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The Reluctant Hero: Analysis of The Hero's Journey in Bilbo Baggins of *The Hobbit* Films

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify the stages of the Hero's Journey experienced by Bilbo Baggins and to explain how they shape his character development throughout *The Hobbit* film trilogy. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method, drawing on Christopher Vogler's (2017) Hero's Journey, to analyze Bilbo's transformation and the roles of supporting characters in his journey. The data were taken from Bilbo Baggins' dialogues, selected scenes, and character interactions in *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey*, *The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug*, and *The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies*. The results show that Bilbo experiences several important stages of the Hero's Journey, including the Ordinary World, Call to Adventure, Refusal to Call, Meeting with the Mentor, Crossing the First Threshold, Tests, Allies and Enemies, the Ordeal, and the Reward. The most dominant stages are Crossing the First Threshold, the Ordeal, and the Reward, showing that Bilbo's development is strongly shaped through repeated trials, moral conflict, and important decisions. These findings show that Bilbo's journey is not only an adventure but also a process of psychological transformation and identity development that shapes him into a hero.

Keywords: Hero's Journey; Bilbo Baggins; Character Development; *The Hobbit*

INTRODUCTION

Peter Jackson's film adaptation of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, based on the novel, has an interesting case in characterization, especially in the given films, where attention can be paid to the main character, Bilbo Baggins. The protagonist of Tolkien's works, published in 1937, is the same hobbit who can be described as the ninth, the most domesticated, and the laziest; and the story describes his Unexpected Journey. Throughout the story, the principal character, Bilbo, an unadventurous creature, is transformed into a genuine hero. Jackson reinterprets this transformation in the film to richly explore the character's personality and development (Collins, 2020).

The term "hero" always seems to refer to the protagonist, the main character in the story, who faces the problem or conflict, is willing to help others, and changes the fate. The hero concept has been the central element in literature, symbolizing humanity's enduring fascination with courage, transformation, and the triumph over adversity. Heroes are often portrayed as figures who embark on a journey that tests their values, strength, and sense of self. This journey typically represents not only an external adventure but also an internal process of psychological and moral

growth (Kinsella et al., 2015). On the other hand, the concept of "hero" has been derived from the archetype theory by Swiss psychologist Carl G. Jung employed the term archetypes. In narrative analysis, archetypes serve to advance the story's structure and reveal the psychological meaning behind each character's journey, making them essential in understanding how the hero evolves throughout the stages of the Hero's Journey.

Despite the growing body of research applying the Hero's Journey theory across novels, video games, psychological studies, and interactive narratives, most existing studies focus primarily on identifying stages of the monomyth or mapping archetypal figures onto different texts and media. However, limited attention has been given to the figure of the reluctant hero as a central analytical focus, particularly in relation to how hesitation, fear, and resistance shape character transformation. Moreover, few studies have examined this relationship within Peter Jackson's film adaptation of *The Hobbit*, where visual storytelling and cinematic techniques further influence the portrayal of Bilbo Baggins's development. Therefore, there remains a significant gap in research that integrates the concept of the reluctant hero with the stages of the Hero's Journey to explain Bilbo's transformation in *The Hobbit*. This study seeks to address this gap by analyzing how these elements work together to construct Bilbo's character arc from reluctance to heroism. Although the hero's journey (monomyth) and archetypes are defined by Joseph Campbell, over time, many authors have expanded the theory of monomyth. Vogler (2017), in his book *The Writer's Journey*, divides the Hero's Journey into twelve stages that represent both the external adventure and the internal transformation of the protagonist. Vogler's model makes Campbell's theory more accessible to contemporary writers and filmmakers by illustrating how each stage, from the Ordinary World and Call to Adventure to the Return with the Elixir. Vogler's model was selected because its twelve-stage structure is more concise, practical, and applicable to contemporary screen narratives, while still retaining the fundamental pattern of Campbell's monomyth. In addition, Vogler emphasizes both the external adventure and the internal transformation of the protagonist, making the model particularly suitable for examining Bilbo Baggins as a reluctant hero. The twelve stages allow this study to trace not only the events Bilbo experiences throughout *The Hobbit* but also his gradual development from an unadventurous and hesitant hobbit into a courageous and independent hero. Through this structure, stories like *The Hobbit* demonstrate how heroes such as Bilbo Baggins undergo physical trials and profound personal evolution throughout their journeys.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Myth

A myth can be defined as a traditional narrative that reflects the cultural, moral, and psychological concerns of the society in which it is told. Myths are composed of interconnected events that convey symbolic meanings about life, humanity, and the universe (Clark, 2012). According to this definition, myth is not simply a static

character or symbol; rather, it is a dynamic narrative that gives form and meaning to cultural experiences.

Carl Jung complements this understanding by introducing the concept of archetypes (collective unconscious), universal symbolic figures such as the Hero, the Mentor, or the Divine Child that recur across myths and cultures. While archetypes are not myths themselves, they become part of mythic storytelling when they manifest within narrative structures. (Clark, 2012; Jung, 2021). In relation to the Hero's Journey, archetypes can be understood as forces that guide, challenge, or support the protagonist at different stages of transformation. These archetypal roles therefore contribute to the protagonist's psychological and moral development as they progress through the stages of the Hero's Journey.

