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**BILBO BAGGINS AS ROLE MODEL:  
STAGE ADAPTATIONS OF *THE HOBBIT* FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES**

**By**

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**A DISSERTATION**

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## ABSTRACT

### BILBO BAGGINS AS ROLE MODEL; STAGE ADAPTATIONS OF *THE HOBBIT* FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES

By

Eric G. Bullis

In her 1978 dissertation, Suzan L. Zeder discussed characterization in dramas for young audiences. Alarmed by the shallow, stereotyped protagonists presented to children, Zeder developed a methodology to analyze this trend. In her study, she recommended that future scholars examine the impact of protagonist portrayal upon audiences.

Many scholars of children's theatre assert that the character of the protagonist frequently becomes a target for children's emulation and admiration. They also emphasize the importance of selecting role models for children that encourage positive behavior. Translation of behavior from model to child has proven to be a provocative field of educational psychology. Experts, such as Dr. Albert Bandura, have proven that children frequently imitate the actions of observed models.

This dissertation first examines current research on the topic of role modeling. It then addresses role modeling behavior as it relates to theatre for young audiences. To focus the subject matter, J. R. R. Tolkien's story, *The Hobbit*, has been selected for this study. The story's particularly benevolent protagonist, Bilbo Baggins, provides a model

of positive behavior in the story *The Hobbit*. After examining the book's protagonist, using Suzan Zeder's character analysis system, this study then applies this system to five theatrical adaptations of Tolkien's story. After a detailed examination of character traits, this study has determined that these five adaptations for young audiences alter Tolkien's original protagonist.

Several of the adaptations portrayed Bilbo Baggins as a violent and selfish protagonist, instead of providing a model of pro-social behavior. The conclusions of this dissertation speculate on the interpretive and technical causes of these character alterations. Following the analysis, this dissertation offers several suggestions which may aid playwrights of children's theatre who use stories for their source material.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Practitioners of children's theatre have long endorsed the concept that theatrical characters can be potential role models. These practitioners, including Charlotte Chorpenning, Suzan Zeder, Jed Davis, Mary Jane Evans and Winefred Ward, believe that children frequently admire and imitate protagonists from plays. This belief is corroborated by an abundance of research by Albert Bandura and Nancy Eisenberg, which indicates that a great deal of children's learning takes place as a result of *imitation*. This phenomenon, also called modeling, identification and observational learning, begins with simple imitation and then develops in complexity as a child matures.

According to social learning theorists such as Bandura and Eisenberg, observational learning has a compelling impact on the social and educational development of children. They assert that the public behavior of role models should be carefully considered in terms of its influence on children. Charlotte Chorpenning, a central figure in the development of American children's theatre, wrote in 1955 that identification with "some one character on the stage is basic to both the pleasure and effectiveness that children get out of watching a play."<sup>1</sup> Twenty two years later, Zeder noted: "that children benefit from viewing children's plays through a process of identification with characters and situations presented in the play."<sup>2</sup> Other theorists, including Jed Davis and Mary Jane

Evans noted the societal impact of role modeling in *Theatre, Children and Youth*. In their text, they acknowledge the significance of providing pro-social models for children: “making a contribution, however small, to the reinforcement of desirable personal resources seems a worthy focus to our efforts. The key to this success lies in our ability to evoke *identification*.”<sup>3</sup>

Helane Rosenberg and Christine Prendergast state in their text, *Theatre for Young People: A Sense of Occasion*, that: “Ideally, everyone involved with young people should have a firm grasp of child psychology and education as these fields relate to artistic principles.”<sup>4</sup> Thomas E. Wren, a noted social learning theorist, states that a continued emphasis needs to be placed upon role modeling within children’s entertainment.<sup>5</sup> Wren and others refer to the landmark studies performed by Bandura which emphasize the power of children’s entertainment.

Bandura, who began empirical studies in the 1960s, discovered that children develop much of their behavior through the observation of role models. His empirical studies found that children imitate pro-social behaviors, such as generosity, sensitivity and bravery. Other studies indicate that anti-social behaviors, such as violence and selfishness, can also be imitated by children. Studies by Mischel in 1975, Eisenberg in 1989, Norcini in 1989, Wren in 1991 and Wyricka in 1996, have provided concrete evidence that modeling can have a significant impact upon both positive and negative behavior.<sup>6</sup> The second chapter of this study will address the relationship of role modeling in plays for young audiences.

Suzan Zeder’s 1978 study was the first dissertation to study the relationship between characterization and potential role modeling. Zeder developed a character

analysis system and found that most plays displayed poorly developed role models. The characters within her sample of plays were “simplified, supposedly for the child’s understanding, to the point where they [were] neither credible nor dynamic.”<sup>7</sup> Zeder therefore urged for further examination of role models found in scripts for children.

Zeder’s character analysis system has become an accepted methodology for other formal studies. Constance Gremore’s 1984 dissertation used the character analysis system to study scripts adapted from literary sources.<sup>8</sup> Gremore’s study contributed to the field by identifying general characteristics of adapted plays. Cheryl Lea Starr’s 1991 study also utilized Zeder’s methodology to study the presentation of stressful situations to children.<sup>9</sup>

The studies by Gremore and Starr utilized Zeder’s character analysis system to produce broad generalities concerning characterization in plays for children. Up to this point, however, no formal study has analyzed character traits in detail. Careful examination of character traits appears necessary because specific actions and attitudes have the power to stimulate imitative behavior in young audiences.

A review of children’s plays indicates that adaptations are the most popular source of dramas for children. Charlotte Chorpenning and Winifred Ward pioneered the adaptation of popular children’s stories into scripts.<sup>10</sup> Since then, the number of adaptations with the same title continues to increase. Constance Gremore noted that *Cinderella* has over 60 theatrical versions and *Treasure Island* has been adapted by at least 25 playwrights.<sup>11</sup> While adaptations of established titles have proliferated, little attention has been given to the various interpretations of adapted role models. Studies comparing the original literary characters with their adapted counterparts have not been attempted.



This study is based upon the need for an examination of the adaptation process and its effect upon modeling. For this purpose, it is necessary to select a story with a positive role model. It also requires the selection of a literary title with enough popularity to inspire a workable number of theatrical adaptations. *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien fulfills these requirements.

*The Hobbit* has inspired five plays for children. The original book sold more than 40 million copies and has been translated into at least 25 languages.<sup>12</sup> The widespread popularity of this book is frequently attributed to the appealing nature of Tolkien's protagonist, Bilbo Baggins.

This study intends to make a serious analysis of Bilbo's character development and relate it to role modeling. By discussing character within the adaptation process, it may provide assistance in translating the literary character into a well-developed role model for the stage.

### Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study is to present the results of an analysis of *The Hobbit* and its five adaptations. A comparison of character traits of each protagonist will reveal similarities and differences which preserve or distort the original role model. This analysis will lead to the disclosure of procedures in the adaptation process that are responsible for these similarities and differences.

## Definitions and Organization of Study

In the body of this study, the following terminology will be utilized. The terms “theatre for children” and “children’s theatre” will refer to theatrical productions for the education and entertainment of children aged 5 to 12.<sup>13</sup> The term will not apply to recreational theatre, participation theatre or creative dramatics. The psychological terminology of “identification,” “modeling behavior,” “role modeling,” “observational learning,” “emulation” and “imitation,” all imply the same general concept -- that children observe and imitate the behavior of others. Finally, the term “adaptation” refers to the translation of a work of fiction into the form of dramatic literature.

A general assumption will be made that certain behaviors represent positive or “pro-social” aspects. These traits include being generous, cooperative, independent and helpful. This study also assumes that violent, hateful and selfish behaviors are generally considered negative or “anti-social.”

This study will be divided into six chapters. Chapter two reviews research on the effect of role modeling and discusses the analysis of role models using Suzan Zeder’s character analysis system. The third chapter analyzes *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien and uses Zeder’s system to identify the character traits of Bilbo Baggins. The fourth chapter applies the Zeder character analysis system to each of the five adaptations. Chapter five discusses each adapter’s writing techniques and makes observations concerning each writer’s adaptation process. The final chapter draws conclusions based upon the observations of the five adapted scripts. The chapter also makes specific recommendations regarding the process of adapting role models and then discusses topics for future research.

## Endnotes

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- <sup>4</sup> Rosenberg, Helene and Prendergast, Christine, *Theatre for Young People: A Sense of Occasion* (New York: Holt, 1983) 18.
- <sup>5</sup> Wren, Thomas E., *Caring About Morality* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991) 57.
- <sup>6</sup> Publications by these psychologists have been included in this study's bibliography.
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- <sup>8</sup> Gremore, Constance, *Characteristics of Stage Adaptations of Works of Children's Literature*, diss., U of Minnesota, 1984 (Ann Arbor, UMI, 1984)
- <sup>9</sup> Starr, Cheryl Lea, *Theatrical Literature Involving Stressful Situations and the Impact upon Young Audiences: An Evaluation of Published Scripts, 1980-1988*, diss., U of Minnesota, 1991 (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1991) 25.
- <sup>10</sup> Starr, 25.
- <sup>11</sup> Gremore, 27.
- <sup>12</sup> Green, William H., *The Hobbit: A Journey into Maturity* (New York: Twayne, 1995) 10.
- <sup>13</sup> The ages of 5-12 is generally termed "theatre for children" and the term "theatre for youth" correlates to junior high school and high school students. This age categorization comes from Jed Davis and Mary Jane Evans in their text, *Theatre, Children and Youth* (New Orleans: Anchorage, 1982)

## **Chapter 2**

### **ROLE MODELING AND METHODOLOGY**

Psychologists have provided volumes of research confirming the hypothesis that children frequently learn language, behavior and attitudes through observation, imitation and role modeling. Social learning theorists such as Albert Bandura, Nancy Eisenberg, Paul Mussen, Walter Mischel, David Lynn, John Norcini, Samuel Snyder and Wanda Wyricka have conducted many studies illustrating the influence of modeling upon child development.<sup>1</sup> By incorporating the theoretical approaches of cognitive theory, behaviorism and even psychoanalysis, social learning theorists have established modeling as an important aspect of the learning process.

What exactly is role modeling? According to M. A. Perry and M. J. Furokawa, a model “acts as a stimulus for similar thoughts, attitudes, or behavior on the part of another individual who observes the model’s performance.”<sup>2</sup> John T. Flynn provides a related definition, stating that imitation, “involves the placing of oneself in the situation of another person and assuming the characteristics of that person.”<sup>3</sup> Usually, an observer is first attracted to some aspect of the model; he or she then studies and imitates the model’s behavior. During this process, a model can affect attitude, behavior and even ethical decision making.

The ability to imitate and model begins in infancy and continues into adulthood. As Wanda Wyricka notes in her text, *Imitation in Human and Animal Behavior*, infants first observe and imitate facial expressions.<sup>4</sup> Wyricka states that infants then begin to imitate sounds. Some learning theorists claim that modeling intonation and inflection is essential to the child's acquisition of language. Although there continues to be a serious debate over the issues relating to acquiring language, imitation apparently plays an important role in the process.

Experimentation by Walter Mischel determined that the age and intelligence of children predict the ability to imitate.<sup>5</sup> By the age of two, most children begin to imitate playmates, relatives and even strangers. At that age, some children can imitate a model turning pages of a book or drinking from a glass. As the child grows and cognitive skills develop, modeling becomes increasingly complex. Children begin to select targets to admire and imitate. From early childhood to young adulthood, youngsters often choose to imitate athletes, performing artists, parents, teachers and friends. Many diverse modeling sources become available to children as they accumulate experience

The observation and imitation of individuals also occurs in adulthood. Adult decisions are frequently influenced by observing another person's successes or failures. As Bandura notes in *Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control*, models "do much more than simply provide a social standard against which to appraise personal capabilities. People actively seek proficient models who possess the competencies to which they aspire."<sup>6</sup> Although the process of seeking and finding models is not completely understood, several social learning theorists have detected some consistencies concerning the phenomenon.

Imitation appears to occur in four sub-processes. These include attraction, observation, imitation and reinforcement.<sup>7</sup> The most complex sub-process appears to be the child's initial attraction to the potential model. The attraction inspires a compulsion to observe the model closely.

A child's attraction to a model is subjective and internalized, yet several generalizations regarding the process have been made through empirical investigations. Social learning theorists, including Bandura, Eisenberg, Mussen, Norcini, Snyder and Lynn have uncovered physical and behavioral factors which inspire or facilitate attraction to a model.<sup>8</sup>

Several studies indicate that initiation of modeling is encouraged when children perceive a model to be similar to themselves.<sup>9</sup> This is especially true when the model is of similar age or when they physically resemble each other. Sometimes the model faces a situation that parallels the child's experience or the model and child share the same interests.

Children also tend to admire and imitate models who possess or gain power. Imitation is augmented by the perception of the model's importance. According to Norcini and Syder, models "who are high in power, prestige, relevance, competence and/or similarity to the observer more often elicit imitation."<sup>10</sup> This explains why children frequently imitate heroes, athletes and actors.

The exhibition of emotional warmth also increases the potential for modeling. Nancy Eisenberg observed that "models who are powerful (i.e. in direct control of resources or rewards of value to the child), competent, and nurturant (warm and friendly) are more effective than models lacking these characteristics."<sup>11</sup>

Once a model is selected by the observer, the remaining three sub-processes of observation, imitation and reinforcement can take place. The model is studied by the subject. The admired attitude or behavior is then copied. Maintaining this behavior hinges, however, upon the reinforcements placed upon the subject and the original model.

The reinforcements (rewards and punishments) frequently determine the perceived effectiveness of the modeled behavior. If a child observes a model being rewarded for his or her actions, the behavior of the model will be perceived as correct and good. If, however, the model's actions are punished, the behavior will be perceived by the child as incorrect or bad. Thomas Wren notes that "modeling involves the vicarious experiences of observing not only the model's overt behavior but also its consequent reinforcements."<sup>12</sup> Overall, people help determine the appropriateness of their own actions by comparing themselves with observed models.

Appropriateness of actions becomes particularly important as children begin to consider ethical situations. Most psychologists agree that children are not born with a built-in sense of right and wrong.<sup>13</sup> Camille Wortman and Elizabeth Loftus write: "an infant enters the world as an amoral creature, bent on nothing more than the satisfaction of immediate needs and desires."<sup>14</sup> It appears that children therefore develop ethics through their social environment.

While psychological theorists agree that morality is developed through societal interaction, the process of *how* ethics are acquired remains a hotly debated topic. Sigmund Freud proposed that the superego, or ethical aspect of consciousness, develops as the child resolves Oedipal conflicts with his or her parents. Lawrence Kohlberg discounts this notion, stating that this theoretical acquisition of ethical beliefs occurs too

suddenly.<sup>15</sup> Kohlberg instead argues that ethical development occurs in specific phases of development. According to this theories, children encounter moral problems and learn from each situation; the child becomes more ethically sophisticated with time.

While social learning theorists agree that ethical development is a gradual process, as Kohlberg suggests, they disagree with his specific developmental phases. If all children experience these phases, they ask, why do people display various ethical standards? Contemporary theorists, including Bandura, Eisenberg, Snyder, Norcini and Mussen argue that children frequently rely upon the observation of models to acquire such knowledge.<sup>16</sup>

Eisenberg and Mussen found that learning by example can encourage acts of charity and sensitivity. Their study, “clearly indicates that children are likely to imitate the altruistic actions of models and thus enhance their own pro-social behavior.”<sup>17</sup>

William Casey and Roger Burton found that specific forms of modeling can actually encourage resistance to temptation. After showing models who resisted theft of candy, they found that, “the power of a moral model in promoting resistance to temptation should not be dismissed, but can be an important component in the development of self-control.”<sup>18</sup> From a social perspective, the ethical implications of modeling are profound. Wren summarizes the findings of social learning theorists by stating that “*any* behavior, moral as well as immoral, can be acquired through modeling.”<sup>19</sup>

Social learning theorists have carried research to the extent of using models for therapy. Bandura asserts that modeling can encourage cooperation, generosity and even courage. As Bandura developed these therapies, he found that patients were able to overcome snake and spider phobias by observing models who overcame their fears.<sup>20</sup>



The most significant aspects of social learning theory is not the development of therapies, however. The majority of their experiments instead address issues of anti-social behavior, such as aggression. Bandura's initial studies were devoted to exploring the causes of aggressive behavior. In a series of experiments, he proved his hypothesis that children become more violent when exposed to projections of aggressive role models.<sup>21</sup> A young audience was divided into two groups. The first group was exposed to a model who abused a toy doll in specific patterns. The second group did not observe the aggressive behavior. Later, the group exposed to the violent behavior tended to imitate the examples of abusing the doll. The control group of children who were not exposed to the violent model did not display aggression. This experiment was repeated with a variety of approaches to ensure the validity of the study.

