters would use them. As Tolkien himself put it:

> I had a mind to make a body of more or less connected legend, ranging from the large and cosmogonic to the level of romantic fairy-story—the larger founded on the lesser in contact with the earth, the lesser drawing splendour from the vast backcloths—which I could dedicate simply: to England; to my country… I would draw some of the great tales in fullness, and leave many only placed in the scheme, and sketched. The cycles should be linked to a majestic whole, and yet leave scope for other minds and hands, wielding paint and music and drama. (Carpenter 124)

Later on it became clear to Tolkien that Bilbo Baggins' undertakings also belong to this universe but during a different, later era. He designed *The Hobbit* with an intention to appeal to the younger reading audience and structurally it was made as the prequel to the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy.

The Hobbit is believed to be created by Tolkien in order to entertain and beguile his children. However, the truth is more complex than that. In *The History of The Hobbit* John Rateliff asserts that Tolkien started with the initial writing of the novel in his late thirties. According to Rateliff, Tolkien has worked on the story during his spare time before and after his daily job as a university professor. It is explained that he has at the same time been sharing the story with his sons who played the role of beta readers. He took their suggestions into account and amended copious amount of the text according to their liking. As the story progressed with time, it was subjected to radical development and rewritings due to the intermittent periods when he was not able to work on the tale, Rateliff believes. He also argues that Tolkien must have constructed the story with and for his children and underscores that, at the same time, *The Hobbit* was Tolkien's means of experimenting with new ideas of mythology and concepts of linguistics. This leads to the conclusion that the novel is not solely a story written for children but also a philological venture exploring mythology, storytelling, and language by means of the writer's curiosity and imagination.

1.1 *The Hobbit* and the critics

It is common case that academic literary criticism becomes caught between two polar options when it comes to dissecting Tolkien and his work. On the one hand, a critic can take a stand and claim that Tolkien is a difficult litterateur. On the other hand, he is merely a successful populist. Critics wish to avoid to be seen as embarrassingly obsequious and servile to the fans, so they adapt their writing to scholarly tone. While doing so they still want to be interesting and relevant so they attempt to cater to popular sentiment. If they want to find readers among fans, they need to address controversial topics and at the same time be careful not to attack the author. Such numerous conditions are one of the reasons why the objective literary criticism on Tolkien's work is not as common as expected. Be that as it may, even Tolkien himself often finds faults in his already highly praised texts and he alone has never opposed to constructive criticism.

Neil D. Isaacs writes on this topic in his *On the Possibilities of Writing Tolkien Criticism.* His intention is to demonstrate the variety of opportunities for Tolkien criticism and to make some observations on the need for Tolkien criticism itself. Isaacs lists all the possible perspectives which one can take to objectively and constructively interpret Tolkien's work. For example, he would like to see "analysis of folk-elements in Tolkien, an actual accounting of motifs according to the Aarne-Thompson index, Tolkien's habitual doubling or echoing of motifs after the manner of late medieval romances, accounting of the mythic materials, study of the many biblical parallels might be in order" (Isaacs 9). His main message to convey would be the fact that this open possibility for criticism only secures *The Hobbit*'s position as a seminal text in literature.

As *The Hobbit* is a story of growing up and maturation, a quest for happiness, and at the same time a representation of battle between good and evil, it has accumulated not only a wide audience of readers but also critics interested in exploring the novel's potential. Still, some of them regard it as "merely a work of children's literature" (Chance 48) reducing it exclusively to the category of a Bildungsroman and describing it as a "badly muddled mix of children's literature and adult literature" (Chance 73). As has previously been stated, on a list of his critics, Tolkien would enlist even himself. Mostly unsatisfied with the voice of the narrator in the novel, Tolkien sees it in retrospective "as bad style, as if one were talking to children" he dislikes this "general tone of condescension" (Stevens and Stevens 17) and portrays it as a "patronizing adult" who is talking to a reader (Stevens and Stevens 17).

According to Stevens and Stevens, this style of narration makes the writer's voice an additional character which serves as a mature side of the novel. They do not only expound on the style of writing but also expose three elements in *The Hobbit* that they consider to be the most prominent: the fantastic, the prosaic and the humorous. They label *The Hobbit's* "didactic purpose prosaic as opposed to fantastic" (Stevens and Stevens 17). This all derives from, they believe, Tolkien's deeper understanding of his reading audience. Smith also believes that Tolkien's virtues and vices in leading roles are purposely developed by contrast for the same reasons, with both sides of the coin "present in good measure" in every character (Smith 45).