According to Campbell (2004), myths are the foundational expressions of human imagination and consciousness. They have appeared in every culture and historical period, functioning as the underlying source of religion, philosophy, art, and even science. Campbell views myth as the bridge between human experience and universal truth (Campbell & Estés, 2004). They symbolize humanity's attempt to understand its place in the cosmos and to give meaning to life's mysteries, struggles, and transformations.

Campbell also establishes an intricate relationship between myth and dream, arguing that both arise from the same psychological origin, the unconscious mind. This means that dreams express the inner struggles and desires of an individual, while myths externalize those same psychological patterns on a universal scale. In dreams, symbols are shaped by the dreamer's personal conflicts, but in myths, these symbols become shared expressions of human experience, representing emotions, fears, and moral questions common to all people. (Campbell & Estés, 2004).

The Hero's Journey

The hero's journey from the book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* by Joseph Campbell presents one of the most enduring ideas in both oral and written storytelling: the myth of the hero. Through his study of hero myths from around the world, Campbell discovered that nearly all heroic tales share the same basic structure, retold in countless forms and variations. He explained that all stories, whether simple or complex, consciously or unconsciously follow the timeless patterns of myth, which he called the "monomyth" or the Hero's Journey (Campbell & Estés, 2004; Vogler, 2017).

Several previous studies have explored the application of the Hero's Journey theory in literary analysis. For instance, Bahari (2021) investigates the role of the stages of the Hero's Journey in Herman Hesse's *Demian*. Using Joseph Campbell's monomyth framework, the study analyzes Emil Sinclair's journey in searching for self-identity. Another related study is conducted by Muspita (2022), which analyzes Mirabel's journey in Disney's *Encanto* using the Hero's Journey. The study finds that Mirabel passes through several stages of the monomyth and is influenced by

archetypes such as the Mentor and the Shadow. The results indicate that her journey reflects both a physical effort to restore her family and an inner process of identity formation. Another study by Amri (2025) applies Vogler's Hero's Journey model to analyze Aether's development in *Genshin Impact*. The study reveals that the game's narrative follows the major stages of the monomyth, showing Aether's progression from a separated traveler to a recognized hero in Mondstadt. This research highlights the potential of video game narratives to present classical heroic structures through player interaction and digital media.

This pattern, according to Campbell (2004), appears in every culture and throughout history. While the specific details of each story may differ, the underlying structure remains the same. The hero's journey continues to reappear across generations because it reflects universal aspects of the human mind and experiences our shared struggles, growth, and transformation. In essence, Campbell shows that the hero's story is a mirror of humanity itself, symbolizing the personal and spiritual journeys that all people undergo in their lives (Vogler, 2017).

METHOD

Design and Sample

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design because it aimed to examine and interpret the Hero's Journey and Bilbo Baggins's character transformation in The Hobbit film trilogy. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the data consisted of dialogues, actions, scenes, and character interactions that required interpretation rather than numerical measurement. Qualitative research allows researchers to explore meanings and patterns within textual and visual data and to provide interpretations that are understandable and supported by the context of the data (Creswell, 2017; Elliott & Timulak, 2015). The primary data source of this study was The Hobbit film trilogy directed by Peter Jackson and adapted from J. R. R. Tolkien's 1937 novel The Hobbit. The trilogy consists of The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey (2012), The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug (2013), and The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies (2014). The films are set primarily in Middle-earth and follow Bilbo Baggins as he leaves the Shire and joins Thorin Oakenshield and his company on their journey to reclaim Erebor.

The sample of the study consisted of 13 selected extracts taken from the three films. The extracts included dialogues, actions, scenes, and character interactions that represented important stages of Bilbo's journey and demonstrated changes in his behavior, decisions, courage, independence, and sense of responsibility. The extracts were selected purposively based on their relevance to the stages of the Hero's Journey. The selected extracts represented three major phases of Bilbo's journey. The Departure phase included the Ordinary World, Call to Adventure, Refusal of the Call, Meeting with the Mentor, and Crossing the First Threshold. The Initiation phase included Tests, Allies and Enemies, Approach to the Inmost Cave, the Ordeal, and Reward. The Return phase included the Road Back,

Resurrection, and Return with the Elixir. The selection also considered important turning points in Bilbo's character development, including his initial reluctance to leave the Shire, his encounters with challenges and conflicts, his increasing willingness to make independent decisions, and his eventual demonstration of courage and responsibility. Supporting materials, including books, journal articles, and previous studies related to the Hero's Journey, archetypal theory, and character development, were also used to support the interpretation of the primary data.

Instrument and Procedure

The primary instrument of this qualitative study was the researcher. The researcher was responsible for watching the films, identifying relevant scenes and dialogues, selecting the extracts, classifying the data, and interpreting Bilbo Baggins's character transformation based on the theoretical framework of the Hero's Journey. A data recording sheet was used to organize the selected data systematically. The information recorded for each extract included the film title, timestamp, dialogue or description of the scene, corresponding Hero's Journey stage, relevant archetypal role, and preliminary interpretation of Bilbo's character development.

The data collection procedure was conducted in several stages. First, the researcher watched the three films in The Hobbit trilogy to understand the overall storyline and Bilbo's development throughout the journey. The films were watched repeatedly to identify scenes that were relevant to Bilbo's character transformation. Second, the researcher identified and recorded dialogues, actions, scenes, and interactions that represented significant moments in Bilbo's journey. Particular attention was given to scenes showing changes in his attitudes, decisions, relationships, courage, independence, and responsibility.