In a related text, Wyricka writes that "the aggressive behavior of 3- to 5-year-old children was increased after a projection of film in which aggression was rewarded; on the other hand, aggressive behavior was decreased after showing the film in which aggression was punished."<sup>22</sup> Dozens of other studies have been performed to confirm the initial findings by social learning theorists. They all agree that aggression appears to increase after children observe violence which is rewarded.

Despite the convincing evidence presented by Wyricka, Bandura, Wren, Eisenberg, Mussen, Snyder and Norcini, other psychological schools of thought assert that the presentation of violence does not engender aggression. Instead, Sigmund Freud and Konrad Lorenz have argued that violent behavior stems from inherent human tendencies. According to Freud, all people possess internal aggressions which are released when frustrations grow too high. Freud incorporated Aristotle's theory of *catharsis*, stating that

the observation of violence purges people of their aggression.<sup>23</sup> Sociobiological theorists make a different claim. As the most noted sociobiological advocate, Lorenz argued that people possess aggression as a survival instinct. He wrote that social pressures force humans to suppress their aggression; the pressure of this pent-up anger periodically emerges in violent outburst.<sup>24</sup>

While social learning theorists acknowledge that psychoanalytical and sociobiological theories contain elements of truth, they argue that the ideas of Freud and Lorenz are not based upon empirical investigation. Bandura, Eisenberg, Mischel and Ross argue that most people are not naturally violent.<sup>25</sup> As their experiments have shown, violence is a behavior which is encouraged by modeling. They conclude that the observation and imitation of models has a strong influence upon the acceptance or denial of aggression.

Dozens of case studies indicate that various anti-social behaviors can be modeled by children. For instance, statistically, children brought up in abusive domestic situations tend to be abusive as adults.<sup>26</sup> Other evidence indicates that the aggressive tendency in boys correlates to each boy's time exposed to violent television shows. According to Wilson, Kunkel, Linz, et. al., there is "absolutely no doubt that those who are heavy viewers of this violence demonstrate increased acceptance of aggressive attitudes and increased aggressive behavior."<sup>27</sup> In this article from the National Television Violence Survey of 1997, the authors assert that observing aggressive forms of entertainment has a measurable impact upon children.

Experiments have revealed that children imitate models from a multitude of situations. According to Bandura, "people have ample opportunities to observe the

attainments of many individuals.”<sup>28</sup> As experiments have proven, the plethora of modeling sources can provide examples of courage, generosity and cooperation; they can also provide examples of aggression and selfishness. Although a great deal of attention has been given to modeling from television and movies, fewer attempts to study potential modeling in theatre have been made.

### Imitation in Theatre for Young Audiences

Television characters and sports heroes can inspire imitation. Theatrical characters, particularly protagonists, can also be a source for role models. Cheryl Lea Starr states that:

Children’s theatre experts have placed a great deal of importance on identification in evaluating meaningful theatre experiences. Audience members begin to see the actions and the story through the eyes of the character with whom they have formed the (conscious or unconscious) attachment.<sup>29</sup>

Constance Gremore, Susan Pearson-Davis, Mary Jane Evans, Jed Davis, Starr and Zeder assert that protagonists from children’s dramas can promote imitative behavior.<sup>30</sup> They argue that children are frequently silent and transfixed by characters on the stage. During performances, children have the opportunity to admire, observe and imitate protagonists.

Zeder wrote the first formal study concerning the characteristics of role models in plays for young audiences. In this study, she observed several general trends regarding the plays. To date, however, no formal study has examined character traits in detail. This

dissertation utilizes a careful application of Zeder's character analysis system to further the understanding of role models adapted from children's literature.

### Methodology

This study uses the character analysis system to scrutinize J. R. R. Tolkien's protagonist, Bilbo Baggins. The in-depth analysis of Tolkien's original role model establishes a compilation of character traits that serves as a paradigm. This paradigm will be juxtaposed and compared with the Bilbo Baggins presented in each of the five adaptations.

The Zeder system represents a collection of eight criteria. The first six traits, originally developed by Sam Smiley in his text *Playwriting: The Structure of Action*, include: biological, physical, dispositional, motivational, deliberative and decisive characteristics. Zeder created a hybrid system by also analyzing the protagonist's changes and development. Her eighth addition to Smiley's system included the influences of surrounding characters upon the protagonist. To create a comparison between story and adaptation, each of these eight character traits will be analyzed.

Biological traits refer to a character's race, gender, ethnic orientation and nationality. Bilbo Baggins is a representative of a fictional sub-species of humanity and his race will therefore become a subject for discussion.

Physical traits are interrelated with biology, but reflect individual aspects. The protagonist's hair color, height, weight, agility, strength, and health will be carefully considered. Physical characteristics will be limited to the descriptions provided by each author.

While the biological and physical aspects of Bilbo are usually inferred or directly stated, the mental attributes of the character must be interpreted through indications provided by each author. In Tolkien's original story, the mental attributes are readily interpreted through the author's narrative voice. In the five adapted scripts, however, actions, dialogue, monologues, asides and director's notes provide indications of mental character traits.

Disposition refers to the mood and personality of the character. In the original text, Tolkien provides direct statements such as "he was sad" or "he was feeling cheerful." In the five adapted scripts, frequently mood and personality are presented physically (by pounding a table in anger), by vocally broadcasting feelings or by presenting a surrounding character's reaction to the protagonist's disposition.

Motivational traits are revealed in a similar fashion. In the case of Tolkien's protagonist, the character's motivations sometimes conflict, creating difficulties in deliberations and decisions. Conflicting motivations enrich the character and provide examples of decision-making. Once again, while the objectives and desires are clearly stated in Tolkien's original text, the adapters must create behavioral, vocal and written indications of these traits.

An investigation of deliberative traits demonstrates the character's thought processes, logic, planning and reasoning. This aspect requires careful attention because deliberations interweave with decisions. This inter-relationship suggests the analysis of deliberative and decisive characteristics should be examined in conjunction with one another. As a result, the thought processes combined with decisions reveal important overall aspects of character.

In addition to the six basic character traits, the changes and developments of the protagonist also require scrutiny. Throughout the plot, Bilbo learns, adapts and gains experience. This character's development has an influence upon his potential as a role model. Tolkien created a model who matures, acquires power and learns valuable lessons. The five adaptations will be examined in terms of each protagonist's development through the course of each script's plot.

The final aspect of this methodology examines the secondary characters -- the guardians and the antagonists. Guardians provide protection, momentum and advice to the protagonist. In Tolkien's story, Gandalf the wizard assumes this role. Interestingly, the portrayal of this guardian can have an impact upon the audience's perception of the protagonist. While guardians may provide comfort or help, Smiley, Evans, Davis and Zeder argue that the over-use of powerful guardians reduces the effectiveness of the protagonist.<sup>31</sup> Overprotective guardians teach young audiences to rely upon outside forces to solve their problems. Tolkien's story and the five adaptations will be carefully examined in terms of the protective power Gandalf applies to the protagonist.

The other type of secondary characters, the antagonists, represents obstacles to the lead character and help illustrate comparisons between them. As Smiley notes, the antagonists also have an impact upon the audience's perception of the lead character:

A strong antagonist insures that the struggle undertaken by the protagonist will have dynamism and power. A weak antagonist undercuts the strength of both the protagonist and the plot. A weak antagonist is shown to be incompetent, inept, or stupid and is not really capable of destroying the

protagonist, because his presumed power is revealed as a sham. There is little virtue in defeating and incompetent adversary.”<sup>32</sup>

Bilbo faces several opponents through the course of Tolkien’s story. Each antagonist will be analyzed for its competence in both the original version and the five adaptations.

Subjecting Tolkien’s original character to this intense scrutiny will produce a paradigm with carefully defined character traits. To fulfill the purpose of this study, it is necessary to subject each of the five adaptations to the same rigorous examination. This procedure will validate a comparison between the original and the adapted characters. It will also provide insights into the adaptation process and reveal techniques that influence modeling for young audiences.

## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> These authors can be found in this study's bibliography.
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- <sup>6</sup> Bandura, 88.
- <sup>7</sup> Zeder, Suzan L. *A Character Analysis of the Child Protagonist as Presented in Popular Plays for Child Audiences*. diss., Florida State University, 1978 (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1979) 31.
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- <sup>10</sup> Norcini, John J. and Samuel S. Snyder, "Effects of Modeling and Cognitive Induction," *Handbook of Moral Development*, ed. Gary L. Sapp (Birmingham: Religious Education P., 1989) 70.
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- <sup>21</sup> Bandura, Albert, Dorthea Ross and Sheila Ross, "Imitation of Film Mediated Aggressive Models," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 66 (1963) 3-11
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- <sup>26</sup> Wortman, 233.
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- <sup>28</sup> Bandura, Albert, *Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control* (New York: W. H. Freeman, 1997) 99.
- <sup>29</sup> Starr, Cheryl, Lea, *Theatrical Literature Involving Stressful Situations and the Impact upon Young Audiences: An Evaluation of Published Scripts*, 1988 diss., U Minnesota, 1991 (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1991) 37.

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<sup>31</sup> Zeder, 93.

<sup>32</sup> Zeder, 175.

### Chapter 3

#### ANALYSIS OF *THE HOBBIT* BY J.R.R. TOLKIEN

Bilbo Baggins, the protagonist from J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, possesses strong potential as a role model. This character displays many traits which elicit attraction and imitation. In addition, ethical issues are infused within the story and the protagonist embodies an ideal of pro-social behavior.

According to Patrick Curry, William Green and Humphrey Carpenter, *The Hobbit* has enjoyed immense popularity because of Tolkien's appealing protagonist, vivid content and accessible writing style.<sup>1</sup> The story has found a readership among various age groups and has appealed to both children and young adults. Judging by reactions made by critics, *The Hobbit* is suitable as a bedtime story for young children and as reading material for youngsters in secondary grades. Adults also frequently read this story as a prelude to Tolkien's best-selling volume, *The Lord of the Rings*. William H. Green states that even though the story was originally intended as a bedtime story for Tolkien's own children, the story possesses a "potentially wide age appeal."<sup>2</sup> Green argues it is "no hollow sales slogan that the story appeals to 'all ages.'"<sup>3</sup> According to the *International Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*, the story can be "read by virtually all age groups."<sup>4</sup>

For the sake of this study, the analysis of Bilbo Baggins will focus upon the audience for whom Tolkien originally intended. The potential role model will be scrutinized in terms of role modeling by child audience members, aged 5 to 12.

### The Hobbit as Role Model

Bilbo Baggins possesses several traits which may attract children and inspire imitation. These include Bilbo's physical qualities, his neutral gender traits, his acquisition of prestige and his warm personality. Bilbo also receives reinforcement for his positive behaviors.

As noted earlier, social learning theorists have found that children tend to emulate models who resemble them physically. Bilbo Baggins is short, roughly half the size of an adult; he belongs to an imaginary sub-species of humanity known for diminutive stature. Since children must constantly interact in a world of "big people," they may develop empathy for others who face a similar challenge.

Despite the difference in height, hobbits are quite similar to humans. In fact, J. R. R. Tolkien fashioned hobbits as small, "rustic English people."<sup>5</sup> Tolkien created a race of down-to-earth, sensible folk who possessed their author's sense of values. Tolkien once wrote: "I am in fact a hobbit in all but size. I like gardens, trees, and unmechanized farmlands; I smoke a pipe, and like good plain food (unrefrigerated), but detest French cooking; I like, and even dare to wear in these dull days, ornamental waistcoats. I am fond of mushrooms (out of the field); have a very simple sense of humor (which even my appreciative critics find tiresome); I go to bed late and get up late (when possible). I do not travel much."<sup>6</sup>

Despite these similarities, there is a difference between Tolkien and his character. Bilbo does not display “gendered” behavior. In fact, the author’s story avoids issues of sex or gender. Several scholars, including Lois Kuznet, Katharyn Crabbe and Patrick Curry have observed that sexuality is not an issue in Tolkien’s writing. Kuznet describes Bilbo as “an androgynous childlike hero who appeals to both boys and girls.”<sup>7</sup> Crabbe agrees and also views “the hero as androgynous.”<sup>8</sup> As a reflection of this, Tolkien’s protagonist displays a mixture of stereotyped behavior associated with males and females. Although Tolkien’s character is identified as male and is referred to using masculine pronouns, his blurred gender behavior can increase the potential of attraction by both boys and girls. Green believes that female readers “may identify with characters who transcend masculine pronouns and act out ‘feminine’ traits.”<sup>9</sup>

According to social learning theorists, children also tend to imitate a model who acquires power and prestige. Bilbo gains physical power with a magical sword and a ring that allows him to become invisible. In addition, his skills and intellect help the hobbit become a valued leader of the adventure. By acquiring both power and prestige, Bilbo Baggins fulfills additional characteristics that promote role modeling.

The warm personality of this potential role model is a compelling influence on imitation. Bilbo displays a series of desirable dispositional traits. He is friendly, kind, considerate, dependable, supportive and protective. Bilbo’s personality may therefore encourage attraction and modeling.

Bilbo provides a potential for pro-social modeling in a number of encounters when he must overcome fear and seek thoughtful solutions to problems. In essence, Tolkien’s story presents a rite of passage, or as author William H. Green calls it, “a journey into

maturity.”<sup>10</sup> As Bilbo’s character traits develop, he provides an example of facing adversity peacefully and courageously.

Finally, the reinforcement of behavior also influences the hobbit’s potential as a role model. At the end of Tolkien’s story, Bilbo receives praise for his decisions, leadership and skills. He also receives a financial reward for his efforts. This reward becomes another indicator of Bilbo’s personality; he offers to give up all his money to ensure safety and peace for his friends.

To provide a comprehensive profile of Bilbo Baggins, these and other characteristics require further examination. This in-depth profile of Bilbo Baggins will become the paradigm for comparison with the five adapted scripts.

### Character Profile of Bilbo Baggins

J.R.R. Tolkien’s story of *The Hobbit* takes the reader on a journey through dangerous terrain to attain a seemingly impossible goal. In many ways, the book’s secondary title, “There and Back Again,” more fully describes the rite of passage experienced by the little hobbit, Bilbo Baggins. This hobbit’s adventure contains crisis situations and moral decisions. The protagonist matures, developing wisdom and confidence.

### Physical and Biological Traits

J.R.R. Tolkien conveniently provides a physical and biological description of hobbits at the beginning of his story:

They are (or were) a little people, about half our height, and smaller than the bearded dwarves. Hobbits have no beards. They are inclined to be fat in the stomach; they dress in bright colours (chiefly green and yellow); wear no shoes, because their feet grow natural leathery soles and thick warm brown hair like the stuff on their heads (which is curly); have long, clever brown fingers, good-natured faces, and laugh deep fruity laughs (especially after dinner, which they have twice a day when they can get it.)<sup>11</sup>

Bilbo Baggins possesses several physical traits which help him survive. He exhibits natural endurance and agility. Tolkien notes several times how Bilbo “can move quietly in woods, absolutely quietly.” Like a child, Bilbo also has an aptitude for hiding himself and can “recover wonderfully from falls and bruises.”<sup>12</sup> He also possesses keen hearing and excellent vision. Finally, Bilbo’s tendency to be overweight stems from his love of frequent meals and domestic comfort.

### Dispositional Traits

The dispositional traits of Bilbo Baggins reveal many admirable aspects of this character. Although the hobbit is initially timid and cautious, he develops bravery as the story progresses. The reader also realizes that Bilbo is consistently polite, cheerful, honest, thoughtful and friendly. His pleasant disposition enables him to navigate through difficult and sometimes dangerous situations.

The reader is first exposed to his demeanor when Bilbo politely turns down Gandalf’s expedition. Even when the small army of hungry dwarves enters his home, he

plays the role of cheerful host to the best of his ability. Bilbo feels frustrated by their visit, but he tries not to show his irritation.

In his first encounter with danger, the hobbit's personality saves him from being eaten. He persuades a group of hungry trolls that he is too small to eat. Later, the timid hobbit convinces himself to become more brave when he is alone in a dark cavern: "'Go back?' he thought. 'No good at all! Go sideways? Impossible! Go forward? Only thing to do! On we go!'"<sup>13</sup> The reinforcement he receives for his courage gives him greater confidence.

Many surrounding characters comment on the hobbit's personality. The dragon, a dangerous foe, remarks that Bilbo is very polite. At the end of the story, both Thorin and Gandalf praise Bilbo's pleasant disposition and positive attitude.

This protagonist does *not* display hatred or greed. Although Bilbo encounters many antagonists, he does not wish to harm them. The hobbit goes out of his way to prevent harm to both Gollum and to an elvish prison guard. Bilbo's considerate, peaceful resolutions to conflicts are reinforced in Tolkien's story. Bilbo offers to give up his share of the treasure to assure peace between the dwarves, humans and elves. As a result, he gains the praise and admiration of other characters.