Rosenbury argues that the modernity of Tolkien's work "lies not in coded reference to specific contemporary events or phenomena, but in the absorption into the invented world—no doubt a partly unconscious absorption—of experiences and attitudes which Tolkien would scarcely have acquired had he not been a man of the twentieth century" (93). In other words the context in which Tolkien lived has paved the way to the hobbit land. After all, it was the century of political turmoil and World War I. It would be hard to imagine such events not to have influence on the people who survived to attest to the aftermaths.

Fuller defends *The Hobbit's* status as a book for everyone, not only for children. He admits that *The Hobbit* is a story which young children love but also reminds that it can and should be read by everyone because "like any fine story that may lie within a child's range, it is not limited to children and, indeed, can scarcely be relished with ultimate appreciation by them" (Fuller 18). Fuller allows it to be called a children's book but only to some extent. His arguments are that the cultivated and more mature reader can recognize and have a better understanding of qualities in the story. He is a strong advocate of stories written for a broad audience. Stories written not for their own sake "but for any strictly targeted group seldom are of enduring merit for children or anyone else" (Fuller 18).

W.H. Auden, in his essay "The Quest Hero", turns his attention to the linguistic part of the novel. In this respect he only has words of praise for Tolkien's "nominative gift to find the 'right' names for characters" (Auden 13) and he does not hide the admiration for his aptitude to invent "whole languages which reflect the nature of those who speak them" (Auden 13). Auden appreciates the fact that every creature has a suitable name. Every title, nickname, first name, and/or last name is never out of character. Invented languages are so appropriate and applicable for the world in which they exist that they feel as natural as any other foreign language to the untrained reader.

2. Literary heroes and heroic archetypes

According to various literary critics there, are a few uniquely traditional attributes a character in a story typically has in order to be declared a hero. First of all, the hero is usually male and full of strength, someone who is strong enough to slay evil creatures and defeat every enemy, much like Beorn in *The Hobbit* "with a thick black beard and hair, and great bare arms and legs with knotted muscles" (Tolken 108). These traditional kinds of heroes exist in the story "to validate by their respect and approval the simple, dogged heroism of the Hobbits" (Purtill 108). A hero should also have some experience in battles, a natural appetence for violence, and should own weapons with appropriate ammunition. Furthermore, desire for prosperity should be one of the initiatives of his heroic ventures. Moreover he needs to be courageous; the true hero never fears for his life. He goes on a journey which would normally lead him to his death but he comes out a winner, and he usually fights alone. The last characteristic of the hero is his origin which should be noble; his bold uniqueness should be imprinted in his blood. Usually heroes have a glorious reputation even before the departure on their quest. The hero always accepts what Joseph Campbell calls "the call of adventure" (Campbell 50). The traditional hero usually goes willingly into the danger, in other words, a hero should be a mythical image of a perfect man.

Most of the time, he is illustrated in hazardous and troubling situations or on an arduous quest. Usually this difficult quest "signifies the potential anticipation of an individuation process which is approaching" (Grant 365). The hero archetype always finds strength to fight off the greatest perils and is more often than not caught in numerous strange events. What happens to the hero is never an average, everyday life experience. Grant asserts that this is a vital part of the story because it serves as a bridge to the "realization of a part of the personality which has not yet come into existence but is still in the process of becoming" (Grant 369). Quest or troubles only help the hero grow, and without the struggle there can be no hero. The battle creates the fighter and not every character is ready to participate in the combat.

2.1. Tolkien and Carl Jung

Carl Jung was the first scholar who applied the term "archetype" to the literary context. He was the first one to recognize the "universal patterns in all stories and mythologies regardless of culture or historical period" and hypothesized that "part of the human mind contained a collective unconscious shared by all members of the human species" that can only be described as "primal memory" ("Archetypes").