Third, the identified scenes were compared with the characteristics of the Hero's Journey stages proposed by Vogler (2017). The researcher then selected 13 extracts that most clearly represented the progression of Bilbo's journey through the Departure, Initiation, and Return phases. Fourth, each selected extract was recorded and organized according to the film title, timestamp, dialogue or scene description, Hero's Journey stage, archetypal role, and its contribution to Bilbo's character development. Relevant books, journal articles, and previous studies were also reviewed to support the theoretical interpretation of the findings. To maintain consistency in the classification, each extract was repeatedly reviewed and compared with the characteristics of Vogler's Hero's Journey model. The surrounding narrative context of each scene was also examined so that an extract was classified according to its function within Bilbo's overall journey rather than based only on isolated dialogue or action.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the qualitative data analysis procedures proposed by Miles et al. (2014), consisting of data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. First, data collection involved gathering

relevant data from The Hobbit film trilogy, particularly Bilbo Baggins's dialogues, actions, scenes, and interactions with other characters. Supporting information was also collected from books, journal articles, and previous studies related to the Hero's Journey, archetypal theory, and character development.

Second, data condensation involved selecting, focusing, simplifying, organizing, and categorizing the collected data. The identified scenes and dialogues were examined based on their relevance to Vogler's Hero's Journey stages and archetypal roles. From the collected data, 13 extracts were selected because they represented significant points in Bilbo's journey and character transformation. Each extract was analyzed by considering its narrative context, Bilbo's actions and dialogue, and the changes revealed in his character. Third, data display involved organizing and presenting the selected extracts systematically. Each extract was presented with information such as the film title, timestamp, dialogue or description of the scene, corresponding Hero's Journey stage, archetypal role, and interpretation of Bilbo's character development. This organization allowed the researcher to identify patterns across the three films and observe the progression of Bilbo's transformation. Finally, conclusion drawing and verification involved interpreting the patterns and meanings identified from the selected extracts. The researcher examined how the stages of the Hero's Journey and the relevant archetypal roles contributed to Bilbo's transformation from a reluctant and comfort-seeking hobbit into a more courageous, independent, and responsible character.

The interpretation and classification of the data were continuously verified through repeated examination of the selected scenes and comparison with the theoretical characteristics proposed by Vogler (2017). Since the study did not employ investigator triangulation or formal peer debriefing, consistency was maintained by reviewing the film data several times and examining the surrounding narrative context of each extract. This process helped ensure consistency between the selected data, the identified Hero's Journey stages, and the interpretation of Bilbo's character transformation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The structure of the Hero's Journey introduces Bilbo Baggins' world as peaceful and comfortable before leading him into a special world. As Vogler explains, "The hero's story is always a journey; a hero leaves her comfortable, ordinary surroundings to venture into a challenging, unfamiliar world" (Vogler, 2017, p. 7). This journey is not only physical, as Bilbo travels from the Shire to dangerous places such as Mirkwood and Erebor, but also internal, as he grows from fear and hesitation into courage, wisdom, and independence. This idea is clearly reflected in Bilbo's transformation from a reluctant, ordinary hobbit into a courageous hero through both external adventures and emotional development.

The Ordinary World

In the first stage, the main character will be introduced to the audience before the journey begins.

Extract 1: *An Unexpected Journey* (08:56- 09:37)

> Old Bilbo: [voice over] That, my dear Frodo, is where I come in. For quite by chance, and the will of a wizard, fate decided I would become part of this tale. It began... well, it began as you might expect. In a hole in the ground, there lived a hobbit. Not a nasty, dirty, wet hole full of worms and oozy smells. This was a hobbit hole. And that means good food, a warm hearth, and all the comforts of home.

In this scene, Bilbo describes his home as "a hobbit hole" filled with "good food, a warm hearth, and all the comforts of home."

This description clearly shows Bilbo's peaceful, safe, and comfortable lifestyle in the Shire. His ordinary world is defined by routine, security, and domestic comfort, which reflects his nature as a hobbit who values stability and simplicity. Furthermore, as Vogler notes, "The Ordinary World is the most appropriate place to deal with exposition and backstory" (Vogler, 2017, p. 94), which is explained in the following scene:

Extract 2: *An Unexpected Journey* (05:29- 07:31)

> Thorin: Dragon!
> Old Bilbo: [voice over] He was a Firedrake from the North. [Smaug starts attacking Erebor by breathing fire everywhere]
> Old Bilbo: [voice over] Smaug had come!
> [Smaug starts destroying the city of Dale]
> Old Bilbo: [voice over] Such wanton death was dealt that day, for this city of men was nothing to Smaug. His eye was set on another prize. For dragons covet gold with a dark and fierce desire.
> [As Smaug starts attacking Erebor, Thror takes the Arkenstone and makes a run for it, then he sees Smaug finding all the hidden gold]
> Thror: No!
> [Thorin finds Thror and grabs a hold of him, dragging him away from the scene]
> Old Bilbo: [voice over] Erebor was lost. For a dragon will guard his plunder as long as he lives.

This extract explains the past event that caused the main conflict of the narration, especially the destruction of Erebor by Smaug. The narration states, "Smaug had come," and later, "Erebor was lost," which directly informs about the fall of the dwarves' kingdom. This information explains the situation that exists before Bilbo's journey begins. This provides a clear exposition of the opposing force in the story. Smaug is introduced as the dragon who attacks both Dale and Erebor, destroying the city and taking control of the treasure inside the mountain. The line "For a dragon will guard his plunder as long as he lives" explains why the kingdom

cannot easily be reclaimed. This creates the central problem that later motivates the quest.