### Motivational Traits

Throughout the story, Bilbo's primary motivations are to return home, to avoid unpleasant conflicts and to help his companions. At the beginning, Bilbo appears content with his peaceful life and has no desire for adventure. His heritage soon creates a conflict of desires, however. Bilbo's conservative upbringing by his father clashes with his mother



Took's sense of adventure. Bilbo's Tookish heritage, temporarily in a state of dormancy, soon emerges to stimulate Bilbo's curiosity and tempt him into adventure. This dichotomy motivates his actions throughout the story.

Bilbo's initial desires are to stay home, eat well and remain safe. Yet when the dwarves begin to sing of their upcoming adventure, Bilbo's dormant desire for travel seems to surface.

As they sang the hobbit felt the love of beautiful things made by hands and by cunning and by magic moving through him, a fierce and jealous love, the desire of the heart of dwarves. Then something Tookish woke up inside him, and he wished to go and see the great mountains, and hear the pine-trees and the waterfalls, and explore the caves and wear a sword instead of a walking-stick.<sup>14</sup>

After his departure from the Shire, Bilbo wishes to return to his comfortable, peaceful home. Mixed with this desire, however, is his strong wish to prove himself useful to his traveling companions. He does this by helping the dwarves escape from several dangerous situations.

In these dangerous situations, Bilbo desires to evade his enemies and avoid conflict. His evasion of unpleasantness should not be mistaken for cowardice, however. Throughout the story, Bilbo faces his enemies with a surprising level of courage. Alone, he bravely faces the spiders, Gollum and the dragon. Interestingly, Bilbo does not desire the *destruction* of these enemies. Bilbo simply wants to remove himself from their company.

Bilbo shows his desire to prevent violence on a number of occasions. When Bilbo encounters the goblins, Gollum and the elves, he attempts to promote peace. Bilbo also shows his pacifism when he tries to prevent war between the elves, dwarves and humans; Bilbo hopes to mediate an accord between these groups. Despite the multitude of conflicts that he faces, the hobbit only becomes involved in one fight (with the giant spiders).

Bilbo's pacifism reflects Tolkien's personal beliefs. In fact, this story was written after the author personally experienced the horrors of the first World War. Appalled by mechanized killing machines and the scale of violence, Tolkien believed that modern warfare represented a perfection of destructive power, not a test of honor. According to William H. Green, Tolkien therefore wanted to display how an essentially meek and ethical character could survive dangerous situations without resorting to violence.<sup>15</sup>

After preventing a war between the elves, humans and dwarves, Bilbo's wish to return home overrides his other motivations. Even though he has the opportunity to come home fabulously wealthy, he takes only a modest share of the treasure, proving that he is not motivated by money. Bilbo then states that he hopes to write a book about his travels.

### Deliberative and Decisive Traits

Bilbo's deliberations and decisions represent precursors to action. The depth of character development and the importance of the deliberation/decision process require substantial attention within the context of Tolkien's plot. Bilbo's deliberations and decisions will be examined in relationship with one another.

Bilbo Baggins appears to develop his deliberative and decisive processes in three distinct steps. At first, Bilbo appears incapable of making concise decisions or plans. Later, through experience, he displays the ability to think quickly and make decisions during crisis situations. Eventually, Bilbo becomes very proficient at developing effective strategies and long-term plans.

Bilbo's first decision is an emotional reaction, made without planning or deliberation. When the dwarves question Bilbo's bravery, he defends his honor. By affirming his courage, he indirectly agrees to join the adventure. This first decision is made by Bilbo without any deliberative consideration.

Bilbo also fails to deliberate over his second important decision. Bilbo reveals his inexperience with danger by failing to evaluate his situation with the trolls. Bilbo unwillingly "volunteers" to scout the monsters' camp. Thinking that he needs to impress his fellow adventurers by stealing some food, he is captured and interrogated. Through pleading, luck and the protection of Gandalf, the entire group avoids being eaten, but it seems that Bilbo learns an important lesson. The hobbit realizes that he must not enter dangerous situations without a logical plan or approach.

Feeling a bit more wary following his harrowing experience with the trolls, the protagonist becomes more cognizant of how to handle danger. Bilbo displays an improvement in thought process when he anticipates a surprise attack by goblins. By staying awake and keeping watch, he is able to provide a warning to the group.

Bilbo later shows his ability to think quickly when he meets Gollum, a sly and dangerous adversary. Bilbo agrees to a game of riddles to buy himself more time to plan. Through intuitive problem solving and luck, he manages to outwit Gollum. He also

acquires a powerful magic ring that makes him invisible. The powerful ring forces Bilbo to consider how to use the magic ethically.

Desperate to leave the dark cavern, Bilbo contemplates how to escape Gollum. Invisible and armed with his sword, Bilbo considers killing his opponent. While he deliberates, however, “a sudden understanding, a pity mixed with horror, welled up in Bilbo’s heart.”<sup>16</sup> Instead of killing him, Bilbo decides to risk his own life by distracting Gollum and then by jumping around him. With his acquisition of power, he gains a greater degree of confidence. Bilbo also acknowledges the great responsibility that accompanies the possession of such power.

Later in the story, Bilbo learns to utilize the advice of others and to gather pertinent information to plan his successful strategies. His learning proves valuable when Gandalf leaves the dwarves under Bilbo’s guidance and protection. Although the hobbit feels unprepared for such responsibility, events occur which prove his ability as a protector.

The attack by the giant spiders forces Bilbo to develop a sophisticated rescue plan. The hobbit turns invisible, taunts the spiders and draws them away from the poisoned dwarves. After locating the forest path, Bilbo leads the dwarves back to safety.

Soon afterward, Bilbo plans another rescue for the group. When the dwarves are imprisoned for trespassing in the territory of the wood elves, Bilbo engineers a jailbreak. Bilbo creates an elaborate escape plan. After days of preparation, the hobbit arranges the theft of the jailer’s keys. As the wood elves celebrate and feast, Bilbo smuggles the dwarves out through an underground river. Interestingly, Bilbo takes another personal risk to prevent harm to another person. Before he leaves, he takes the time to return the

stolen jail keys: “That will save him some of the trouble he is in for,’ said Mr. Baggins to himself. ‘He wasn’t a bad fellow, and quite decent to the prisoners. It will puzzle them all too. They will think we had a very strong magic to pass through all those locked doors and disappear.”<sup>17</sup>

Bilbo develops another strategy when the adventurers finally arrive at Lonely Mountain. The reader realizes that Bilbo functions as the group’s strategist and voice of reason. For example, he tenaciously searches to find the mountain’s secret entrance. “None of them had much spirit left. Now strange to say Mr. Baggins had more than the others. He would often borrow Thorin’s map and gaze at it, pondering over the runes and the message of the moon-letters Elrond had read.”<sup>18</sup> When he does find this entrance, Bilbo remembers the advice of Elrond and Gandalf. He opens the door by deciphering its magical riddle.

Bilbo makes another critical decision when he contemplates the danger of entering Smaug’s lair. Bilbo manages to overcome his fear. “He was trembling with fear, but his little face was set and grim. Already he was a very different hobbit from the one who had run out without a pocket-handkerchief from Bag-End long ago.”<sup>19</sup> Tolkien then informs his reader that entering Smaug’s lair, “was the bravest thing he ever did.”<sup>20</sup>

Bilbo shows great wisdom conversing with the dragon. This conversation gives him an opportunity to observe the dragon’s vulnerabilities. By praising and cajoling Smaug, Bilbo sees a weakness in the dragon’s armor. The knowledge of this weakness later saves the people of Laketown from the dragon’s attack.

According to Humphrey Carpenter, the Tolkien had difficulty writing the end of his story. The author of *The Hobbit* originally ended the story by having Bilbo kill the

dragon. “But this idea, which scarcely suited the character of the hobbit or provided a grand enough death for Smaug, was rejected in favour of the published version where the dragon is slain by the archer Bard.”<sup>21</sup> As Carpenter notes, Tolkien maintained the ethical integrity of his protagonist by not portraying him as an assassin.

Following the killing of Smaug by the archer, Bilbo attempts to resolve conflicts by negotiating between the dwarves, elves and humans. Bilbo uses his share of the treasure as a peace offering and successfully finds a way to prevent a war between the races.

After a final conflict between the allies and the goblins, Bilbo finds out that Thorin has been mortally injured. Bilbo and the dwarf exchange forgiveness; the hobbit comforts Thorin as he dies. Bilbo, “sat alone wrapped in a blanket, and, whether you believe it or not, he wept until his eyes were red and his voice was hoarse. He was a kindly little soul.”<sup>22</sup> As he contemplates the wastefulness of violence, he decides that the adventure is over and it is finally time to return home.

As he departs, he continues to display his lack of greed by turning down a large share of the treasure. Bilbo takes only what he can carry. Interestingly, he also gives a valuable necklace to the elven king, because Bilbo feels guilty about stealing food from his kingdom in the woods:

I may be a burglar -- or so they say; personally I never really felt like one but I am an honest one, I hope, more or less. Some little return should be made for your, er, hospitality. I mean even a burglar has his feelings. I have drunk much of your wine and eaten much of your bread.<sup>23</sup>

Tolkien’s story ends with Bilbo’s peaceful return home. Although he begins the adventure following the dwarves’ dreams of gold, he realizes that peace and friendships

are more important than glory or money. He begins writing a book about his journey, entitling it “There and Back Again: A Hobbit’s Holiday.”

### Surrounding Characters

J.R.R. Tolkien’s use of surrounding characters enhances Bilbo’s potential as a role model. The guardian character and the multiple antagonists require scrutiny to understand the dynamics and interactions of Bilbo.

The author presents Gandalf as a guardian. As a protector, Gandalf frequently provides critically needed advice and planning. Interestingly, the wizard removes his presence from Bilbo and the dwarves, seemingly to prompt the hobbit’s development. This departure forces Bilbo to think and act for himself. The wizard therefore functions as an excellent guardian; he teaches by example and then allows the “student” to display his acquired skill and knowledge. When Bilbo displays his ability and thoughtfulness, Gandalf rewards him with praise.

Tolkien’s episodic story includes a number of antagonists who present obstacles to Bilbo. Thorin Oakenshield frequently functions as a mild antagonist to the hobbit. Thorin rarely provides encouragement or support to Bilbo, and he frequently clashes with the hobbit’s ethical sensibilities. Thorin’s shortcomings illustrate Bilbo’s virtues. As William Green notes, this clash illuminates Tolkien’s beliefs: “Indeed, what is macho in *The Hobbit* is bad.”<sup>24</sup> Instead of being macho like Thorin, the hobbit “cooperates and shares; he does not compete to establish personal dominance. His most powerful stance is invisibility, not the claiming of territory.”<sup>25</sup>

The antagonists -- the trolls, the goblins, Gollum, the giant spiders and Smaug -- all represent powerful and deadly threats to Bilbo. Like Thorin, the antagonists display greed and aggression; these characters provide a contrast to Bilbo's peacefulness and generosity. Tolkien includes strong antagonists in his writing to emphasize the significance of the hobbit's accomplishments.

Smaug the dragon is the most deadly antagonist of the story. The dragon possesses immense destructive power; his shrewd and cunning intellect makes him a dangerous foe. When Bilbo outwits Smaug by finding out his weakness, it represents a remarkable achievement.

### Summary of Character Traits

Bilbo is approximately half the height of a normal human, slightly overweight, has hair on his feet and has a good-natured face. He exhibits endurance and agility along with excellent hearing, keen eyesight and an ability to move silently. Tolkien also notes that Bilbo dresses nicely, in bright, colorful clothes.

Bilbo is consistently polite, cheerful, honest, thoughtful and friendly. He has a charming personality that endears him to others. While he is initially fearful and frequently worried, he develops courage and confidence through the course of the adventure.

Tolkien's protagonist *never* displays hatred or greed.

Bilbo displays conflicting motivations. One side of Bilbo wants to remain in his comfortable home and his other side wishes to travel and explore. During his travels, he hopes to prove himself useful to the dwarves, to avoid aggressive conflicts and to promote



peaceful resolutions. He does not desire treasure, conquest or glory. Throughout the adventure, however, Bilbo continually wishes to return to his peaceful life.

Although each instance of deliberation and decision represents a significant aspect of Bilbo's character, overall statements can be made concerning his development throughout the story. Initially, Bilbo seems incapable of making effective plans or decisions. After acquiring some experience, however, he develops an ability to think and evaluate quickly. As Bilbo becomes a leader of the group, he develops the ability to create successful strategies and plans. Throughout this development, Bilbo Baggins attempts to act ethically and to consider the feelings of other characters.

Gandalf functions as an excellent guardian and helps to promote Bilbo's growth. When the hobbit is ready, Gandalf allows his student to learn for himself. This guardian character is not overprotective, nor does he take away the protagonist's decision making. In contrast to Gandalf, Thorin acts as a mild antagonist. While Thorin is good natured, he appears stubborn, aggressive and territorial.

The other antagonists in Tolkien's story create a myriad of challenges for Bilbo and the dwarves. The trolls, goblins, wargs and spiders all represent dangerous threats to the safety of the group. The humans and elves represent a challenge in diplomacy and understanding. Gollum and Smaug become Bilbo's personal antagonists; the hobbit must outwit these enemies or be killed.

### Summary of Tolkien's Role Model

Bilbo Baggins possesses strong potential as a role model. Not only does he physically resemble children, but he can potentially appeal to both boys and girls. Through

the course of the story, he acquires power and prestige. His warm personality elicits attraction and his ethical behavior is reinforced.

J.R.R. Tolkien originally wrote this story for his grandchildren and carefully developed the character traits of his protagonist. He began with a very simple, unsophisticated, frightened little hobbit and subjected him to incredible adventures. Through this character, Tolkien showed children how to learn from adversity, avoid violence, assume leadership and maintain ethical values. The author was also careful to reinforce the admirable traits in Bilbo.

In the appendix, a comprehensive plot synopsis is provided to summarize Tolkien's story for children. Following the synopsis, a more detailed explanation of the author's biography, cultural context and critical reception has also been included.

This chapter has analyzed the protagonist and surrounding characters of Tolkien's original story. The next chapter will apply the same methodology to the five theatrical adaptations of *The Hobbit*. By analyzing all versions with the same methods, comparisons between the original role model and each adaptation's role model can then take place. This comparison will show if the original role model is maintained by each playwright's adaptation process.

## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> Curry, Green and Carpenter provide excellent background information on Tolkien's writing and personal beliefs.
- <sup>2</sup> Green, William H., *The Hobbit: A Journey into Maturity*. (New York: Twayne Pub., 1995) 18.
- <sup>3</sup> Green, 12.
- <sup>4</sup> Hunt, Peter, ed. *International Encyclopedia of Children's Literature* (London: Routledge, 1996) 309.
- <sup>5</sup> Carpenter, 176.
- <sup>6</sup> Carpenter, 178.
- <sup>7</sup> Kuznet, Lois R., "Tolkien and the Rhetoric of Childhood." In *Tolkien: New Critical Perspectives*, edited by Neil D. Isaacs and Rose A. Zimbardo, 150-162. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1981. Observed and quoted frequently by Green, page 17.
- <sup>8</sup> Crabbe, Katharyn F., *J.R.R. Tolkien* (New York: Continuum, 1981). Quoted by Greene, page 18.
- <sup>9</sup> Green, 68.
- <sup>10</sup> Green, 18.
- <sup>11</sup> Tolkien, J.R.R., *The Hobbit* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966) 12.
- <sup>12</sup> Tolkien, 66.
- <sup>13</sup> Tolkien, 66.
- <sup>14</sup> Tolkien, 22.
- <sup>15</sup> Green, 9.
- <sup>16</sup> Tolkien, 79.
- <sup>17</sup> Tolkien, 155.
- <sup>18</sup> Tolkien, 176.

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<sup>19</sup> Tolkien, 183.

<sup>20</sup> Tolkien, 183-84.

<sup>21</sup> Carpenter, 179.

<sup>22</sup> Tolkien, 243.

<sup>23</sup> Tolkien, 230, 247.

<sup>24</sup> Green, 68.

<sup>25</sup> Green, 68.

## **Chapter 4**

### **ANALYSIS OF THE FIVE ADAPTATIONS**

This chapter will scrutinize each of the five adaptations of *The Hobbit*, using the character analysis system. The scripts will be analyzed in order of publication, beginning with the oldest adaptation from 1967 and ending with a recent script from 1996. Following each adaptation's analysis, summaries will clarify each script's potential for imitation and each protagonist's character traits.

#### **ANALYSIS OF ADAPTATION BY PATRICIA GRAY**

The Dramatic Publishing Company's 1967 publication of *The Hobbit* by Patricia Gray is the first adaptation in this study's analysis. In terms of content, Gray condenses Tolkien's 255-page book into a 78-page script.

##### **Physical and Biological Traits**

Many of Bilbo's physical and biological traits in this script are similar to Tolkien's story. Gray discusses physical and biological traits in her character and costume notes. In these notes, she includes several basic physical and biological traits. She describes Bilbo as "short, compact, with a well-stuffed stomach. His head is covered with thick,

curly brown hair, as are his shoeless feet. He is impeccably outfitted in a bright yellow waistcoat and pea green trousers, and wears a pointed cap, as do any hobbit extras used.”<sup>1</sup> The pointed hat is an addition made by Gray. In Tolkien’s story, hobbits do not wear whimsical hats. In addition to this alteration, Patricia Gray eliminates references to Bilbo’s excellent vision, hearing and his ability to move silently.