American mythologist Joseph Campbell accepted Jung's ideas and implemented them to the literary world of mythology. In his book *A Hero with a Thousand Faces* he cultivated the concept of a hero and the hero's journey. This typology can be applied to Tolkien's *The Hobbit* because the term archetype is ambiguous in meaning. It could refer to an image, a theme, a symbol, an idea, a character type or a plot pattern. Furthermore, archetypes can be expressed in more than one way (myths, dreams, literature). Next to heroic archetypes, Campbell goes on to elaborate types of archetypal tourney, stages, as well as characteristics of the hero's journey. Tracing Campbell's classification, the novel *The Hobbit* finds its hero(es) in the most unlikely places.

In addition, Grant posited a connection between the typical "Jungian insistences on dream and fantasy" (Grant 367), the theory of collective unconsciousness with Tolkien's appreciation of the balance, and "the opposition of ends and beginnings, the progress from youth to old age in the hero" (Grant 367). For Jung, as well as for Tolkien, fairy tales are copiously inhabited with valuable and dangerously volatile animals and monsters. For both of them landscapes with woods and mountains "are favourite representations of the unconsciousness" (Girauld) and Tolkien sets his whole universe in such surroundings.

3. Bilbo Baggins – the reluctant hero

In the first episode of the 1988 PBS series *'Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth — "The Hero's Adventure"'*, Campbell outlines the three types of heroes. The first type he mentions is the reluctant (or forced) hero, the description of which fits perfectly with Bilbo Baggins' character. Morrell describes it as "tarnished or ordinary man with several faults or a troubled past, and he is pulled reluctantly into the story, or into heroic acts. During the story, he rises to the occasion, sometimes even vanquishing a mighty foe, sometimes avenging a wrong. But he questions whether he's cut out for the hero business. His doubts, misgivings, and mistakes add a satisfying layer of tension to a story" (Morrell 62).

Arslan states that the beginning of the novel is particularly significant for the introduction of the hero's background since the beginning is an initiation in the process of becoming great. *The Hobbit* begins with the description of the Hill's serene scenery and peacefully slow lifestyle: "In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit. Not a nasty, dirty, wet hole, filled with the ends of worms and an oozy smell, nor yet a dry, bare, sandy hole with nothing in it to sit down on or to eat: it was a hobbit-hole, and that means comfort" (Tolkien 1). The pleasant, food-filled tunnel symbolizes "the comfort in mother's womb" (Arslan 137). This kind of setting is minutely chosen to sharply contrast with what is yet to come. Bilbo's motivation for the journey is not one-dimensional or solely built on the notion of gold. There is no doubt that he is scared of everything outside of the Hill, but "when something Tookish woke up inside him" (Tolkien 17) he departs on the quest as one would when visiting a foreign country: "he wished to see the great mountains, and hear the pine trees and the waterfalls, and explore the caves" (Tolkien 16). The sole willingness to participate despite his fear differentiates him from the characters who do not possess a hero potential.

Bilbo may be set in his ways and suspicious of anything outside his own limited sphere, but even in his first encounter with danger, he shows the beginnings of courage:

> Tolkien makes Bilbo's increasing courage plausible to us in two ways—first, by showing us its cause and, second, by reminding us of Bilbo's limitations—his empty stomach and a little later his loneliness without his companions. The idealized heroes of some fantasies never seem to worry about such ordinary things as hunger and loneliness. But because of Bilbo's very ordinariness, we are often reminded of the uncomfortable and even comic side of adventure—and at the same time reminded that ordinary people can act heroically. (Purtill 111)

Clearly, Bilbo is relatable and that is one of the main reasons why readers root for him. Before setting on this journey he was never in need of heroism as his life was sheltered. After being bullied into an adventure he sees that there is more to life than the comfort of one's home. Bilbo has shown that he does not break under pressure even when dwarves push him into dangerous situations to do the dirty work for them. When faced with the challenge he proudly exclaims: "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" (Tolkien 19). With each and every small and partial success he understands that he does not need somebody else's help and his confidence grows. As Bilbo's parents are long gone, Gandalf adopts parental authority. He pushes Bilbo enough to get him started but leaves him to his own devices when it comes the time that Bilbo learns on his own through the struggle.