Call to Adventure

In this stage, the hero is presented with an event, an invitation, or a challenge that introduces the adventure.

Extract 3: *An Unexpected Journey* (13:12- 14-09)

Bilbo: Good morning.
Gandalf: What do you mean? Do you mean to wish me a good morning, or do you mean that it is a good morning whether I want it or not? Or perhaps you mean to say that you feel good on this particular morning? Or are you simply stating that this is a morning to be good on?
Bilbo: All of them at once, I suppose.
[Gandalf looks at Bilbo thoughtfully, making Bilbo feel uncomfortable]
Bilbo: Can I help you?
Gandalf: It remains to be seen. I'm looking for someone to share in an adventure.
Bilbo: An adventure? No, I don't imagine anyone west of Bree would have much interest in adventures. Nasty, disturbing, uncomfortable things. Make you late for dinner!
[Bilbo gets up to collect his mail from his mailbox and awkwardly backs away].

In this stage, the hero receives an invitation that introduces the possibility of leaving the ordinary world and entering the special world. In the scene, the call is clearly shown through Gandalf's statement, "I'm looking for someone to share in an adventure." This line directly functions as the invitation that disrupts Bilbo's ordinary life in the Shire.

Bilbo's response further strengthens this stage because it seems how unexpected the adventure is for his character. He says, "An adventure? No, I don't imagine anyone west of Bree would have much interest in adventures. Nasty, disturbing, uncomfortable things. Make you late for dinner!" This reaction highlights Bilbo's strong attachment to safety, order, and domestic comfort. His negative view of adventure creates a clear contrast with Gandalf's invitation and emphasizes the tension between Bilbo's ordinary identity and the new path being offered to him.

Refusal to Call

In this stage, the hero refuses or hesitates to accept the adventure after realizing the challenges and dangers ahead.

Extract 4: *An Unexpected Journey* (32:26- 33:13)

[carries on reading]

Bilbo: Uh…'The present company shall not be liable for injuries inflicted by or sustained as a consequence thereof, including, but not limited to…lacerations. Evisceration.
[turns over the page]
Bilbo: Incineration?
Bofur: Oh, aye, he'll melt the flesh off your bones in the blink of an eye.
[Bilbo tries to take all this in]
Balin: You alright, laddie?
Bilbo: Huh? Yeah, I fe… [takes a breath]
Bilbo: I feel a bit faint.
Bofur: Think furnace, with wings.
Bilbo: I…I…I need air.
Bofur: Flash of light, searing pain, then poof! You're nothing more than a pile of ash!
[Bilbo thinks for a moment then looks over at the dwarves]
Bilbo: No.
[he faints, collapsing to the ground]
Gandalf: Oh, very helpful, Bofur.

According to Vogler (2017), after receiving the call, the hero often becomes aware of the dangers involved and begins to resist the journey. In this scene, Bilbo reads the contract and encounters the words "lacerations," "evisceration," and "incineration," which clearly describe the physical risks of the mission. These terms make the danger of the adventure more real and immediate for Bilbo. Bofur's explanation, "Think furnace, with wings," and "You're nothing more than a pile of ash," intensifies the threat by giving Bilbo a vivid image of Smaug's destructive power.

Bilbo's physical and verbal reactions strongly support this stage. His lines, "I feel a bit faint," and "I need air," show that the fear of the journey affects him immediately. The moment becomes more explicit when Bilbo says "No" before collapsing to the ground. This direct rejection clearly functions as his refusal of the adventure. Rather than accepting the heroic role, Bilbo responds with anxiety and avoidance, showing that he is not yet ready to leave the safety of his ordinary world.

Meeting with Mentor

In this stage, the hero meets a mentor who provides knowledge, encouragement, or tools needed to face the adventure.

Extract 5: *An Unexpected Journey* (33:14- 34:45)

Bilbo: I'll be alright. Just let me sit quietly for a moment.
Gandalf: You've been sitting quietly for far too long. Tell me, when did doilies and your mother's dishes become so important to you? I remember a young hobbit who was always running off in search of Elves, in the woods. He'd stay out late, come home after dark, trailing mud and twigs and fireflies. A young hobbit who would've liked nothing better than to find out

what was beyond the borders of the Shire. The world is not in your books and maps. It's out there.
Bilbo: I can't just go running off into the blue! I am a Baggins, of Bag End!
Gandalf: You are also a Took. Did you know that your great, great, great, great uncle Bullroarer Took was so large he could ride a real horse?
[Bilbo nods his head]
Gandalf: Yes, well he could! In the battle of Greenfields, he charged the goblin ranks he swung his club so hard, it knocked the goblin king's head clean off, and it sailed a hundred yards through the air, and went down a rabbit hole. And thus the battle as won, and the game of golf invented at the same time.
Bilbo: I do believe you made that up.
Gandalf: Well, all good stories deserve embellishment. You'll have a tale or two to tell of your own when you come back.

In this scene, Gandalf serves as the mentor, helping Bilbo reconsider his fear and hesitation. Gandalf reminds Bilbo of his younger self, describing him as "a young hobbit who was always running off in search of Elves" and someone curious about "what was beyond the borders of the Shire." This guidance is important because it reconnects Bilbo with a part of his identity that his comfortable life in Bag End has hidden. Gandalf's statement, "The world is not in your books and maps. It's out there," directly encourages Bilbo to move beyond safety and experience the world for himself.