### Dispositional Traits

Gray’s adaptation exaggerates several of Bilbo’s dispositional traits. Although Bilbo frequently acts polite and friendly, his personality alters when he becomes frustrated. At the beginning of the script, the protagonist displays fear, sarcasm and moodiness. He tries to act as a cheerful host, but he frequently grumbles to himself and he responds bitterly to the dwarves’ requests for food.

At first, Gray portrays Bilbo as extremely fearful. When Gandalf mentions the notion of adventuring, Bilbo responds with an expression of “sheer terror.”<sup>2</sup> At one point, Bilbo becomes seized with anxiety: “(BILBO lets out a piercing shriek, falling off the stool to the floor, where he lies shaking and twitching wildly, shrieking) I’m struck by lightning! Struck by lightning!”<sup>3</sup> Following this fearful outburst, Bilbo’s emotional state turns to anger; he grows “incensed”<sup>4</sup> when he realizes he is obligated to join the adventure.

Later in the script, Bilbo’s exaggerated fearfulness continues when he emotionally pleads with the dwarves to avoid the trolls. After being captured by the monsters, however, he avoids being eaten, like the representation in Tolkien’s story. Also like the original story, Bilbo displays courage when he finds himself in the cavern of Gollum.

When the hobbit meets this foe, Bilbo's disposition parallels the polite tone presented in Tolkien's text.

At the end of the play, Bilbo's polite disposition contributes directly to Smaug's death. As he carries on a conversation with the dragon, Bilbo persuades Smaug to expose his weak underbelly. During this moment of weakness, the hobbit prompts Thorin to rush in and slay Smaug. Mr. Baggins appears to use his charming personality to deceive and to help kill the dragon.

### Motivational Traits

Gray's interpretations of Bilbo's motivations do not always resemble the original story. Bilbo's primary motivations remain centered on returning home, helping his companions and avoiding unpleasant creatures. Gray's protagonist appears to be motivated by social pressures, however. Concerned with his reputation as a conservative hobbit, he worries what his neighbors might think of him having dwarves in his home. When the dwarves first enter, the hobbit proclaims: "If my neighbors knew, they'd be scandalized! Dwarves here! In Bag-End!"<sup>5</sup> Bilbo also appears concerned with his reputation as an adventurer. Many of his brave actions are motivated by peer pressure. When Gandalf accuses Bilbo of being a coward, Bilbo "(highly insulted, stands up with great dignity): Sir, I must tell you that to uphold the honor of the Took family, I would cross mountains and deserts and fight a hundred dragons!"<sup>6</sup> Finally, Bilbo's participation in the killing of Smaug results from the dwarves' pressure and encouragement.

Gray displays Bilbo's motivation to avoid conflicts and encourage peace, but the displays occur much less frequently than in Tolkien's book. Mr. Baggins becomes directly

involved in violent fights with the trolls, the goblins and the dragon. The elimination of other plot elements omits Bilbo's desire to correct wrong-doings. Gray does not include Bilbo's returning the jail keys or nor does Gray dramatize Bilbo's repayment to the elf king.

Finally, Gray alters Bilbo's final motivation. Although Mr. Baggins states that he wishes to return home, in this script he also expresses his desire to go on another adventure. Tolkien's original character eventually realizes that adventures include discomfort and death; Gray's protagonist still romantically wishes for war and adventures.

#### Deliberative and Decisive Traits

Several of Bilbo's complex deliberations have been omitted from Gray's adaptation. In this adaptation, Gandalf makes most of the play's significant decisions. Although Patricia Gray initially portrays Bilbo's deliberations in a fashion similar to Tolkien's book, this portrayal becomes progressively altered. In the first scene, the hobbit commits himself to the adventure after defending his family honor. The hobbit makes his first decision without any deliberative considerations other than concern for his reputation.

This adaptation does, however, include an invented episode that dramatizes Bilbo's decision to be generous. After the loss of the supply ponies, he shares his food and helps his companions with enthusiasm. Gray later maintains fidelity to Tolkien's plot, by including Bilbo's inexperience with danger in the scene with the trolls. Bilbo's decision, however, is based on his hope to impress the dwarves by stealing from the trolls.

Patricia Gray appears to give less attention to the development of Bilbo's thought processes. Bilbo does not think quickly when the goblins attack; instead, it is Gandalf



who warns the group of danger. Gray's adaptation also includes a large-scale battle in which Bilbo decides to participate.

Later, Gray maintains fidelity to the original story during her dramatization of the encounter with Gollum. In the script, Bilbo consciously builds up his courage and then thinks quickly in this encounter. This appears to be the only point of this adaptation when the protagonist exercises his own volition. Bilbo outwits Gollum and then considers the ethics of killing his foe while he is invisible. "I could stab him with my blade, but that would be wrong when he can't see me."<sup>7</sup>

By not portraying the protagonist's development of strategic skills, Gray also prohibits him from becoming a leader. The adapter cuts the episode with the Mirkwood spiders, eliminating Bilbo's first successful strategy. This adaptation's protagonist also appears to forget the seriousness of the situations he faces. On two occasions, Thorin has to remind Bilbo to become invisible to avoid being caught by enemies.

The hobbit seems incapable of developing a strategy to break the dwarves out of jail. He lets the dwarves out of their cells and then admits he doesn't know what to do next: "But now what? We're still stuck here in the dungeon and if we go out the guards will grab us and put us right back in!"<sup>8</sup> In Gray's adaptation, the intricate jail-break strategy has turned into haphazard and ill-conceived plan.

Two additional cuts in this adaptation eliminate other aspects of Bilbo's character. Bilbo does not return the keys to the jailer nor does he find the secret entrance. Opportunities to display his thoughtfulness and his keen observational skills have both been eliminated.

Gray then invents the Elven Queen character, apparently to speed the play's denouement. The invention of this female guardian figure has significant ramifications. The Queen dispenses weapons and advice, assuming responsibility for several of Bilbo's important discoveries. Although this character helps solve the group's problems, adding a second guardian character reduces the effectiveness of the protagonist. This is readily apparent when the hobbit no longer displays his selfless plan to emphasize peace. Instead, Gandalf and the Elf Queen arrange an alliance between the elves and dwarves. The Queen discovers the secret entrance and Gandalf takes credit for the discovery of Smaug's weakness.

Gray alters Tolkien's plot by creating a plan to kill the dragon. Gandalf crafts the strategy and then tells Bilbo what to do. Bilbo converses with the dragon and persuades the serpent to show him his armored belly: "(SMAUG rears up and displays the glittering waistcoat. There is a black spot over the heart, bare of diamonds.) BILBO (calling off) Now, Thorin! (Thorin rushes on from Right and plunges his sword into Smaug's chest)."<sup>9</sup> With the death of Smaug, the play ends quickly. Pleased with the outcome, Gandalf and the Queen praise the hobbit. Bilbo then makes his final decision to return home with a modest share of the treasure.

### Surrounding Characters

Gray's most significant alteration of surrounding characters occurs with Gandalf. The wizard does not nurture or groom Bilbo into a leader. Instead, Gandalf maintains decisive control over the adventure. Whenever trouble arises, the wizard provides help. Even at the end of the story, Gandalf dictates plans and provides critical information. This

guardian appears to be overprotective. The invention of the Elf Queen character continues this reduction of Bilbo's volition and self-reliance.

Thorin fills the same role as in Tolkien's version, but the dwarf leader survives the adventure. When Gandalf chastises Thorin for his territorial stubbornness, the dwarf instantly changes his mind and his attitude. Suddenly, the bull-headed dwarf becomes congenial and cooperative. This alteration prevents a contrast between Thorin's and Bilbo's personalities.

The antagonists of this play represent powerful foes. Although Gray's adaptation eliminates the spider episode and the final battle with the goblins, the other antagonists in this play appear to be genuine threats. The trolls are dangerous, the goblins are bloodthirsty, Gollum is frightening and the dragon is intimidating. Overall, these antagonists present serious obstacles and threats to the protagonist, as they did in the original story.

### Summary of Characterization

Patricia Gray presents a protagonist that resembles the original Bilbo physically and biologically. She does not, however, include his remarkable vision, his ability to move silently, his excellent hearing or his ability to hide from enemies. Gray also alters this protagonist by having him wear a farcical, pointed hat.

Gray portrays Bilbo as friendly, polite and charming, but Tolkien's original character also appears to be altered. Gray's protagonist possesses a more extreme personality. He seems nervous, fearful, bold, moody and sarcastic. Bilbo also appears more tolerant of violence and aggression.

Patricia Gray's protagonist is more motivated by peer pressure. Bilbo's central objective is to appease his neighbors and friends. He even participates in aggressive behavior to gain their approval.

This adaptation does not display Bilbo's strong motivation to promote peaceful solutions. This becomes apparent during the negotiations between dwarves and elves. Bilbo's direct participation in Smaug's death also displays his reduced pacifism.

Instead of developing strategies, Bilbo relies upon luck or outside help. There are few examples of his quick thinking. Opportunities to develop crucial plans are also omitted. When he does develop a strategy, it is with the assistance of one of the surrounding characters.

The surrounding characters in this adaptation have undergone some changes. Gandalf is an overprotective guardian in Patricia Gray's adaptation. He controls the plot and eliminates Bilbo's volition. The wizard does not nurture or train Bilbo to become the adventure's leader. Furthermore, Gray's invention of the Elf Queen reinforces the notion that Bilbo requires guidance and protection at all times.

The playwright presents Thorin as a supporting character, not as a minor antagonist. Instead of providing a contrast between Thorin and Bilbo, Gray changes Thorin into Bilbo's friend.

The strong antagonists, such as the goblins, Gollum and Smaug, represent dangerous threats to the protagonist. The strength of these antagonists presents serious obstacles to the protagonist. However, Gray's elimination of several of these antagonists reduces the opportunities to display Bilbo's development.

### Potential of Imitation by Children

Patricia Gray presents her audience with a potential role model. Bilbo can elicit attraction and imitation because he is similar to children. Bilbo might inspire attraction because he appears friendly, acquires prestige and is reinforced for his actions. Unlike Tolkien's protagonist, however, this potential role model displays aggressive behavior. Bilbo is also rewarded for his violence. In addition, Gray's adaptation displays a role model who is motivated by peer pressure and who frequently makes decisions based upon the opinions of others. Finally, Gray's overuse of guardian characters might teach children to rely upon outside forces to solve their problems.

### **ANALYSIS OF THE MUSICAL ADAPTATION**

The musical version of *The Hobbit* is the second adaptation for analysis. Published in 1972 by the Dramatic Publishing Company, this play was crafted as a collaborative effort. Allan Jay Friedman composed the music, David Rogers wrote the lyrics and Ruth Perry wrote the text. This musical version is significantly longer (109 total pages) than Gray's play. The publisher includes the lyrics of all the songs, so observations can still be made concerning action and dialogue.

The inclusion of music and lyrics may have an effect upon modeling behavior. While the exact impact upon young audiences would be difficult to determine, it may be assumed that song lyrics can be remembered easily because of melodious repetition. Songs also have the tendency to inspire emotion and mood. This study will attempt to address the possible influence of the music and lyrics into its analysis.

### Physical and Biological Traits

In the production notes, Ruth Perry identifies many of the same physical and biological traits described by Tolkien. In the script's costume notes, Bilbo is described as: "short and rather plump and has thick brown hair on his toes to match the hair on his head."<sup>10</sup> These notes also describe Bilbo's bright clothing and that he wears a pointed cap, as in Patricia Gray's version. In several situations, Bilbo displays his ability to move silently and hide from his enemies. Interestingly, however, the lyrics of Bilbo's song "Invisibility" contradict this adaptation's statement that Bilbo possesses dexterity: "The deeds of daring, I'll dare to do with such facility. I've brains but little brawn and absolutely no agility."<sup>11</sup> This musical adaptation also does not display Bilbo's keen hearing or his excellent eyesight.

### Dispositional Traits

This adaptation's interpretation of Bilbo's disposition maintains limited fidelity to the original story. At the beginning of the script, the adaptation portrays Bilbo as fearful; he eventually acquires high levels of courage. For a brief period, Bilbo becomes indignant about being "invited" on the journey. After the first scene, however, this musical version alters Bilbo's disposition.

Throughout the script, Bilbo's cheerfulness dominates his personality. While this protagonist still displays such dispositional traits as politeness, honesty and thoughtfulness, Bilbo's good cheer seems to serve a direct purpose in this adaptation. On several occasions, Mr. Baggins functions as a cheerleader. After losing the supply ponies, Bilbo sings the song "Tale of Two Frogs," that roughly parallels the children's story "The Little

Engine That Could.”<sup>12</sup> This cheerful song improves the dwarves’ spirits and keeps them moving. Bilbo’s positive attitude is maintained throughout the script.

This adaptation also alters Bilbo’s peaceful personality. In this script, Bilbo participates in the fight with the trolls and the goblins. Bilbo also *kills* the dragon with his sword. Bilbo’s increased aggression and anger is displayed throughout the script.

### Motivational Traits

In this adaptation, Bilbo’s motivations are similar to those found in the original book. As in Tolkien’s text, the dominant desire of the hobbit is to return home. The lyrics of two songs illustrate this motivation. His first song, “No, Thank You,” concerns his desire to remain in the Shire. The melancholy song entitled “I Want to Go Home” displays Bilbo’s dominant motivation.

This adaptation also accurately portrays Bilbo’s desire to avoid trouble and to provide help to his companions. However, this adaptation reduces Bilbo’s motivation to discourage violence. As mentioned earlier, Bilbo participates in battles with the trolls, the goblins and the dragon.

Another alteration made by the adapters concerns Bilbo’s attitude toward the ring. Bilbo becomes quite possessive of his magical treasure. Several of the dwarves ask to use the ring of invisibility, but the hobbit greedily refuses to give the ring to anyone else.

This adaptation also alters the little hobbit’s desire for money. Bilbo seems much more fascinated by treasure and wealth. Bilbo’s greed becomes apparent when he speaks with Smaug and furtively steals jewels at the same time. “No, thank you, Smaug. I did not come for gifts. (All the same, Bilbo pockets an emerald necklace.)”<sup>13</sup>

Mr. Baggins occasionally displays his desire to prevent harm to others. This play dramatizes his urge to avoid harming Gollum and his inclination to return the prison guard's keys. Bilbo does, however, display aggressive behavior towards several other opponents.

### Deliberative and Decisive Traits

In this musical adaptation, Bilbo Baggins makes many decisions, but he does not display a sequential development in his thought processes. Instead, Bilbo's abilities to plan and make decisions are *pre-existing*. The hobbit's ability to lead appears to be present from the beginning of the script.

Bilbo's first decision, to go on the adventure, parallels Tolkien's original story. Instead of discussing the issue, however, Bilbo sings of staying home and Gandalf sings of the wonders of adventure. In an interesting use of overlapping lyrics, the adapters portray Bilbo's conflicting desires and the difficulty of his decision. Finally, when the dwarves describe their home and the injustices committed by Smaug, Bilbo states his desire to adventure with them.

In an interesting departure from Tolkien's plot, Bilbo is dramatized as being enthusiastic about leaving: "BILBO (suddenly bold and cheerful). And now, boy, run on home and tell your mother I'm off killing dragons. (To THORIN.) I believe you said we should get started?"<sup>14</sup> This resolute and optimistic decision differs from Bilbo's hesitance in the original story.

Without encouragement or experience, Bilbo assumes Gandalf's role as protector. Bilbo deals with his first dangerous situation in a confident and professional manner. In



this adaptation, the hobbit saves the dwarves from the trolls. It is Bilbo's idea to distract the trolls with ventriloquism. Gandalf arrives afterwards and congratulates Bilbo for his skill and planning.

The next antagonists provide another opportunity for Bilbo to display his already sharp observational and strategic skills. Bilbo notices that his sword glows, indicating that goblins are near. Bilbo warns the others and the group prepares for an attack. Bilbo provides strategic help during the long and violent battle.

Although this adaptation displays Bilbo's tactical knowledge and strategic planning from the beginning, it portrays the protagonist's encounter with Gollum accurately. Their game of riddles and their conversation appear similar to Tolkien's original text. This adaptation alters the final moments of this scene, however. The deliberation over killing Gollum does not occur. This script does not include one of Bilbo's important ethical decisions.

Bilbo's deliberations change as his confidence grows into arrogance. After surviving Gollum, he victoriously sings "Invisibility" and begins to think of ways to use his new power. The adapters include several violent plans in these lyrics:

With my left hand I'll slay a dragon showing versatility...

Good-bye to good old Baggins with his tractable docility.

He used to turn the other cheek when faced with incivility.

Well, now he'll turn it back and he'll attack with new virility.