For American writer and literary critic Richard Purtill, Bilbo is an everyday character who rises to fulfil heroic role. Hobbits are, rather than humans, the torchbearers and models for what a reader's life can be. The reader is the one who embarks on a journey with the character, and according to Purtill "their journey is ours" (107). While on the journey, hobbits and readers search answers to the abiding questions of life: "What is the nature of good? What is the nature of evil? How do good and evil operate in human beings?" (Purtill 107). Bilbo holds adventure inside him, a part of him wishes to see more, to be more. He is a hero because he represents the triumph of the mind over body. Girauld refers to Robert A. Heinlein, who deals with "the concept of the "brave little tailor" as "the unheroic hero (or seemingly anti-hero) who adopts or is thrust into a role initially far too large for him, and successfully grows to be worthy of it" (Girauld) which perfectly describes Bilbo's path to self-discovery.

Given the wizard's status, readers know that Bilbo must be doing something right if he has earned his stamp of approval by almighty Gandalf who describes him as an "excitable little fellow…Gets Funny queer fits, but he is one of the best, one of the best – as fierce as dragon in a pinch" (Tolkien 17). "There is a lot more in him than you guess, and a deal more than he has any idea of himself (19). For Tolkien, being a hero does not mean being extremely large, flawless, or infallible. In *The Hobbit*, there are no "stock character" heroes; there are only individuals who do heroic deeds. Early on in the story even Gandalf discards the notion of hero or warrior when he warns Thorin against a direct attack on the dragon's lair: "That would be no good, … not without a mighty Warrior, even a Hero. I tried to find one; but warriors are busy fighting one another in distant lands, and in this neighbourhood heroes are scarce, or simply not to be found" (Tolkien 20).

3.1. Bilbo Baggins as an anti-hero

The Longman Dictionary describes an anti-hero as "a main character in a book, play, or film who is an ordinary or unpleasant person and lacks the qualities that you expect a hero to have" ("Anti-Hero"). There are plenty other definitions of the term and they all have one thing in common – they expound the anti-hero as a common man. Oxford dictionary urges the reader not to intermingle anti-heroes with villains: "The anti-hero should not be confused with the antagonist or the villain" ("Anti-hero"), and he is not the archenemy of the protagonist. It can be deduced that anti-hero is mainly an opposition to the values that the hero tradition necessitates.

Tolkien immediately makes it clear that hobbit is not "a person possessing impressive physical strength" (Girauld) and his physical features might seem unusual for a hero: short, about half our height; has no beards, fat in the stomach; dressed in bright colours, wears no shoes because his feet grow "natural leathery soles and thick warm brown hair like the stuff on his head" (Tolkien 10). Nevertheless, he "has more heart than he has muscles" (Arslan 137) and is far from being an unpleasant character. Tolkien describes him in a comical and amusing way that borderlines with humorous ridicule, which only adds to the loveability of the character. Humphrey Carpenter in his book *J.R.R.Tolkien: A Biography* reiterates Tolkien's inspiration for the hobbits. During this interview, Tolkien reveals that "the hobbits are just rustic English people, made small in size because it reflects the generally small reach of their imagination not the small reach of their courage or latent power" (Carpenter 180). In that sense hobbits are epitomised English people. Girauld notices that by doing that, Tolkien creates recognizable characters with a familiar feel. There is no better way for evoking sympathy than by creating a hero who resembles an average man. An epic hero cannot trigger the feelings of empathy and compassion as he is not as relatable.

Bilbo knows little or nothing of the world that crosses the boundaries of his familiar background: "he had read of a good many things he had never seen or done" (Tolkien 42). This inexperience and callowness are in sharp contrast to the background of a "traditional" hero. In the situations where there is danger he reacts as many would – by being completely and paralysingly petrified, which is a far cry from the heroic bravery. Bilbo is a hedonist with a strong affinity for food and a strong attachment to things: "He had only just had breakfast, but he thought a cake or two and a drink of something would do him good after his fright. Bilbo was finishing his second cake and beginning to think that he had escaped adventures very well" (Tolkien 9). When he was well on his way into the journey, "these [meals] didn't come quite as

often as Bilbo would have liked them" anymore (Tolkien 49). If Bilbo despises anything, than it must be adventures (or so he thinks): "Nasty disturbing uncomfortable things! Make you late for dinner!" (Tolkien 7), he exclaims when Gandalf expresses his wish to see Bilbo to take part in the dwarves' project. Adventure would only be a hindrance to his snug and easy-going life.