The mentor role is further strengthened when Gandalf reminds Bilbo of his Took heritage through the story of Bullroarer Took. By telling the heroic story of Bilbo's ancestor, Gandalf encourages and suggests that courage and adventure are already part of Bilbo's nature. This advice functions as motivation, helping Bilbo see that he is capable of more than he believes. Gandalf's final statement, "You'll have a tale or two to tell of your own when you come back," also offers Bilbo a vision of future growth and achievement.

Crossing the First Threshold

In this stage, the hero decides to leave the familiar world and step into the unknown challenges of the adventure.

Extract 6: *An Unexpected Journey* (39:20- 40:40)

[Bilbo looks pleased that everything is back in order, but then he looks down and sees the contract, he thinks for a moment and then we see him flying out the door, contract in hand as he runs to find Gandalf and the dwarves]
Hobbit: Here, Mr. Bilbo! Where are you off too?
Bilbo: I can't stop, I'm already late!
Hobbit: Late for what?
Bilbo: I'm going on an adventure!

In this scene, Bilbo first appears pleased that everything in his home is back in order, which reflects his strong attachment to comfort and routine. However, when he notices the contract, he pauses and thinks for a moment. This brief hesitation is important because it shows Bilbo making a conscious decision between staying in his ordinary world and entering the adventure. His sudden action of running out of the house with the contract in hand marks the beginning of his commitment to the quest. The threshold crossing becomes even clearer through Bilbo's dialogue with the hobbit outside. When asked, "Where are you off to?", Bilbo answers, "I can't stop, I'm already late!" and then directly states, "I'm going on an adventure!" This line strongly confirms that Bilbo has now accepted the journey that he previously refused. Unlike the earlier stages, where he reacted with fear and hesitation, this moment shows clear determination and movement toward the unknown.

Test, Allies, and Enemies

In this stage, the main character faces challenges, meets supporting characters, and begins to recognize the allies and enemies who will influence the journey (Vogler, 2017).

Extract 7: *An Unexpected Journey* (01:30:00- 01:32:00)

Elrond: 'Cirth ithil'.
Gandalf: Moon runes. Of course. An easy thing to miss.
Elrond: Well in this case, that is true. Moon runes can only be read by the light of the moon of the same shape and season as the day on which they were written.
Thorin: Can you read them?
[referring to the map]
Elrond: These runes were written on a mid-summer's eve by the light of a crescent moon nearly two hundred years ago. It would seem you were meant to come to Rivendell. Fate is with you, Thorin Oakenshield. The same moon shines upon us tonight.
[he places the map on a stone slab right under the moon, and as the moon's light shines on the map, it reveals the runes and Elrond translates]
Elrond: 'Stand by the grey stone when the thrush knocks, and the setting sun with the last light of Durin's Day will shine upon the keyhole.'
Bilbo: Durin's Day?
Gandalf: It is the start of the dwarves' new year, when the last moon of Autumn and the first sun of Winter appear in the sky together.
Thorin: This is ill news. Summer is passing, Durin's Day will soon be upon us.
Balin: We still have time.
Bilbo: Time, for what?
Balin: To find the entrance. We have to be standing at exactly the right spot, at exactly the right time. Then, and only then, can the door be opened.
Elrond: So this is your purpose, to enter the mountain.
Thorin: What of it?

Elrond: There are some who would not deem it wise.
[Elrond gives the map back to Thorin]
Gandalf: Who do you mean?
Elrond: You are not the only guardian to stand watch over Middle-earth.

In this scene, Elrond explains that the runes "can only be read by the light of the moon of the same shape and season", which reveals a crucial instruction for entering Erebor. The scene also clearly introduces an ally in the form of Elrond, who helps reveal the meaning of the moon runes and provides essential information for the quest. Without his knowledge, the group would not understand the meaning of the moon runes or the importance of the timing. His statement, "It would seem you were meant to come to Rivendell," further emphasizes that his assistance becomes a significant turning point in the journey. At the same time, the line "There are some who would not deem it wise" introduces the presence of opposing forces who may challenge the quest in the future.

Approach to the Inmost Cave

In this stage, the hero moves closer to the main obstacle and begins preparing mentally and physically for the major trial ahead.

Extract 8: *Desolation of Smaug* (02:07:41- 02:08:45)

[as they walk further in through the mountain]
Bilbo: You want me to find a jewel?
Balin: A large white jewel, yes.
Bilbo: That-that's it? Only I imagine there's quite a few down there.
Balin: There is only one Arkenstone. And you'll know it when you see it.
Bilbo: Right.
[Balin walks on ahead and stops]
Balin: In truth, lad. I do not know what you will find down there. You needn't go if you don't want to. There's no dishonor in turning back.
Bilbo: No. Balin, I promised I would do this. And I think I must try.

In this stage, the hero approaches the most dangerous part of the journey and begins to face the fear connected to the main challenge. The line **"**You want me to find a jewel?" shows that Bilbo is now fully aware of his mission, which is to search for the Arkenstone inside the mountain. This moment is significant because the task is no longer abstract; it becomes a direct responsibility that Bilbo must carry out as he enters the place where Smaug may be waiting. Balin's statement, "You needn't go if you don't want to. There's no dishonor in turning back," gives Bilbo a final opportunity to retreat before facing the danger. However, Bilbo responds, "No. Balin, I promised I would do this. And I think I must try." This response highlights his readiness to continue despite the uncertainty ahead. According to Vogler (2017), the Approach stage often involves preparation before the major ordeal. In this extract, Bilbo's decision to move forward demonstrates his psychological readiness to enter the inmost cave and face the ordeal awaiting him within Erebor.