Alone... I own... invisibility.<sup>15</sup>

Bilbo's aggression is an alteration of Tolkien's original character. In addition, the lyrics of this song also utilize an elevated vocabulary which might not be understandable to younger audiences.

This adaptation's alteration of character and language continues when Bilbo uses the ring's power to tease other characters. In a situation similar to Christopher Marlowe's invisibility scene in *Doctor Faustus*, Bilbo taunts the dwarves. He steals items and eavesdrops on their conversations. Bilbo violently pulls Bombur's hair and trips him so the dwarf falls. Apparently, these antics are for the amusement of the young audience.

Bilbo's thought processes in Mirkwood also change. Wood elves, rather than Bilbo, save the dwarves from the spiders. In addition, this adaptation simplifies Bilbo's intricate jail-break. Like Gray's adaptation, this musical version presents Bilbo's jailbreak as a haphazard plan. The dwarves escape through luck rather than strategy.

The adapters of this play include some indicators of Bilbo's sensitivity. For example, they include the moment when Bilbo returns the jail keys. Even though Thorin thinks his action is dangerous, Bilbo returns the keys so the guard will not get into trouble.

Despite this conscientious action, evidence of Bilbo's planning appears to decrease towards the end of the script. Gandalf -- not Bilbo -- finds and opens the secret entrance. This script also eliminates Bilbo's discovery of Smaug's weakness. Instead, Gandalf already knows that the dragon possesses a vulnerability in his armored hide.

In another moment of deliberation, Bilbo contemplates the ethical nature of stealing treasure. The dwarves sing to convince him that stealing is not bad. After rationalizing theft from Smaug as, "Benevolent Burglary," Bilbo decides that it is ethical and acceptable to steal back the treasure.

Without any ethical deliberation, Bilbo deceives and then kills the dragon. “(As Smaug stands, Bilbo suddenly hurls Sting [his dagger]. There is a heavy crash and sudden, complete silence.)”<sup>16</sup> The hobbit slays the dragon and receives praise from Gandalf and the dwarves. Although an earlier song concerns itself with the ethics of burglary, Bilbo does not even contemplate the ethics of killing the dragon.

The adapters do not include Bilbo’s attempts to promote peace demonstrated in the original story. Instead, Bilbo’s pacifism is replaced by aggression. At the end of the play, Bilbo is praised and is given a share of the treasure. His aggression is encouraged and reinforced. The dwarves and the hobbit part company with a hopeful but sorrowful song of farewell.

### Surrounding Characters

In this adaptation, Gandalf does not nurture Bilbo’s development. The hobbit must fend for himself and Gandalf does not function as a guardian. Bilbo’s abilities to plan strategically are pre-existing; they do not develop.

Thorin does not function as a mild antagonist. This adaptation deletes the situations that resulted in conflicts between Bilbo and Thorin. Thorin appears more supportive of Bilbo. The comparison between pacifism and aggression does not take place; instead, Bilbo and Thorin seem to agree that violence is an effective strategy.

Like Gray’s adaptation, this script contains numerous antagonists who hinder or endanger the protagonist. The trolls, the goblins, Gollum, the spiders and the dragon all represent serious threats to Bilbo, as they did in the original story.

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### Summary of Characterization

In this musical adaptation, the physical and biological traits of Bilbo parallel those of Tolkien's original character. The adapters only alter two aspects: he wears a pointed cap and the adapters do not mention his excellent hearing and vision.

This adaptation emphasizes one of Bilbo's dispositional traits. In this script, Bilbo is cheerful in almost all situations. While he also displays politeness, honesty, thoughtfulness, cowardice and bravery, this protagonist's personality becomes dominated by his positive attitude.

The greed displayed by Bilbo also reflects an alteration of his motivations. While this script portrays most of the protagonist's original motivations, more emphasis is placed upon his desire for treasure. This script also dramatizes Bilbo's desire to return home, to avoid trouble and to help his companions, but this adaptation reduces his desire to promote peace. Bilbo's violent actions directly contradict his desire to avoid trouble and resolve situations peacefully.

Bilbo's deliberations and decisions in this script are also different from Tolkien's original. The protagonist does not display a sequential development of thought processes. Instead of learning painful lessons and acquiring the ability to plan strategies, this character displays his leadership and planning from the beginning of the play. Interestingly, as the plot unfolds, Bilbo's deliberative abilities seem to degenerate. By the end of this play, Bilbo's ethics and plans seem poorly conceived, evidenced by his concern for the ethics of burglary rather than the ethics of murder. He becomes more concerned with treasure than with promoting peace.

Finally, this musical adaptation alters the functions of the surrounding characters. Gandalf's role as the nurturing guardian becomes reduced to the role of helpful friend. Thorin stops being a mild antagonist; instead, he seems supportive and friendly to Bilbo. The other antagonists, however, seem to maintain their power and threat to the protagonist.

### Potential of Imitation by Children

This adaptation possesses strong potential for imitation by children. This version of Bilbo still possesses the physical similarities to children, although Bilbo again appears more masculine than the original character. The potential of imitation by girls may therefore become reduced. This potential may be counterbalanced, however, by the amount of power and prestige the character acquires. In this adaptation, Bilbo finds a sword capable of slaying a dragon, a ring of invisibility and a huge amount of treasure. He also receives the praise of Gandalf and the dwarves. The perceived power and prestige are perhaps even higher in this adaptation than those found in Tolkien's original story. The potential for imitation by children is enhanced by Bilbo's cheerful and nurturing personality. He is also admirable for displaying several acts of courage.

The physical similarities, power, prestige, warmth and courage of this character help to reinforce and encourage several anti-social behaviors. First, several of Bilbo's traits conflict with one another and seem to give mixed messages to the audience. Bilbo is helpful and kind, yet he is also directly responsible for the deaths of three trolls and a dragon. Bilbo becomes selfish with his magical ring and seems strongly motivated by

money. Contrary to the ethical behavior found in Tolkien's story, Bilbo becomes a potential role model for greed and violence.

## **ANALYSIS OF ADAPTATION BY BRAINERD DUFFIELD**

Brainerd Duffield's script, published in 1974 by Baker's Plays, maintains the least fidelity to Tolkien's original story. This adaptation condenses the original story into a 73 page script.

### **Physical and Biological Traits**

Bilbo uses direct address to describe himself. He mentions that he is proud of his pot belly and that all hobbits are short. The adapter does not include references to Bilbo's vision or hearing. Duffield does not mention Bilbo's ability to hide or move silently. In essence, Duffield only mentions that Bilbo appears short and overweight.

### **Dispositional Traits**

In this adaptation, Bilbo's personality differs from the disposition presented by Tolkien. The only dispositional trait that is consistent with the original text is the hobbit's politeness. Duffield appears to present this politeness as haughtiness rather than graciousness, however. This adaptation frequently displays Bilbo's snobbish attitude during his addresses to the audience. After he observes the trolls, Bilbo states to his young audience: "I'm afraid that trolls have never been famous for their etiquette or table manners, and these three will never qualify for the Social Register."<sup>17</sup>

This attitude infuses the rest of Bilbo's personality. In several scenes, the hobbit appears sarcastic, bitter, moody and resentful. When Bilbo has committed himself to journeying with the adventurers, he whines and protests violently:

BILBO [In a sudden tantrum] No, no, **no!** [He gets up and stamps his feet. He pounds his fists on the table. He tears at the tufts of his furry hair.] This won't do at all, I tell you! [He sinks to the bench again, buries his face in his hands and sobs a little.]<sup>18</sup>

Bilbo displays a mixture of fear and paranoia in this adaptation as well. He is criticized by Gandalf for being so frightened by the trolls. When the dwarves criticize him as well, Bilbo feels persecuted and unappreciated.

Later, when the hobbit meets Gollum, Bilbo makes threats to prevent an attack: "It's a dagger, and I'll stick it in your throat, if you come any closer!"<sup>19</sup> This aggression becomes even more apparent when he kills Smaug. Bilbo seems to relish the deadly power of his magical sword combined with his ring of invisibility. The hobbit is sometimes friendly and sometimes aggressive

### Motivational Traits

Bilbo's motivations are simplified in Duffield's adaptation. Bilbo does not want to travel with the dwarves and he continually wishes to return home. He also wants to avoid trouble. Finally, hoping to impress the dwarves and to return home quickly, Bilbo Baggins kills the dragon.



### Deliberative and Decisive Traits

As with the motivational traits, Bilbo's thought processes also appear simplified and abbreviated. Gandalf forces Bilbo to come along, eliminating any deliberation. Duffield adds a moment of ethical deliberation, however. When Bilbo observes the trolls, he speaks to the audience and contemplates what he should do. He deliberates and then decides that the trolls are too dimwitted to catch him. Interestingly, this complex decision-making process is the only one of its kind in the play.

Duffield also creates situations that reflect Bilbo's paranoia. After his unsuccessful encounter with the trolls, Bilbo decides that the dwarves hate him. Bilbo pleads and begs to return home. Gandalf forces the dwarves to apologize to Bilbo to mollify the hobbit's suspicions and fears.

Bilbo's next thought processes become apparent when he encounters Gollum. Although the riddles in this adaptation are similar to those in Tolkien's original, some riddles are attributed to a different speaker. At the end of the riddle game, Bilbo wins through deception. He then discovers the powers of his ring of invisibility and forces Gollum to leave by threatening to stab him.

Later at Lonely Mountain, Bilbo does not help to find the entrance, nor does he solve the door's riddle. When the door opens, he threatens not to enter. When he finally does enter, Bilbo engages Smaug in a conversation. Their dialogue resembles that in the original story, but then the plot then changes. Bilbo fakes his concern when the dragon mentions that he has a toothache:

SMOWG [sic]: I believe it is the upper bicuspid...

BILBO: Perhaps I can relieve you of pain. Let me see... [Approaching SMOWG.] Open a little wider, please. [He slips the dagger from its scabbard and then thrusts it into the white patch under the dragon's chin. Blood gushes forth. BILBO steps back quickly to admire his handiwork. SMOWG lies still in death]... That should relieve you of pain permanently.<sup>20</sup>

Bilbo uses trickery to kill the dragon. The blood-soaked hobbit tells the dwarves of his deed and then decides immediately to return home.

### Surrounding Characters

In Duffield's adaptation, Gandalf does not function as a nurturing guardian. Instead, he forces Bilbo into going on the adventure and berates the hobbit for being cowardly. Gandalf does, however, praise Bilbo for his violent actions.

Thorin displays very few character traits. He seems to function as Bilbo's friend and companion. The hobbit and the dwarf no longer have contrasting personalities.

This adaptation has altered some of the antagonists. The first antagonists, the trolls, are presented as bloodthirsty females. The goblins also appear to be changed. In the scene with the dwarves and Elfrida, the goblins stand little chance of survival. Like Patricia Gray's script, the invented character of Elfrida seems to function as a second guardian. The inclusion of this character and the female trolls also bring issues of gender into the production.

Gollum is fairly similar to the character in the original text, but Bilbo's brutality towards the creature might make the audience feel sorry for him. Finally, while the dragon

appears threatening and powerful, his death might generate sympathy from the audience. Smaug describes the pain of his toothache and Bilbo capitalizes upon the situation. By portraying the dragon as naive and unsuspecting, Duffield emphasizes Bilbo's cruelty. In short, while the antagonists may still represent a genuine threat, Duffield allows Bilbo to brutalize, deceive and conquer each one of them.

### Summary of Characterization

Duffield's script contains two references to Bilbo's biology and physiology; he states that the hobbit is short and fat. Although the adapter dramatizes Bilbo's demeanor as polite, he alters the protagonist by also making him aristocratic, moody, resentful, sarcastic, bitter and fearful. Throughout the script, Bilbo whines, complains and voices his opinions. Instead of developing wisdom and courage, Duffield develops Bilbo into a warrior.

The adapter simplified the protagonist's motivations. Bilbo does not show a desire to help others or to promote peace. Instead, Bilbo only wishes to go home; he continually reminds every one of this desire. To fulfill his desire to return home, he solves his problems quickly by killing his enemies.

In this adaptation, the author alters most of Bilbo's decisions. His deliberations center upon his own needs rather than the greater good. He constantly needs encouragement to make decisions and he relies upon trickery, deception and violence to resolve his conflicts. Bilbo does not learn how to plan or develop strategies; instead, he learns how to intimidate and kill. Duffield does not include the ethical problems Bilbo faces; the author presents the character as a warrior who will do anything to finish a job.

### Potential of Imitation by Children

This protagonist displays potential as a model. Bilbo is similar in height to children. Bilbo also elicits modeling by acquiring the powerful ring and sword. Finally, Duffield reinforces and rewards Bilbo's actions.

Bilbo's behavior in this adaptation appears to be anti-social. The adapter reinforces Bilbo's selfishness and his violence. Bilbo Baggins seems both bloodthirsty and selfish. Because the protagonist's behavior is reinforced, this undesirable behavior might be imitated by young audiences.

### **ANALYSIS OF ADAPTATION BY MARKLAND TAYLOR**

Markland Taylor's adaptation maintains close fidelity to Tolkien's text. Published in 1992 by the Dramatic Publishing Company, Taylor wrote this script to honor the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of the late J.R.R. Tolkien. It is important to note that Taylor has written this script for a small cast of six performers. In addition, this script is only 56 pages long. The cast size and length limits the number of dwarves, goblins and elves that can be present on stage at any time. For the majority of the adventure, only Thorin, Bilbo and Gandalf are present on stage. While this limits the epic quality of Tolkien's story, it does not seem to have a significant impact upon the protagonist's characterization.

### Biological and Physical Traits

This is the first adaptation discussed in this study that includes all physical and biological elements of the original protagonist. In the director's notes, Markland Taylor

indicates Bilbo's basic biological traits: "He's fat in the stomach, dresses in bright colors (particularly green and yellow), and wears no shoes because his feet have naturally leathery soles and lots of warm, curly hair -- like his head."<sup>21</sup> Taylor dramatizes the protagonist's abilities to hide, move quietly, observe and listen. Finally, the adapter does not add a whimsical, pointed hat.

### Dispositional Traits

Because Taylor has included almost all events from Tolkien's story, many more opportunities exist for Bilbo to display his personality and attitude. The script initially portrays Bilbo as timid, but he develops courage as the story progresses. It is also apparent that Bilbo is consistently polite and cheerful, in spite of the situations he faces. Unlike the three earlier adaptations, Bilbo engages in polite conversations with Elrond, the lord of the eagles, Beorn, the wood elves, the Master of Laketown and Bard.

One slight change in Bilbo's disposition occurs, however. Markland Taylor seems to amplify Bilbo's appetite. Because the hobbit's thoughts are frequently dominated by food, his personality is also affected by it. Bilbo's appetite is displayed early in the play: "Bilbo has just finished an enormous breakfast, evidence of which can be seen on a tray beside him."<sup>22</sup>

In this adaptation, Bilbo never displays hatred or greed (unless excessive hunger may be considered a form of greed). At the end of the play, the protagonist gives up his share of treasure in the interest of peace. He also shows his good nature by forgiving Thorin.

### Motivational Traits

Taylor accurately portrays all of Bilbo's primary motivations. Consistent with Tolkien's story, the protagonist's primary motivation is to stay at home and then, of course, to return home. Bilbo also wishes to avoid conflicts and to help Thorin.

While Taylor does not spend production time discussing the inner conflict between Bilbo's adventurous and conservative sensibilities, it does seem clear that Bilbo wants both comfort and danger. He expresses his desire to stay home and also his hopes to travel. In fact at the beginning of the play, Bilbo dreams of meeting a dragon.

When Bilbo finally meets danger, he consistently desires to avoid trouble and to promote peace. The adapter includes Bilbo's attempt to make peace between the humans and dwarves: "This is the Arkenstone of Thrain, the heart of the mountain. I give it to you [as a peace offering]." <sup>23</sup> Like Tolkien's story, Taylor's Bilbo never desires the destruction of his antagonists; he simply wishes to avoid them.

The only alteration of Bilbo's motivations seems to be his preoccupation with food. This adaptation seems to capitalize upon Bilbo's constant need for nourishment. The hobbit's desire seems harmless enough, but it does make Bilbo appear slightly gluttonous.

### Deliberative and Decisive Traits

It seems that Bilbo's thought processes and decisions suffer slightly due to the brevity of the script. Although Mr. Baggins acquires the abilities to make plans, his evolution sometimes lacks Tolkien's smooth development.

The staging of the goblin scene prevents Bilbo's first instance of quick thinking. The goblins attack instantly and Bilbo can not give his warning. Despite this deviation, Taylor later portrays the protagonist's encounter with Gollum fairly accurately. Bilbo displays his wisdom and wit during the riddle contest. In one of the few plot alterations by Taylor, Bilbo does not contemplate killing Gollum. Instead, he follows Gollum and escapes: "The ring has the power to make its wearer invisible. How very, very useful. But I'd better hurry after Gollum and follow him to the way out of this slippery, slimy cave."<sup>24</sup>

Bilbo's wisdom apparently fades when he and Thorin enter Mirkwood, however. They do not heed Gandalf's advice and they leave the path. This act results in an attack by giant spiders. This adaptation eliminates Bilbo's plan against the spiders, but Bilbo's next strategy in the wood elf stronghold appears quite elaborate. This adaptation portrays the jailbreak as an indication of Bilbo's developing abilities. Thorin thanks him several times for his ingenuity.