One can conclude that Bilbo in many ways corresponds to the definition of an anti-hero by his "ordinariness, ignorance of the world, materialism and the fact that he is not willing to go on a quest" (Girauld). While he fails to meet the requirements for a literary hero, Bilbo becomes temporarily cast as one due to circumstance, suggesting that there is valour in ordinary people as well.

4. Thorin Oakenshield - the intentional hero

The second hero type as presented in *'Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth — "The Hero's Adventure"'* is the intentional hero. This hero intentionally embarks on a journey or a quest in order to achieve a specific goal. In the complex process of attaining the marked goal, the hero is often subjected to a psychological or spiritual transformation. In *The Hobbit*, Thorin Oakenshield is the intentional hero. Thorin's specific purpose of action is to regain what is by right already his: Lonely Mountain, Arkenstone and gold. He sets off on the long journey to the Lonely Mountain and battles his way through the adversities. In the end he regrets his miserly ways and apologizes for causing hardships, an event which marks his spiritual transformation. He is a hero of noble ancestry whose death serves as a life lesson.

Bilbo may be the main character in the story but most of the time the lesser protagonists are the ones who move the plot along. Thorin as the leader of the Company of Dwarves, is one of such characters. While he is often castigated for the choices he makes after the death of Smaug, he is never considered as a villain per se. Mostly he is reproached for his unwillingness to share the treasure with the people of Lake-town, for his bitter indignation, and excessive pride. Gandalf, with his private motives in mind, organizes the adventure they all embark on but it is Thorin's desire to reclaim his kingdom that keeps the party going. Thorin can be described as an inconsistent hero, a flawed, highly complex warrior, who will not rest until he has his way.

Typically, Thorin is remarkably heroic, bold, and honest. His bravery is evident when the goblins and Wargs attack and he does not hesitate to jump in the heart of the battle with all his might. Furthermore, after he gets fatally wounded in battle and he is on his death bed he realizes that his unhealthy obsession with gold had clouded his judgement. He forgives Bilbo for trying to stop the war Thorin started and dies soon after apologising for his hurtful decisions: "Since I leave now all gold and silver, and go where it is of little worth, I wish to part in friendship from you, and I would take back my words and deeds at the Gate" (Tolkien 165). Moreover, Thorin is not afraid to lead the group. He is the one Gandalf trusts the most when he gives him the key of the secret entrance. When Thorin speaks, everybody listens and when Thorin leads, everybody follows. He does become the antagonist by opposing the goal of the hero at some point, but he never hides or changes his own goals. He is honest about his intentions all the time and never makes a secret of his desires, nor a promise that he will be generous with the treasure.

Thorin is a king without an actual kingdom. He wants the Lonely Mountain, all the treasure within it, and the heirloom Arkenstone, and he will have it by any means necessary. Despite his shortcomings, he is a leader worth following because his heritage and skills make him a born leader. Sometimes he selfishly eludes danger by sending a hobbit to deal with any danger that lies ahead as he does at the very beginning of their journey when Bilbo is sent to investigate the light of a fire in the distance: "You must go on and find out all about that light, and what it is for, and if all is perfectly safe and canny," said Thorin to the hobbit. "Now scuttle off, and come back quick, if all is well" (Tolkien 27).

The moment the Lonely Mountain is reclaimed, Thorin's fatal character flaw is revealed through a deadly rage against Bilbo:

> "You! You!" cried Thorin, turning upon him and grasping him with both hands. "You miserable hobbit! You undersized—burglar!" he shouted at a loss for words, and he shook poor Bilbo like a rabbit. "By the beard of Durin! I wish I had Gandalf here! Curse him for his choice of you! May his beard wither! As for you I will throw you to the rocks!" he cried and lifted Bilbo in his arms. (Tolkien 158)

In the end, Thorin does not get the kingdom, treasure, or a long life. Instead, he dies on the battlefield from battle wounds, without an heir to prolong his family line. Still, he dies knowing that his faithful little army of friends has forgiven him all his failings. What they end up remembering about him is the fact that no matter what obstacle was tossed his way, Thorin never gave up on the hope that somehow, some way, he will prevail. With his imperfection, he reflects Tolkien's general idea of dwarves:

> The most that can be said for the dwarves is this: they intended to pay Bilbo really handsomely for his services; they had brought him to do a nasty job for them, and they did not mind the poor little fellow doing it if he would; but they would all have done their best to get him out of trouble, if he got into it, as they did in the case of the trolls at the beginning of their adventures before they had any particular reasons for being grateful to him. There it is: dwarves are not heroes, but calculating folk with a great idea of the value of money; some are tricky and treacherous and pretty bad lots; some are not, but are decent enough people like Thorin and Company, if you don't expect too much (Tolkien 126).