The Ordeal

In this stage, the hero confronts a major crisis or life-threatening challenge that becomes a turning point in the journey.

Extract 9: *Desolation of Smaug* (02:51:30- 02:52:30)

Smaug: You think you can deceive me, barrel rider? You have come from Laketown. This is some sordid scheme hatched between these filthy dwarves and those miserable trading lakemen. Those sniveling cowards with their long bows and black arrows. Perhaps it is time I paid them a visit.
Bilbo: Oh no!
[Smaug turns to leave]
Bilbo: This isn't their fault! Wait! You cannot go to Lake-town!
[Smaug stops and turns to Bilbo]
Smaug: You care about them, do you? Good. Then you can watch them die!
[Smaug turns and starts to make his way out].

In this stage, the hero confronts a serious challenge with high stakes and dangerous consequences. In the scene, Smaug realizes Bilbo's connection to Lake-town and suspects a plan between the dwarves and the people there. The crisis becomes more intense when Smaug decides to attack Lake-town, shown in the line, "Perhaps it is time I paid them a visit." This moment shifts the danger from Bilbo's personal survival to the lives of innocent people, making the ordeal more serious and emotionally charged.

Bilbo's response, "This isn't their fault! Wait! You cannot go to Lake-town!", shows his development into a more responsible and heroic figure. Instead of focusing on his own safety, he immediately tries to stop Smaug from harming others. Smaug is not defeated in this moment; instead, he leaves Erebor and continues the conflict by flying toward Lake-town. His line, "Then you can watch them die!", reinforces that the villain remains active and dangerous beyond this stage.

Reward

In this stage, the main character gains a reward after overcoming challenges during the journey. However, Vogler explained, "the hero takes possession of a treasure or even steals it" (Vogler, 2017, p. 178), which is explained in this scene:

Extract 10: *The Battle of the Five Armies* (01:03:34- 01:04:23)

[suddenly Bilbo appears]
Bilbo: That won't stop them. You think the Dwarves will surrender? They won't. They will fight to the death to defend their own.
Gandalf: Bilbo Baggins!
[they meet in Thranduil's tent]
Thranduil: If I'm not mistaken, this is the Halfling who stole the keys to my dungeons from under the nose of my guards.

Bilbo: Yes. Sorry about that. I came to give you this.
[he shows them the Arkenstone]
Thranduil: The Heart of the Mountain. The King's jewel.
Bard: And worth a king's ransom.
[looking at Bilbo]
Bard: How is this yours to give?
Bilbo: I took it as my fourteenth share of the treasure.

In this stage, Vogler explains that the hero may receive a reward in the form of an object, knowledge, or achievement, and, in some cases, may even take or steal the treasure. In this scene, Bilbo reveals the Arkenstone and says, "I took it as my fourteenth share of the treasure." This line directly shows that Bilbo has taken possession of the most valuable object in Erebor. The Arkenstone is not only a treasure but also a central symbol of kingship and power, as shown in Thranduil's response, "The Heart of the Mountain. The King's jewel."

The Road Back

In this stage, the hero begins the return journey after completing the main challenge and prepares to face the final consequences of the adventure.

Extract 11: *The Battle of the Five Armies* (01:07:54- 01:09:51)

[Bard takes out the Arkenstone and holds it up]
Bard: We have this.
Kili: They have the Arkenstone. Thieves! How came you by the heirloom of our house? That stone belongs to the king.
Bard: The King may have it, with our good will.
[Bard puts the Arkenstone back in his pocket]
Bard: But first he must honor his word.
Thorin: They're taking us for fools. This is a ruse, and a filthy lie. The Arkenstone is in this Mountain, it is a trick!
Bilbo: I-it's no trick. The stone is real. I gave it to them.
[Thorin faces Bilbo]
Thorin: You?
Bilbo: I took it as my fourteenth share.
Thorin: You would steal from me?
Bilbo: Steal from you? No, no. I may be a burglar, but I like to think I'm an honest one. I'm willing to let it stand against my claim.
Thorin: Against your claim?
[Thorin chuckles]
Thorin: Your claim? You have no claim over me, you miserable rat!
Bilbo: I was going to give it to you. Many times I wanted to, but…
Thorin: But what, thief?
Bilbo: You are changed, Thorin. The Dwarf I met in Bag End would never have gone back on his word, would never have doubted the loyalty of his kin.
Thorin: Do not speak to me of loyalty.

In this stage, the hero begins dealing with the results of the journey and the conflicts that arise from it. The Arkenstone becomes the central object in this scene, as Bard uses it to demand that Thorin fulfill his promise. Bilbo's confession, "The stone is real. I gave it to them," shows that he takes action to resolve the conflict rather than remain silent. This marks an important shift in the journey, as Bilbo now actively influences the direction of events after the quest's main objective has been achieved.

This highlights the final tension that must be faced before the journey can truly end. Thorin's reaction, accusing Bilbo of betrayal, shows the consequences of greed and mistrust after the treasure has been recovered. Bilbo's statement, "You are changed, Thorin," is significant because it reflects his recognition that the adventure has not only changed him but has also affected others. At this point, the story is moving toward its final resolution, with Bilbo helping to confront the conflict caused by Thorin's obsession with the treasure.