Taylor includes Bilbo's discovery of the secret entrance *and* of the dragon's vulnerability. In his encounters with Smaug, Taylor presents the complicated chain of events that illustrate Bilbo's thought process. This adaptation portrays Bilbo's thoughtful assistance to the people of Laketown rather than his participation in an assassination. First, Bilbo evaluates the dragon by conversing with him. Bilbo then observes his weakness: "(To himself) Why there's a large patch in the hollow of his left chest as bare as a snail out of its shell! [Pause, out loud] Well, I really must not detain Your Magnificence any longer, or keep you from your much needed rest!"<sup>25</sup> As a result of finding this information, Bilbo helps Bard save Laketown from the dragon.

The hobbit's final deliberations are also similar to those in Tolkien's story. To appease Bard and the humans, Bilbo gives them the Arkenstone. This angers Thorin, and the dwarf then goes to war with the humans. Taylor includes Bilbo's attempt at promoting peace.

### Surrounding Characters

Gandalf functions as a relatively helpful guardian. He seems more friendly with Bilbo than in the other adaptations; he also encourages and nurtures the protagonist. Gandalf allows Bilbo to learn from his mistakes and mature. At the end of the script, Gandalf praises Bilbo's ethical decisions and helps Bilbo return home. Overall, the wizard's function is similar to Tolkien's original conception.

Thorin, on the other hand, has become a combination of characters. Throughout the journey, dialogue normally distributed among the thirteen dwarves becomes focused upon this character. Thorin is initially distrustful of Bilbo's abilities but he then develops admiration for his little companion. At the end of the story, however, Thorin functions as a minor antagonist by opposing Bilbo's support of the humans. The contrast between the hobbit and the dwarf still exists.

The other antagonists within this adaptation represent dangerous threats to Bilbo. Their powers are genuine and their wits are sharp. Because of this script's fidelity to Tolkien's plot, all of the antagonists appear in the production.



### Summary of Character Traits

Taylor presents a protagonist who resembles the original Bilbo physically and biologically. Taylor also presents a similar disposition that emphasizes politeness, thoughtfulness, friendliness and pacifism. While Bilbo's motivations appear simplified in this adaptation, they are not altered. Bilbo still wishes to promote peace, to help his friends, to avoid trouble and to return home. The only small change by Taylor's interpretation takes the form of Bilbo's increased appetite.

Bilbo's thoughts and decisions do not result in aggressive or selfish actions. Throughout the story, Bilbo tries to make considerate and peaceful decisions. He also acquires the ability to develop plans and strategies, although these plans are not as elaborate as those in Tolkien's text.

The surrounding characters remain similar to the original story. Gandalf remains a nurturing guardian, Thorin is a mild antagonist and the other antagonists seem to be both dangerous and intelligent. Although the reduced number of supporting characters appears to reduce the overall "epic" quality of this script, the number of actors does not seem to have an impact upon the characterization of Bilbo.

### Potential of Imitation by Children

The fidelity of this adaptation to Tolkien's original may encourage imitation by children. First, Bilbo is presented as small and slightly fearful of "big people." He also appears androgynous and therefore might appeal to both boys and girls. Bilbo also acquires the powers of the ring and the sword. In this adaptation, the hobbit is consistently warm, supportive and cheerful.

Mr. Baggins appears to be giving and selfless in all circumstances. This adaptation dramatizes several of Tolkien's best examples of behavior. The hobbit develops his ability to plan and to resolve situations peacefully. Finally, Bilbo is reinforced and praised for his ethical behavior. This is the first adaptation that presents a potential role model who displays pro-social, consistent behavior.

### **ANALYSIS OF ADAPTATION BY EDWARD MAST**

The final script for analysis is a recent publication. Copyrighted in 1996 and published by the Dramatic Publishing Company, this short adaptation contains 53 pages. Edward Mast's adaptation is a mixture of character fidelity and abbreviated episodes.

#### **Physical and Biological Traits**

As in the adaptation by Markland Taylor, this script also includes all the physical characteristics outlined in Tolkien's original story: "He is a little fellow, with something of a stomach, dressed comfortably in trousers and gaudy waistcoat. His feet are bare and covered with fur; otherwise, he is quite ordinary and human-like."<sup>26</sup> Mast mentions Bilbo's abilities to hide and move quietly and he does not clothe Bilbo with a comical hat.

#### **Dispositional Traits**

As in Tolkien's story, Bilbo's personality is pleasant. It seems that Mast's protagonist is extremely polite. The hobbit is friendly, thoughtful and timid. Through the course of the adventure, Bilbo acquires courage and confidence.

Bilbo's social graces can be observed from the beginning of the script. When the dwarves enter his home, the hobbit is as friendly as he can be, despite his apparent frustration. One difference in the protagonist's disposition arises, however, when the dwarves question his honor. Bilbo appears much more direct and assertive about defending himself: "Well, I am very sorry if I don't meet with your approval, Master Oakenshield. Perhaps, if you are quite finished eating my food and drinking my tea, you can take your twelve kinsmen and the thirteen of you can go."<sup>27</sup> As in Tolkien's story, Bilbo later becomes slightly pessimistic when he discovers how uncomfortable adventures can be.

This adaptation eliminates the scene with the three trolls. This prevents the display of Bilbo's pleasant disposition helping him out of danger. The script returns to Tolkien's original story when Bilbo meets Gollum, however. The protagonist appears meticulously polite and friendly, despite his knowing that Gollum wants to kill and eat him.

As in Tolkien's original story, several characters note how polite and friendly the hobbit appears. Smaug, Gandalf, Thorin, Maxwell and Bard all notice the hobbit's pleasant demeanor. Finally, Bilbo does not display hatred or greed.

### Motivational Traits

Although Bilbo's motivations remain similar to Tolkien's character, Mast's use of dramatic techniques seems to alter the overall tone of Bilbo's beliefs. In essence, this adaptation continuously shows Bilbo's desire for battles, danger and excitement. At the beginning of the script, the hobbit wears pots and pans for armor as he pretends to be participating in a heroic battle. Deep down, Bilbo not only longs for adventure, but he

also hopes to participate in epic wars and dangerous conflicts. However, the playwright later dramatizes Bilbo's realization that warfare and battles are not glorious or glamorous.

When faced with danger, Bilbo quickly learns that he prefers to avoid trouble. The hobbit's initial fantasies of danger and battles soon turn to desires for peaceful solutions. At the end of the story, Bilbo wishes to return home. In this version, he demonstrates his lack of desire for money by not wanting any reward.

### Deliberative and Decisive Traits

The liberties that Edward Mast takes with Tolkien's plot have the most direct impact upon Bilbo's deliberations and decisions. This script alters the hobbit's first decision. The dwarves and Gandalf arrive and then leave, allowing Bilbo to decide alone. Realizing that he has always wanted to go on a journey, the hobbit chases after them.

Mast then skips the scene with the trolls, eliminating Bilbo's first failure and valuable lesson. It is not until the group is attacked by goblins that the hobbit begins to realize that war is less glamorous than he initially thought.

Mast accurately dramatizes Bilbo's encounter with Gollum. Bilbo displays his clear thought processes when he solves each riddle. He displays his ethical nature when he decides not to kill Gollum. As in Tolkien's book, the hobbit considers killing his enemy, but his conscience prevents the action: "How do I get past him? I suppose I'll have to... (Stands behind Gollum, raises dagger to kill him; stops; lowers dagger. Whispers:) Pathetic little beast. It would be like squashing a snail."<sup>28</sup>

Bilbo crafts an elaborate plan when he rescues the dwarves from the goblins. Mast departs from Tolkien's original story by combining plot elements from their encounters

with the trolls, the goblins and the elves. In this adaptation, the dwarves become imprisoned by the goblins. Bilbo comes up with an elaborate plan to save them. He turns invisible and uses ventriloquism to get two goblin guards to brawl. The hobbit then steals the keys and leads the dwarves through Gollum's secret exit. While this plot alteration confuses and mixes moments of Tolkien's plot, Bilbo's thoughts and decisions create the image of a wise strategist. Although, in essence, Bilbo actually instigates a fight, the argument between the two goblins is only comically violent.

Bilbo then displays his first attempt at peacemaking. Mast includes an initial conflict between Thorin and the humans of Laketown. Mr. Baggins successfully arranges an agreement between them.

This adaptation does not include two of Bilbo's important discoveries, thus reducing the audience's perception of his thought processes. Mast does not show Bilbo's discovery of the secret entrance, nor does Mast dramatize Bilbo's clever discovery of the dragon's weakness.

Bilbo's ethical behavior continues throughout the adaptation, however. In the final moments of the play, Bilbo uses the Arkenstone to make peace with the humans:

BILBO (steps out and addresses us as BARD, THORIN and the rest freeze) In my memory, most of the old glorious stories had good guys and bad guys, and the good guys won. But now, in my own story, here are two sets of good guys about to come to blows. It's most unsettling; someone ought to do something.<sup>29</sup>

In this version, Bilbo gives up his share of treasure and returns home with Gandalf no richer than when he left. He gains the praise of the wizard for his ethical decisions and his pleasant personality.

### Surrounding Characters

In this adaptation, Gandalf's role becomes limited. He is present only during the beginning and ending of the production. He seems supportive of Bilbo, but he no longer provides an example to the hobbit. Finally, Gandalf does not protect the dwarves or Bilbo. In Mast's adaptation, Gandalf is no longer a guardian.

Mast's interpretations have also altered Thorin. The dwarf leader becomes maniacal and paranoid at the end of the script. He appears bold, macho and stubborn, much like the character in Tolkien's story. In this version, Thorin seems more violent. When Gandalf returns to chastise the dwarf for his behavior, Thorin attacks the wizard:

You too. Betrayed. I am betrayed on all sides. Everyone turns against me! (THORIN furiously aims at GANDALF; GLOIN and BALIN cry out, but THORIN lets fly an arrow with a snap.)<sup>30</sup>

Although Thorin provides a foil to Bilbo's exemplary behavior, it seems that Mast significantly alters Thorin's characterization.

The antagonists of this production present genuine threats to the protagonist, although their numbers have become greatly reduced. This adaptation eliminates the trolls, the spiders and the wood elves. Essentially, the goblins, Gollum, Thorin and Smaug function as the only threats to Bilbo. This reduction in the number of antagonists probably alters the perception of Bilbo's abilities and perseverance.

### Summary of Character Traits

This script includes all the physical and biological traits originally developed by J.R.R. Tolkien. In addition, Mast seems to have included all of Bilbo's original dispositional traits. Although slightly more assertive than Tolkien's original, this Bilbo is still polite, friendly and sometimes timid. Overall, Bilbo never displays hatred or greed.

Mast's adaptation also incorporates most of Bilbo's motivations. Except for dramatizing Bilbo's desire for epic battles, Mast portrays the hobbit's desires to help his friends, to promote peace and to return home.

This adaptation portrays Bilbo's development as a strategist, although his acquisition of skills seems slightly rushed. Because this script eliminates or combines episodes, Bilbo possesses fewer opportunities to display his development. Despite this loss, Mast still portrays Bilbo's quick thinking and planning. Most importantly, he emphasizes Bilbo's disillusionment with battles and warfare. The hobbit learns the valuable lesson that conflicts should be resolved peacefully.

### Potential of Imitation by Children

As in the other adaptations, Bilbo Baggins possesses physical similarities to children. The hobbit acquires the power of his sword and his ring. He also becomes an influential advisor to the dwarves and humans. This power and prestige, combined with Gandalf's praise, may elicit imitative behavior. In addition, Bilbo possesses a warm, friendly personality and he develops the ability to craft plans and strategies. Most importantly, Bilbo's potential for role modeling has not been ignored. Mast apparently wanted to present Bilbo as a thoughtful, ethical protagonist.

The five adaptations have produced significantly different interpretations of Tolkien's original story. Several of these adaptations frequently present a potentially anti-social role model. Other adaptations appear to have maintained many of Bilbo's pro-social behavior. The interpretations and adapting techniques of each playwright are probably partially responsible for the wide variety in these scripts. The next chapter will observe and discuss these interpretations and techniques.



## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> Gray, Patricia, *The Hobbit* (Woodstock: Dramatic P, 1967) 79.
- <sup>2</sup> Gray, 6.
- <sup>3</sup> Gray, 16.
- <sup>4</sup> Gray, 17.
- <sup>5</sup> Gray, 11.
- <sup>6</sup> Gray, 17.
- <sup>7</sup> Gray, 46.
- <sup>8</sup> Gray, 60.
- <sup>9</sup> Gray, 76.
- <sup>10</sup> Friedman, Allan Jay, David Rogers and Ruth Perry, *The Hobbit: A Musical* (Woodstock: Dramatic P, 1972) 116.
- <sup>11</sup> Friedman, 62.
- <sup>12</sup> Piper, Watty. *The Little Engine that Could* (New York: Platt and Munk Co., Inc., 1954) This is the classic children's book which tells the story of the little blue train engine who, through positive thinking, manages to take a heavy burden over a mountain. Bilbo's song is similar. This musical number tells of two frogs who fall asleep in a butter churn. When cream is poured in, one frog gives up and drowns. The other frog stays positive and fights until he is on top.
- <sup>13</sup> Friedman, 98.
- <sup>14</sup> Friedman, 21.
- <sup>15</sup> Friedman, 63.
- <sup>16</sup> Friedman, 101.
- <sup>17</sup> Duffield, Brainerd, *The Hobbit* (Boston: Baker's Plays, 1974) 28.
- <sup>18</sup> Duffield, 18.

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<sup>19</sup> Duffield, 47.

<sup>20</sup> Duffield, 71.

<sup>21</sup> Taylor, Markland, *The Hobbit* (Woodstock: Dramatic P, 1992) 57.

<sup>22</sup> Taylor, 5.

<sup>23</sup> Taylor, 51.

<sup>24</sup> Taylor, 26.

<sup>25</sup> Taylor, 46.

<sup>26</sup> Mast, Edward, *The Hobbit* (Woodstock: Dramatic P, 1996) 6.

<sup>27</sup> Mast, 16.

<sup>28</sup> Mast, 27.

<sup>29</sup> Mast, 46.

<sup>30</sup> Mast, 48.

## Chapter 5

### TECHNIQUES OF ADAPTERS

The five adapters of *The Hobbit* have utilized a variety of techniques to portray Tolkien's story. A variety of verbal techniques were employed to give exposition to the audience. To provide background information and to "bridge" transitions between episodes, the adapters used such devices as voice-over recordings, direct address, diaries and narrators. Also, the practical concerns regarding production length, audience interest and box office sales seem to have influenced each adapter's writing. Many of these choices appear to have an influence upon characterization.

#### Writing Techniques Utilized in Gray's Adaptation

Patricia Gray's adaptation alters the characterization of Bilbo Baggins. Overall, this script portrays the hobbit as excitable, moody, sarcastic and aggressive. Mr. Baggins is also more violent and fails to develop mature traits. Yet despite these discrepancies, Patricia Gray's writing skill and dramatic techniques appear well-developed.

A common adage of playwrights is to "show, not tell." In other words, playwrights should try to reveal character through actions and words rather than to directly describe character. Instead of "telling" her protagonist's thoughts and feelings, Patricia Gray "shows" character through verbal techniques and physical actions. For

example, instead of informing the audience directly that Mr. Baggins enjoys frequent meals, she begins her play with him sighing contentedly and pushing away several plates. Moments later, he refers to his food pantries and his plans for a third breakfast.

Gray also includes an interesting verbal device to bridge episodes and provide background information. This device is Bilbo's diary. At the beginning of several scenes, Mr. Baggins reads his diary entries aloud. As he reads, he reveals his motivations and deliberations. The protagonist also describes his surroundings, past events and his opinions about each situation. The hobbit does not read to the audience, however. Instead, the actor pretends that he is reading his diary aloud to edit or evaluate his writing. In Gray's adaptation, Bilbo never directly addresses the audience. The character does not break the "fourth wall" or speak out of character.

Although her approach to displaying character appears effective, Gray seems to fall into a trap by taking her dialogue directly from Tolkien's text. *One-third* of her entire script concerns Bilbo's first decision. In her effort to include Tolkien's own words, Gray has sacrificed content and detail in the rest of her script. To compensate for the lengthy beginning, she cuts the episodes with Elrond, the wargs, the giant eagles, Beorn, the spiders and Bard.