5. Beorn – the accidental hero

The last type of hero as presented in *'Joseph Campbell and the Power of Myth — "The Hero's Adventure"'* is the accidental hero. This type serves as the middle ground between the reluctant hero and the intentional hero. This hero unexpectedly gets involved in a journey but willingly decides to participate. No pressure or convincing is needed to make him to take part in the quest, although he never even thinks about seeking an adventure. Similarly, Beorn accidentally gets involved in the saga when Gandalf and the throng visit his home.

The name Beorn originates from Old English which means "warrior". Tolkien introduced the character of Beorn to the story so the dwarves would have a strong ally in the fight for the mountain. He and his animal company that "he loves as his children" (Tolkien 83) live in a wooden house between the Misty Mountains and Mirkwood. According to Gandalf, Beorn "does not eat them; neither does he hunt or eat wild animals" (73). Dwarves and the hobbit learn that Beorn is a warrior of great strength who can change into the form of a great black bear. In human form he appears tall with superhuman strength. His physical strength and size could classify him as one of the heroes from Germanic stories: "He is a skin-changer. He changes his skin: sometimes he is a huge black bear, sometimes he is a great strong black-haired man with huge arms and a great beard." (Tolkien 72). Gandalf describes him in way that the dwarves and the hobbit are in awe and fear in his presence. Tolkien sets Beorn apart from the other characters in the novel by giving him powers and associations denied even to Gandalf.

Unlike Bilbo and Thorin, Beorn fits into the most of the existing classifications of the hero. His origin can be interpreted as noble as he is "a bear descended from the great and ancient bears of the mountains that lived there before the giants came" (Tolkien 73). He is a remarkably strong male with experience in the battle. He owns a lot of armour and ammunition. His character is a representation of a perfect man. Even though a bear, he is not blood thirsty in nature. However, Beorn "is a bad enemy" (Tolkien 83) and he will not hesitate to attack or defend if the need arises. When the Battle of the Five Armies starts Beorn appears, seemingly out of nowhere, ready to fight the goblins: "The roar of his voice was like drums and guns; and he tossed wolves and goblins from his path like straws and feathers. He fell upon their rear, and broke like a clap of thunder through the ring" (Tolkien 165). He also rescues Thorin from the Goblins, and kills their leader: "Swiftly he returned and his wrath was redoubled, so that nothing could withstand him, and no weapon seemed to bite upon him. He scattered the bodyguard, and pulled down Bolg himself and crushed him" (Tolkien 165). Thus, he symbolizes the importance

of those who will take the side of the good if the need arises, even if they are typically not interested in adventures and quests.

Conclusion

The Hobbit is a children's fantasy novel in which a home-loving hobbit embarks on an adventure of his life. When hobbit Bilbo Baggins agrees to join the company of dwarfs and a wizard in an adventure, he is not aware that his life is about to irrevocably change. This is a story of self-growth and heroism. As a protagonist, Bilbo Baggins is at the same time a hero and an anti-hero. When observed from the perspective of a physical appearance and intrinsic motivation Bilbo is an anti-hero. He is not muscular, tall, foreboding, and does not own a weapon of any kind. Content with his life, he does not initiates dangerous ventures. But when it comes to resolving a tense situation in which he and his friends find themselves – his true nature surfaces. The anti-hero becomes a hero in his full form. That being said, Bilbo is not the only hero in the tale. Thorin Oakenshield, the leader of the Company of Dwarves, purposefully embarks on his own, private quest. He serves as an example of how thin the line between a villain and a hero can be. The character of Beorn is an excellent example of a classical hero with his immense physical strength and bravado. Through this characters, Tolkien reminds his readers that being a hero does not necessarily mean having a biological predisposition. Everyone who is daring enough can be one. One can conclude that, in fact, there are no heroes, only heroic deeds. As Bilbo, Thorin and to some extent Beorn show by an example, it is possible to be afraid, to make mistakes and to play on the line of the comfort zone and at the same time be your own as well as someone else's hero.

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