The Resurrection

In this stage, the hero experiences a final test or conflict that demonstrates the change he has gone through throughout the journey.

Extract 12: *The Battle of the Five Armies* (02:13:12- 02:15:14)

[Bilbo notices the wound in Thorin's stomach]
Bilbo: Oh!
Thorin: I'm glad you're here.
Bilbo: Shh, shh, shh, shh…
Thorin: I wish to part from you in friendship.
Bilbo: No, you are not going anywhere, Thorin, you're going to live.
Thorin: I would take back my words and my deeds at the gate. You did what only a true friend would do. Forgive me. I was too blind to see. I am so sorry that I have led you into such peril.
[he starts choking with pain]
Bilbo: No, I…I'm glad to have shared in your perils, Thorin. Each and every one of them. It is far more than any Baggins deserves.
[Thorin smiles at him]
Thorin: Farewell, Master Burglar. Go back to your books and your armchair. Plant your trees, watch them grow. If more people valued home above gold, this world would be a merrier place.
[Thorin takes his last breath]
Bilbo: No! No, no, no, no! No! Thorin! Thorin, don't you dare…
[Thorin finally dies].

This stage presents the final emotional and moral test that confirms Bilbo Baggins' transformation. In Vogler's Hero's Journey, this stage functions as the hero's last major moment of change, where the growth developed throughout the journey is fully revealed. In this scene, Bilbo is no longer the fearful and comfort-loving hobbit introduced at the beginning of the story. Instead, he remains beside Thorin

during his final moments, showing courage, loyalty, and emotional strength. His response, "I'm glad to have shared in your perils, Thorin. Every one of them," directly shows that Bilbo now accepts the dangers and hardships of the journey as meaningful experiences rather than something to avoid.

Thorin's words, "You did what only a true friend would do," confirm Bilbo's development into someone trustworthy, brave, and morally strong. This is significant because earlier stages showed Bilbo as reluctant and fearful of adventure, while this final moment presents him as a character who values friendship, loyalty, and shared struggle above comfort. Thorin's final statement, "If more people valued home above gold, this world would be a merrier place," further reinforces the lesson Bilbo has come to embody.

Return With the Elixir

In this final stage, the hero returns to the ordinary world, bringing the results of the journey.

Extract 13: *The Battle of the Five Armies* (02:24:33- 02:25:28)

[Gandalf and Bilbo ride back to the borders of the Shire]
Gandalf: Ah, the borders of the Shire. It is here I must leave you.
Bilbo: That's a shame. I quite liked having a wizard around. It seems they bring good luck.
Gandalf: You don't really suppose, do you, that all your adventures and escapes were managed by mere luck. Magic rings should not be used lightly, Bilbo. Don't take me for a fool, I know you found one…
Bilbo: No.
Gandalf: In the Goblin tunnels, and I've kept my eye on you ever since.
[Bilbo smiles]
Bilbo: Well, thank goodness. Farewell, Gandalf.
[Bilbo extends his hand to Gandalf]
Gandalf: Farewell.

In this stage, the hero brings back the results of the adventure in the form of knowledge, experience, or personal transformation. The line "Ah, the borders of the Shire. It is here I must leave you" clearly marks Bilbo's physical return to his familiar world. The setting at the Shire's border is significant because it shows the transition from the world of adventure back to the place where his journey originally began. The dialogue between Bilbo and Gandalf also highlights the changes Bilbo has gained from the journey. Bilbo's statement, "I quite liked having a wizard around. It seems they bring good luck," reflects his new appreciation for adventure and companionship, which contrasts with his earlier negative view of adventure as something "nasty" and "uncomfortable." Gandalf's mention of the magic ring and his awareness of Bilbo's actions in the Goblin tunnels further suggest that Bilbo returns with something meaningful from the journey, both physically and personally. Most importantly, Bilbo's calm farewell and confident interaction with

Gandalf show his growth from a hesitant hobbit into someone more experienced and self-assured.

The findings show that Bilbo Baggins' journey in *The Hobbit* films strongly reflects the early stages of the Hero's Journey, particularly the Ordinary World, Call to Adventure, and Refusal of the Call. These stages do not simply present the sequence of events, but clearly reveal how Bilbo's heroic identity is gradually formed. In the Ordinary World, Bilbo is portrayed as deeply attached to comfort, routine, and the safety of home, which establishes his initial personality before change begins. When the Call to Adventure appears through Gandalf's invitation and the dwarves' search for a burglar, the narrative introduces the possibility of a new role that challenges Bilbo's ordinary self. His reaction in the Refusal of the Call, especially his fear after learning the dangers of Smaug, shows that his transformation begins with hesitation rather than confidence. Bilbo's refusal does not weaken his heroic role; instead, it strengthens his development as a reluctant hero, since his courage later emerges from overcoming fear rather than from natural bravery. This pattern shows that Bilbo's growth is psychological as well as narrative, as the stages of the Hero's Journey gradually reshape his identity and prepare him for future trials. This pattern strongly supports Christopher Vogler's (2017) idea that heroic transformation often begins with resistance, uncertainty, and emotional conflict before the hero is ready to accept change.