This lopsided dramatic structure directly affects Bilbo as a role model. To compensate for her long beginning, Gray invents an Elf Queen character. It is interesting that Gray chose to include a female character into Tolkien's masculine world. In Tolkien's Middle-Earth, many characters, including Bilbo, Gandalf and the elves, demonstrate non-gendered traits. Utilizing masculine pronouns for all characters avoids

the concern of gender or sex. By including this feminine character, a stronger awareness of gender might occur in the audience, possibly reducing modeling potential.

The Elf Queen also has an impact upon the play's structure. While this added character expedites the play's denouement, the change sacrifices several of Bilbo's independent and admirable deeds. Bilbo's discoveries and plans no longer take place. The Elf Queen instigates a rapid ending and the play becomes rushed. The final scene seems hurried; less than two pages of the script separate the death of Smaug from the end of the show.

Gray's inclusion of comedy and violence have a direct impact upon Bilbo's characterization. The adapter includes invented moments of comedy, even though these moments consume production time. For example, Thorin develops a speech impediment, Bombur provides pratfalls and Bilbo plays several practical jokes on his companions. While it seems clear that Gray includes amusing moments to maintain her young audience's attention, these moments can impact the tone of the production. The comic elements may reduce the seriousness of the situations faced by Bilbo. By incorporating comedy, Bilbo's antagonists will probably be perceived as less threatening. This perception may be reinforced by Bilbo's cone shaped hat, which casts him as a clown rather than a country gentleman.

Violent actions also seem to be included to maintain audience attention. By including Bilbo's participation in violent scenes, Gray may have reduced his potential as a pro-social role model. The arguments among the three trolls results in a brawl, the dwarves and goblins engage in a lengthy melee and Smaug is killed on stage. Gray chose

not only to change Tolkien's story, but also altered it into a violent spectacle for young children.

In conclusion, while Gray's use of Bilbo's diary appears to be an effective tool to reveal motivations and deliberations, several of her adapting techniques alter the potential role model. Gray's focus on the lengthy introductory scene reduces Bilbo's development as an ethical strategist. By not having time to portray his final deliberations and decisions, the audience is never exposed to the hobbit's thoughtful plans. Also, the increase in power of the guardians reduces Bilbo's opportunities to exercise his volition. The guardians' protection and the inclusion of comedy appear to reduce the significance of the dangers Bilbo faces. Most importantly, Gray alters Bilbo's ethical behavior by having him participate in a plan to assassinate the dragon.

#### Dramatic Techniques Utilized in the Musical Adaptation

The musical adaptation of *The Hobbit* also incorporates some noteworthy theatrical techniques. Perhaps the most apparent aspect of this script is the inclusion of excellent lyrics. Each song provides insight into character and eliminates time consuming expository techniques such as direct address or diary reading.

The lyrics in this adaptation seem to reveal character. In Bilbo's songs, the words reflect his motivations and deliberations. In his first musical number, "No, Thank You," Bilbo expresses his desire to remain home. Yet the song "Thirteen Mighty Dwarves" stirs Bilbo's imagination and inspires him to go on the adventure. Later in the production, "The Tale of Two Frogs" shows Bilbo's optimism. Bilbo's solo, "Invisibility," portrays

his confidence and “I Want to Go Home” illustrates his final motivations. Finally, “Benevolent Burglary” displays the protagonist’s ethical deliberation and decision making.

The production time of this musical version would be significantly longer than Patricia Gray’s adaptation. This musical script’s length allows for a casual and unhurried denouement. The script incorporates nineteen musical numbers and reprises, probably extending production time to about 100 minutes.

The few plot alterations that occur in this adaptation have an impact upon pro-social role modeling, however. Like Patricia Gray’s script, this production also includes more comedy and violence than in Tolkien’s original book.

The comedic plot elements add frivolity to important situations. Like Patricia Gray’s adaptation, moments of slapstick comedy appear intermittently. While these elements may promote laughter and interest, they may also reduce the perceived threat of the antagonists. The reduced threat, in turn, minimizes the value of the protagonist’s achievements.

This musical adaptation also includes several dramatizations of Bilbo’s greed and violence. This adaptation includes plot elements that emphasize Bilbo’s possessiveness of the ring and his desire for money. This script also emphasizes violent actions and provides a relatively poor example for children. Bilbo physically abuses and torments the dwarves for the sake of comedy. The hobbit also slays Smaug with his sword. Several other violent actions occur in the script. The frequency and graphic nature of these actions emphasize the sensationalism of violence rather than the need for peaceful compromises.

The adapters also include several extraneous plot elements which create anachronisms within the plot. The adapters included a multitude of references to

Tolkien's book, *The Lord of the Rings*. Fans of this text for adults will recognize that Bilbo's nephew (named Frodo) is present in this story. The authors also dramatize the addictive power of Bilbo's magical ring, which does not manifest itself until the later books. The adapters chose to mix dialogue and plot from *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. These references are inaccurate and anachronistic within the context of Tolkien's writing. While it does show that the adapters were aware of other stories by Tolkien, it also shows that their understanding of Tolkien's chronology, timeline and history of Middle-Earth is slightly confused.

The inclusion of such references affects the hobbit's character traits. By showing the addictive powers of the ring of invisibility, Bilbo appears greedy and selfish. Also, by including references from a book intended for older audiences, the play adapters are essentially "talking over the heads" of their young audiences. Only more mature readers would read Tolkien's three-volume text. Several jokes are made in reference to *The Lord of the Rings*. This creates humor that only adult audiences would understand.

Another plot alteration seems illogical and might confuse the audience. In the middle of the play, a moment in the script removes focus from the protagonist. The audience is shown a brief scene in the great goblin's throne room. During this scene, the great goblin plans to attack the dwarves. Out of the blue, the audience is given an omniscient view of the great goblin's plans; yet this episodic perspective is not granted to any of the other antagonists. While the inclusion of this scene might build suspense, it seems inconsistent to introduce a cinematic technique and then to only utilize it once. Such mixture of dramatic techniques can challenge the clarity of the production.



In conclusion, this musical adaptation contains lyrics which help to reveal character traits. The inclusion of songs helps the audience understand motivations and deliberations. Several plot alterations may have an impact upon modeling behavior. Violence and comic elements in this production may alter the original role model into an example for selfishness and aggression. In addition, several plot alterations may confuse young audiences because they are directed towards adults rather than children.

#### Dramatic Techniques Utilized in Duffield's Adaptation

Brainerd Duffield's protagonist only slightly resembles the original character. Duffield's characterization deviates from the original story. In this version, both the expository elements and the plot structure contribute to the creation of a anti-social role model for children.

Duffield utilizes monologue to introduce his protagonist. At the beginning of the production, Bilbo acknowledges the audience and tells the children about himself. He directly states his disposition, his motivation and his deliberations. Bilbo functions as an omniscient narrator: "Hobbits dislike adventures and danger and much prefer to stay home by the fireside and keep out of trouble. But I, Bilbo Baggins, am about to get involved in a terrible hair-raising adventure. So this is a necessary beginning to the story."<sup>1</sup> Other times, Bilbo stops narrating and becomes involved in the action. Other times, he reads from a diary to provide background information. Upon several occasions, the hobbit makes asides and monologues to inform the audience of his opinions and thoughts. Duffield apparently included this mixture of theatrical devices and traditions to

conveniently reveal character traits. This mixture of dramatic techniques appears to reduce production consistency.

Duffield also changed the flavor of Tolkien's writing. He changes Gandalf's use of vocabulary and verbal style. The wizard becomes an astrologer, always making decisions based upon the stars:

...according to the stars, omens and prognostications, **this** is the propitious morning to seek the treasure and bring our curses home to Smowg. Don't you worry about a thing! The stars are in their proper orbits, and all will go well, believe me. Bring a little verisimilitude into your dull existence!<sup>2</sup>

Gandalf uses "big words" that would be difficult for children to understand. In addition, Duffield's use of vocabulary creates the impression that Gandalf and Bilbo are aristocratic, elitist and condescending. Throughout the script, Duffield includes Shakespearean references, puns, plays-on-words and other literary humor. Besides altering the character, Duffield's humorous references may also alienate his intended audience. Most of these references are directed towards adults and may reduce the younger people's enjoyment.

Other references can further alienate the audience from the production. Duffield's adaptation makes dozens of references to the contemporary world. For example, Bilbo talks about the stock market and Thorin discusses what he will do with his share of the treasure: "I'm thinking of starting up a chain of sausage factories. I'd call it Colonel Oakenshield Enterprises, the First with the Vurst."<sup>3</sup> At the end of the show, Thorin graciously offers to "book a flight" with the giant eagles to help Bilbo return home. Although many of these references are rather humorous, they may reduce an audience's suspension of disbelief.

Duffield's plot alterations also impact Tolkien's work. Audience members may feel sorry for the antagonists. The female trolls are killed, Gollum is bullied and Smaug is slain brutally. In addition, the goblins seem easily defeated by the invented guardian character, Elfrida. The antagonists become fodder in the wake of the heroes.

Like Gray's adaptation, Duffield's script includes a female Elf Queen. In addition to highlighting gender in a non-gendered world, the inclusion of Elfrida changes the plot by expediting the story and by reducing Bilbo's volition. Both guardians, Gandalf and Elfrida, seem powerful and demanding. The hobbit's chances of developing his own strategies are reduced by these two protective guardians. This lack of development is illustrated by Bilbo's inability to develop ethical plans. The behavior and attitude of this character appear to contradict the stated personality in Tolkien's story.

Duffield probably did not craft his play as pro-social entertainment for children. Even though the script is advertised as a play for young audiences, the inclusion of violence, humor, puns and other elements indicate that Duffield created a literary satire rather than a play for children.

#### Dramatic Techniques Utilized in Taylor's Adaptation

Markland Taylor's adaptation possesses plot fidelity to Tolkien's original story. Providing a contrast to Duffield's script, this text dramatizes almost every event that occurs in the original story. Paralleling this high level of fidelity, the potential for positive imitation by children is also high. Bilbo displays pro-social behavior and thought processes.

Taylor uses direct address in his adaptation. Bilbo and Gandalf speak with the audience, acting as narrators. Taylor uses this technique so infrequently, however, that it appears unpredictable and irregular. In the script, narrative moments only occur three times.

Unlike Gray's lopsided plot, however, this script's plot material is more balanced. Taylor incorporates a reasonable proportion of Tolkien's first chapter and he devotes just six pages to the first scene. This scene occupies roughly one-tenth of the production's length and is proportionate with the page-length of Tolkien's story.

Although Taylor's adaptation does not alter the plot, it does alter the magnitude of the story. This version is intended for a small cast of six actors and therefore appears less epic and grand. By paring down the technical needs of the show and by reducing the number of dwarves, elves, goblins and humans, Taylor has been able to incorporate many more subplots and minor characters. His adaptation includes such helpful characters as Elrond, the Lord of the Eagles, Beorn and Bard.

Because of the script's brevity and its faithfulness to the original, however, a significant problem exists. The script appears to be rushed. The multitude of events require a breakneck production speed. The quick tempo reduces suspense and hurries poignant moments. Although the plot is proportionate to Tolkien's original, its hurried pace resembles the final moments Patricia Gray's adaptation.

The production's tempo appears to affect the development of character traits. This script would benefit from allowing more time for each scene. Characters would probably elicit more understanding and appreciation from their audience if the production's pace were more casual.

To summarize, Taylor's adaptation displays the plot fidelity to Tolkien's original story. Because of this fidelity, it also displays a relatively accurate representation of Bilbo's traits. While Taylor's adaptation contains a pro-social role model, it suffers from three problems. First, the small cast may reduce the epic nature of Tolkien's story. Its unpredictable use of narration might promote confusion in the audience. Finally, the script might benefit from adopting a more casual tempo.

#### Dramatic Techniques Utilized in Mast's Adaptation

The most recently written adaptation of Tolkien's story also uses the most technical elements. Within Mast's script are numerous approaches that inspire an audience's interest. In his effort to introduce spectacle to the production, Mast also provides several examples of violence to his young audience.

From the opening of the production, the playwright uses many theatrical techniques to stimulate the imaginations of his young audience members. The play opens as an armored figure narrates from Tolkien's book *The Simarillion*. Like the musical adaptation, the referencing to Tolkien's non-children's literature can potentially alienate the young audience.

During the introduction, a shadow puppet play dramatizes this epic battle on projection screen and a recorded voice-over describes monsters and heroes. Moments later, Bilbo reveals himself as the armored figure. The hobbit sheepishly acknowledges that he is wearing pots and cooking utensils for his weapons and armor.

The hobbit directly addresses the audience, but this verbal conversational technique appears less awkward than the other adaptations. Essentially, audiences would

probably perceive this exposition as a friendly conversation. This direct address also reveals Bilbo's conflicting motivations for both comfort and adventure.

This first scene includes other interesting theatrical techniques. Gandalf appears incredibly tall because he wears elevated shoes. Gandalf's cothurni help illustrate Bilbo's small physique. This is the only adaptation that attempts to fully dramatize Bilbo's height difference. This has the potential of promoting more empathy from a young audience.

Mast includes a mildly comic moment that reveals Bilbo's disposition. When the dwarves enter the hobbit hole, there is a comedic repetition of Bilbo's polite greeting rituals. As the pace of the greetings increases, the more frustrated Bilbo becomes.

Mast also dramatizes Bilbo's decision to go on the adventure in a unique fashion. Departing from the original plot, this adaptation has Gandalf and the dwarves leaving Bilbo alone to decide. Mast reveals the hobbit's deliberations by using another voice-over. The hobbit and the voice debate about going on the adventure. Finally, Bilbo makes his decision and races off the stage to start the journey.

This adaptation simplifies Tolkien's original plot by combining encounters and events. During a conflict in the middle of the script, Mast combines the encounters with the trolls, the goblins and the elves into one scene. In this script, instead of being captured by the elves, the dwarves become captives of the goblins. To rescue them, Bilbo turns invisible and uses ventriloquism to provoke an argument between two goblins. The hobbit then develops a plan to help the dwarves escape. This plan involves the use of force, however.

Interestingly, Mast's mixture and alteration of plot elements do not seem to have a significant impact upon Bilbo's characterization. This script appears to be the only script

which makes plot changes without diminishing Bilbo's character traits. Although the events unfold differently, Bilbo still acquires his ability to develop strategies. Apparently, Mast possessed a strong understanding of Bilbo's character and produced a script which did not alter the protagonist's traits.

Mast incorporates Tolkien's dislike of violence, but Mast's approach appears to be different. Instead of displaying peaceful solutions, Mast shows the terrible results of warfare. In the original, Bilbo always seeks peace and therefore avoids the horrors of war. In Mast's version, Bilbo desires involvement in conflict; afterwards, he realizes how horrible it can be. To bring this idea home, the adapter includes a bloody final scene:

*(a roar and explosion of sound and light; the theater is overwhelmed with fire and darkness and fury. All the others are drowned in battle... the agonized groaning of wounded from all around the theater. Lights up on the battlefield strewn with ugly dead and blood and severed limbs. More realistic than anything we've seen. Stretchers with wounded are occasionally carried across the stage.)*<sup>4</sup>

Although this scene may be considered acceptable for adult audiences, many parents would probably find its graphic nature unsuitable for children. Mast makes his point, however, and the play might teach a lesson concerning the wastefulness of violence.

In summary, Mast's adaptation uses a number of theatrical and technical devices that help hold the interest of his audience. He uses projection screens, voice-overs, lighting effects and cothurni. Mast uses Bilbo's friendly disposition to create a relationship with the audience. He also uses comedy, but only as a means to reveal Bilbo's character traits. To save time, Mast engineers a melting of plot elements that do

not drastically alter the protagonist's character traits. In his effort to reveal the horrors of violence, he dramatizes graphic pictures of warfare. Although the violent aspects of this adaptation may be considered undesirable, many of the techniques of Mast's adaptation have excellent dramatic potential.

While the previous chapter addressed each adaptation's protagonist, this chapter has studied each adapter's writing and adapting techniques. Apparently, the writing styles, adapting techniques, scenic demands and resources of the playwright have an influence upon the adapter's interpretation of Tolkien's protagonist. This chapter has also revealed that several of the adapters may have possessed divergent goals for their scripts. Based upon these observations, this study can now draw conclusions and offer suggestions for further research.



## **Endnotes**

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<sup>1</sup> Duffield, Brainerd (Boston: Baker's Plays, 1974) 5.

<sup>2</sup> Duffield, Brainerd, 23.

<sup>3</sup> Duffield, Brainerd, 43.

<sup>4</sup> Mast, Edward (Woodstock: Dramatic P, 1996) 49-50.

## **Chapter 6**

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The story of *The Hobbit*, with its famous reputation and renowned protagonist, represents an opportunity for playwrights to create a children's play with instant recognition. There are five adapters who have written children's plays retaining the name of *The Hobbit* and its popular protagonist, Bilbo Baggins. Comparison of each adaptation with the original story reveals a number of dissimilarities, however.