In addition, this research supports Amri's (2025) study by confirming that Christopher Vogler's Hero's Journey model remains highly adaptable across different media forms. Amri's analysis of *Genshin Impact* shows Aether's progression through the major stages of the monomyth within an interactive game narrative. Similarly, the present study finds that Bilbo's journey also follows the classical heroic structure through the selected film scenes. However, unlike Amri's study, which highlights player interaction and digital narrative progression, this research emphasizes character-centered cinematic transformation, particularly through Bilbo's emotional resistance and evolving trust in surrounding archetypal figures. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on *The Hobbit* films as the most concentrated representation of Bilbo's heroic development, allowing for a deeper understanding of how early narrative stages and archetypes work together to shape a reluctant hero within fantasy film adaptation.

This research also supports Bahari's (2021) study in showing that the Hero's Journey and archetypal theory function not only as a structural framework but also as a means of understanding the protagonist's inner transformation. Similar to Bahari's findings on Emil Sinclair in *Demian*, the present study shows that Bilbo's journey is not limited to a physical quest but also reflects a gradual process of self-development, particularly his shift from hesitation to courage. However, unlike Bahari's study, which places greater emphasis on identity formation and psychological awakening, this study focuses more on how Bilbo's transformation is constructed through the stages of cinematic narrative and character interactions in a fantasy film adaptation. The difference is influenced by the contrasting narrative forms, where *Demian* emphasizes introspective literary symbolism, while

The Hobbit films combine external adventure with visual storytelling. This makes Bilbo's transformation appear more explicitly through actions, dialogue, and archetypal encounters.

The findings also align with Muspita's (2024) analysis of *Encanto*, which examines Mirabel's journey through the Hero's Journey framework. The study shows that Mirabel's adventure reflects both an external mission to restore her family and an internal struggle related to identity and belonging. This pattern is strongly relevant to Bilbo's journey because his quest to help reclaim Erebor is similarly connected to an inner transformation. While the external objective focuses on the dwarves' kingdom, Bilbo's personal development is seen in his shift from hesitation and fear to courage and moral awareness. The similarity between Mirabel and Bilbo suggests that the Hero's Journey remains highly adaptable across different narrative settings, whether family-centered animation or epic fantasy film.

The findings further reveal that the Hero's Journey stages play an important role in shaping Bilbo Baggins' psychological growth and narrative development. Especially in moments that involve fear, uncertainty, and moral pressure. Stages such as the Call to Adventure, Refusal of the Call, and Ordeal are not only used to organize the sequence of events, but also to reveal how Bilbo responds to situations that challenge his sense of safety and identity. For instance, Bilbo's hesitation during the Refusal of the Call and his later confrontation with Smaug in the Ordeal stage are not merely dramatic plot moments, but key points that reveal his psychological transformation. Unlike a classic hero who willingly accepts the call to adventure and demonstrates courage from the beginning, a reluctant hero initially experiences fear, hesitation, and resistance that resemble ordinary human responses to unfamiliar or threatening situations. Bilbo's reluctance therefore makes his transformation appear gradual and believable rather than immediate or predetermined. When he eventually chooses to act courageously despite his fear, the audience can recognize that his heroism is not defined by the absence of fear but by his willingness to overcome it. This can create a stronger sense of empathy and identification because the audience witnesses both his vulnerability and his development. His early fear and uncertainty reflect Vogler's idea that the hero must first resist change before gradually developing courage through repeated trials. As Bilbo moves into later stages, such as Tests, Allies and Enemies, and the Reward, these experiences strengthen his ability to make independent decisions and maintain his moral judgment under pressure.

In contrast, a classic hero who readily embraces adventure may position the audience primarily as observers of an already established heroic identity, whereas Bilbo invites the audience to follow the process through which that identity is formed. His progression from reluctance to courage allows the audience to experience uncertainty alongside him and to recognize the significance of his individual choices. Consequently, Bilbo's reluctant-hero archetype strengthens the emotional and psychological connection between the character and the audience by presenting heroism as a process of personal growth rather than an inherent quality. His journey suggests that courage can emerge through fear, and that moral strength

develops through the choices an individual makes when confronted with uncertainty and pressure.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of Bilbo Baggins in *The Hobbit* films, this study concludes that Bilbo's character development strongly reflects Christopher Vogler's Hero's Journey framework. Bilbo progresses through several important stages, including the Ordinary World, Call to Adventure, Refusal of the Call, Meeting with the Mentor, Crossing the Threshold, Tests, Allies and Enemies, the Ordeal, and the Reward. These stages reveal that his transformation from an ordinary hobbit into a courageous, morally aware, and responsible hero takes place gradually through repeated trials and emotional conflicts. The findings show that Bilbo's heroism is not based on immediate bravery but develops through fear, hesitation, and the ability to make ethical decisions in difficult situations. However, this study is limited by its focus on 13 selected dialogue extracts and their immediate narrative contexts. Therefore, it does not fully represent every aspect of Bilbo's characterization or the cinematic elements that contribute to his development, such as cinematography, facial expressions, body language, music, camera angles, visual symbolism, and editing. Some subtle changes in Bilbo's character that occur outside the selected extracts may therefore not be fully captured. For future research, researchers are encouraged to analyze the complete trilogy more comprehensively or compare Bilbo's development with other reluctant and classical heroes in fantasy films. In addition, combining Vogler's Hero's Journey with psychological or character-development approaches may provide a deeper understanding of the relationship between archetypes, moral development, and audience engagement. Such research could further explore how cinematic storytelling constructs different forms of heroism and how audiences respond to protagonists whose heroic identities develop through reluctance, uncertainty, and personal growth.

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