All of the adaptations altered some aspect of the plot, tempo or character development. The alterations of character traits apparently stem from conditions inherent in the adaptation process and from the influence of individual interpretations. The adapters faced the challenges of presenting dialogue, exposition and technical elements and each one met with varying degrees of success. The ensuing conclusions are based upon the evaluation of their scripts.

#### **Observations of Character Traits**

The five adaptations of *The Hobbit* tend to generalize rather than develop character traits. In various ways, adapters altered the biological, physical, dispositional, motivational, deliberative, decisive and developmental traits of the protagonist. They also altered the surrounding characters.

The biological and physical traits were included in each adaptation only when they could be easily dramatized. Few of the playwrights attempted to display these traits in their entirety. Except for Edward Mast's use of elevated shoes, no other adapters provided significant height contrasts between Bilbo and the other characters. Several adaptations did not include Bilbo's exceptional vision, hearing or ability to hide. Perhaps these traits were not dramatized because they were difficult to portray, consumed too much production time, or were considered unimportant by the adapter.

Dispositional alterations tended to simplify the protagonist's personality. Although the adaptations usually presented Bilbo's pleasant personality, they either oversimplified or exaggerated his demeanor. For example, Bilbo is changed into an excitable, selfish or aggressive character. The character sometimes shrieks, faints, shakes and whimpers to show emotion. By exaggerating particular traits, adapters probably hoped to demonstrate the hobbit's personality to young audiences. In their efforts to clarify Bilbo's disposition, they instead simplified it. This simplification had a tendency to reduce the richness of Tolkien's original character.

The adapters displayed a variety of alterations regarding Bilbo's motivations. These changes included Bilbo's increased desire for money, his susceptibility to peer pressure, his desire for violence and his strong obsession with food. Like the dispositional traits, some of the adapters simplified or magnified a specific trait, making it ludicrous or undesirable.

Bilbo's deliberative and decisive traits were influenced by each adapter's fidelity to Tolkien's plot. The playwrights who skipped significant plot elements also eliminated Bilbo's increased ability to make decisions and plans. When the adapters chose to simplify

their plots, Bilbo's thought process also became simplified. In Gray's adaptation, the hobbit participates in Smaug's assassination without any deliberation. In the musical version, Bilbo contemplates the ethics of stealing but does not consider the ethics of murder. In Duffield's script, few of the hobbit's original deliberations remain.

### Surrounding Characters

Several adapters altered Gandalf's role as a guardian character. In two scripts, Gandalf appears to control every aspect of the plot. This prevented Bilbo's maturation. In the musical adaptation, Bilbo does not need the wizard's guidance because the hobbit was initially assigned confidence and skill rather than developing these traits through his experiences.

Several of the adaptations did not present Thorin as a mild antagonist. By not portraying the conflict between Bilbo and Thorin, the contrast between peace and aggression was not established. The musical adaptation and the scripts by Gray and Duffield did not include these conflicting beliefs. Paralleling this omission, these adaptations also did not fully display Bilbo's desire for peace.

The adapters' invention of comic moments altered the antagonists. The adapters included comedy, possibly to promote more interest. This change in mood might alter the audience's perception of the production; threats may become perceived as amusing obstacles. As Sam Smiley noted, the accomplishments of the protagonist are diminished when the antagonists are not taken seriously.<sup>1</sup>

### Dialogue, Exposition and Narration

All the adaptations experienced problems in presenting dialogue. Interestingly, they all seemed to seek authenticity by incorporating Tolkien's original conversations. The transference of dialogue from the source material appears relatively easy, yet its overuse created problems. Gray included a large section of dialogue from Tolkien's first chapter and the production became disproportionate. As noted in the previous chapter, Gray's adaptation appears to devote too much time to the introductory scene.

The invention of new dialogue also proved difficult for the adapters. Several adapters seemed uncomfortable with inventing dialogue for episodes that originally had no verbal equivalents in Tolkien's story. Frequently, the adapters ignored the problem by eliminating the episode. Other adapters, like Duffield, attempted to solve this difficulty by altering the vocabulary or speech patterns of each character.

Providing exposition created an additional problem for the adapters. Each adapter provided background information by using a variety of techniques. They included the use of a diary, song lyrics, direct address, omniscient narration, asides and soliloquies. Although in many instances these techniques were effective, the use of exposition in each adaptation lacked consistency. In some scripts, Bilbo and Gandalf would trade the "duties" of speaking to the audience. In another, such exposition occurred only once or twice. Utilization of expository techniques appeared to be haphazard and non-productive.

Although Tolkien's style seems well suited for a narrator, none of the adapters used one. All the adaptations ignored Gandalf as a convenient source for narration and exposition. The wizard could easily step out of a scene, provide narrative description, and then return to the immediate concerns of the script. The use of this technique would also

be a way of illustrating the nurturing aspects of the wizard. Gandalf could easily remove himself from the action to allow Bilbo's character development and maturation.

### Technical Elements

Theatre companies are much more likely to attract audiences with a famous story rather than an unknown original production. In this respect, *The Hobbit* was an excellent choice for the adapters.

Understandably, each adapter seemed concerned with technical costs, cast size and production length. For example, most of the scripts eliminated plot elements that required extensive scenery. Along this line, the adapters also reduced the number of locations to reduce the cost of multiple settings. Despite their apparent concern with cost, four of the adaptations included an elaborate setting for Smaug's lair. These scripts focused upon the costuming and presentation of the dragon.

Most of the adaptations devote significant resources to the denouement of the show. Several adapters emphasized Smaug's lair to provide a spectacular finale, but this emphasis reduced other important moments. The cost of presenting a realistic dragon apparently forced several playwrights to cut corners or eliminate other scenes.

The adapters also seemed concerned with cast size. Most of the adaptations eliminated supporting roles that were deemed unimportant. In Taylor's script, the cast size was specifically reduced to provide parts for just six performers. While concerns for cast size remain a reality for all production companies, such reductions may eliminate the epic potential of the original story.

The adapters reduced production length by eliminating plot elements and by cutting entire episodes. Four adaptations cut moments that did not directly relate to the “spine” of the story. However, many of these plot elements represented important episodes in Bilbo’s development. The extensive cuts within the scripts restricted the possibilities of accurately representing Tolkien’s original role model.

By condensing their scripts, the adapters sacrificed richness, depth and detail. Children’s plays are usually only one hour long; the adapters reduced Tolkien’s plot in their attempts to meet this standard. Although each adapter transferred much of Tolkien’s original dialogue directly into their scripts, the adapters did not seem obliged to maintain Tolkien’s original plot or character models.

Although Taylor’s adaptation included most of Tolkien’s plot elements, it seems that this adapter faced a different challenge. Taylor apparently desired plot fidelity *and* a short production length. His approach resulted in a rushed show. The adaptations by Gray and Duffield can also be considered rushed. The adapters therefore also faced the challenge of crafting a manageable and aesthetically pleasing tempo.

The adapters seemed to have underestimated the perception and intelligence of child audiences. Children are frequently capable of understanding nuances and subtleties of a character’s personality. The short production length and rapid pace of each show were probably based upon the assumption that children have short attention spans. This assumption sometimes underestimates children; they can be attentive if the subject matter is interesting. In a recent interview, Suzan Zeder discussed this matter:

The notion that young people’s attention spans are somewhat shorter than

that of adults is nonsense, in my opinion. One has only to watch a child doggedly and patiently pursue an activity in which he or she is invested to know that. While children bore easily and are less polite than adults about making their boredom obvious, children are capable of a virtually unlimited attention span -- provided the activity is worth their attention.<sup>2</sup>

Each of the five adaptations employed techniques which were probably aimed at maintaining audience attention. Several of the scripts included music, comedy, suspenseful situations and spectacular costumes. Several contrived comic moments were probably included to enhance the enjoyment of the play and to reduce restlessness in the young audience. Fights and other violent actions may have also been added to hold their interest.

As this study has observed, the creation of an adaptation is not necessarily a consistent or easy process. The transference of characters, plot, exposition, dialogue and visual imagery from literature to the stage requires a firm understanding of both literary and dramatic elements. Through the adaptation process, it appears that playwrights encounter a number of difficulties which limit the complete or accurate representation of the original literary source. As this study has observed, however, the five adapters appear to display a varying degree of success in overcoming these difficulties. This dissertation offers several recommendations which may facilitate the process.

### Specific Recommendations

A familiarity with developmental psychology is highly desirable for playwrights of children's theatre. Through a knowledge of psychology, dramatists can create adapted



scripts which are relevant and entertaining. Understanding factors which inspire modeling behavior would be especially helpful for adapters who wish to create positive examples of behavior.

A basic understanding of the character analysis system would be useful for adapters. By first applying the analysis to the original work of literature, the adapter can develop a comprehensive character profile. As the adapter writes and develops the script, he or she can then compare and juxtapose this character profile to their adaptation. Inconsistencies between the script and profile can then be observed more readily. As Mast demonstrated, an understanding of the original character traits allowed him to produce an accurate portrayal. His approach also granted him latitude regarding technical and plot elements.

Audiences, in all probability, expect the characters and plot in an adaptation to resemble the original work of literature. This study revealed the dependence of characterization on story-line. Adapters attempting to re-create literary characters should consider fidelity to plot. By incorporating most events from the literary source which displays a positive role model, adapters are more likely to include episodes which display the protagonist's behavior. As Taylor demonstrated, the inclusion of most plot elements granted more opportunities to display Bilbo's personality, decisions and beliefs.

To cope with the problem of production length, techniques such as narration should be considered. The utilization of a narrator may help maintain a manageable production tempo and can serve as a "bridge" between locations and episodes. This figure can also provide background information and exposition, in addition to revealing the thoughts of a character. As noted earlier, it is interesting that the adapters utilized a

variety of devices to inform the audience, yet none of them consistently used a narrator. Playwrights interested in the use of narration might wish to refer to Robert Breen's text, *Chamber Theatre*. In this book, Breen describes and analyzes a variety of narrative techniques. He also suggests several approaches which help dramatists maintain the original intentions and style of a literary work.

Many of the difficulties faced by the adapters could be ameliorated by incorporating theatrical techniques and innovative technology. Edward Mast demonstrated that age-old theatrical techniques such as elevated shoes can be combined with contemporary devices like voice recordings, imaginative lighting and vivid projections. Acquiring a repertoire of such effective theatrical techniques would be a great asset for playwrights.

Adapters can benefit from researching the literary source and its author. Although the cultural context or biographies of authors may be unavailable for all children's stories, many authors, including Tolkien, have been studied with great care. In texts, biographies and articles, Tolkien is revealed as a thoughtful man who possessed strong beliefs. As noted in the appendix, the author incorporated these beliefs into his writing. In several of *The Hobbit* adaptations, however, the playwrights appeared to be unaware of Tolkien's concerns with aggression and thoughtfulness.

Playwrights undertaking the adaptation of children's literature should be cognizant of the fact that they may be educating children whether they intend to or not. While all of the scripts contain a character who might inspire admiration and imitation by children, this character sometimes developed into a violent or selfish model. In the first three

adaptations, Bilbo becomes directly involved in at least one killing. In two adaptations, Bilbo murders the dragon through trickery and is rewarded for his deceit.

This study does not suggest that young audiences might instantly become more aggressive or greedy after watching a show. This study does suggest that the propensity for a child to model should not be ignored.

### Recommendations for Further Study

Despite the significance of the subject matter, there is a surprising lack of literature regarding the adaptation of children's literature for the stage. Considering the desirability of expanding the selection of children's plays, several areas of study would be useful:

1. A study of the impact of Suzan Zeder's theories would prove to be a fascinating topic of research. Using her character analysis system, a sample of plays from the past thirty or forty years could determine trends in characterization. While scholars such as Jed Davis and Mary Jane Evans<sup>3</sup> note that character development has improved over the past several decades, no formal studies have empirically studied the trend.
2. Empirical studies, such as the ones performed by Albert Bandura, prove that exposure to violence increases aggression.<sup>4</sup> Similar studies should be performed in direct relationship to children's theatre. Developing more insight into modeling for children could be invaluable in the popularity and educational value of children's theatre.

3. Since a majority of children's plays are adaptations, analytical studies devoted to techniques in character development would significantly improve children's scripts.
4. Popular children's stories are frequently adapted for the stage. A study regarding the development of adapting techniques through the decades may reveal trends within the genre.
5. The character analysis system utilized in this study could also be applied to children's films, television scripts or books on tape.

Theatre for young audiences represents a wonderful opportunity to entertain and educate. To elevate the status of the field, all playwrights for children's theatre should be encouraged to give careful consideration to the development of character in their scripts. Hopefully, this would include a recognition of the potential role models they are creating.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Smiley, Sam, *Playwriting: The Structure of Action* (Englewood: Prentice-Hall, 1971) 67.

<sup>2</sup> Zeder, Suzan L., personal mailed interview, 23 January, 1998.

<sup>3</sup> Davis, Jed H. and Evans, Mary Jane, *Theatre, Children and Youth* (New Orleans: Anchorage Press, 1982)

<sup>4</sup> Bandura, Albert, *Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory*. (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1986)

## APPENDIX I

### PLOT SUMMARY OF J.R.R TOLKIEN'S *THE HOBBIT*

J.R.R. Tolkien begins his story at the home of Bilbo Baggins in the quiet countryside of the Shire. This home is a hobbit-hole, a pleasant place. As a respected member of his community, Mr. Baggins maintains a cheerful household, takes pleasure in civilized conversation and enjoys the security of large, well-stocked food pantries.

One morning, as Bilbo enjoys a smoke of his pipe, the wise old wizard Gandalf pays him a visit. Gandalf has selected Mr. Baggins for an adventure. Tolkien carefully crafts the hobbit's reaction. Bilbo politely turns down the invitation, yet the reader gains the impression that he seems intrigued by the notion of seeing the outside world.

The next day, a group of thirteen dwarves arrives at Bilbo's home at tea time. Although he feels dismayed and befuddled by their demands for food and drink, the hobbit politely invites them into his home. Soon, however he grows more and more frustrated by their appetites and their constant references to Bilbo's involvement in their adventure. Gandalf also arrives and listens to the dwarven leader's plans and objectives. Thorin, the group's leader, leads the group in a song that describes the ancient riches of their former kingdom and describes how this kingdom was overtaken by the mighty dragon Smaug.

Tolkien carefully reveals the hobbit's longing for travel and adventure. The song inspires Bilbo to help the dwarves recover their kingdom. The company will journey to Lonely Mountain and regain their stolen treasure from the dragon. Bilbo's fear begins to tug at his sensibilities and he soon tells the dwarves of his concern and hesitation. The

dwarves question his bravery, Bilbo defends his courage and it is suddenly agreed that the hobbit will depart with them in the morning. Bilbo is shocked; he realizes his own words have committed him to the adventure.

Gandalf and Thorin then examine a map of Lonely Mountain and plan the journey. Bilbo loves maps and he hopes to have a look at it. The runes on the map reveal a secret entrance and a tunnel too small for the dragon to use. After this discovery, the entire group retires to sleep.

In the morning, Bilbo rushes to get ready for the journey. Although the hobbit forgets his pocket handkerchiefs and other luxuries, he finds the first days of traveling quite pleasant. As the group ascends into the mountains, however, thunderstorms begin to gather. When the group stops one evening, the pack ponies are swept away in a mud slide. The dwarves realize that they have lost their food supplies; Bilbo then begins to think that adventures are not very pleasant.

The group's depression increases when they realize that Gandalf has disappeared. While looking for the wizard and a good place to camp, they notice a campfire in the woods. Bilbo investigates the fire. The hobbit silently approaches and observes three trolls arguing about dinner. Thinking that he should attempt to steal some food, Bilbo tries to pick some pockets. The trolls catch the hobbit and interrogate him. He convinces the trolls that he is too small to eat, but then one of the dwarves enters the clearing to find the missing hobbit. Hoping to have a feast, the trolls race through the woods to capture all the dwarves. Bilbo tries to fight them, but he is thrown aside.

The author establishes suspense as the trolls debate how they should cook their new found dinner. Luckily for the dwarves, Gandalf reappears and distracts the trolls with

magical ventriloquism. The trolls argue until sunrise; the huge creatures turn to stone because they stayed out past dark. Gandalf and Bilbo help to free the dwarves and the group then investigates the trolls' cave.

The cave contains several treasures that the adventurers take. Along with food and gold, they find several magical swords made by ancient elves. Bilbo takes one small dagger while Gandalf and Thorin each takes a sword. The group then travels through the mountains for several days.

The group arrives at an elven city and they receive a warm welcome from Elrond, the ruler of Rivendale. They spend long hours in discussion with Elrond; he helps identify the goblin-slaying swords they found. He also provides important insights regarding the map. Secret letters on the map reveal how to open the secret entrance. Bilbo listens carefully to the instructions. Armed with important information and fresh supplies, the adventurers leave the comfort of Elrond's house towards dangerous mountain terrain.

Several days later, near the highest point in the mountains, the weather turns incredibly fierce. A thunderstorm crashes above the adventurers as they traverse the steep path. They locate a cave and use it for shelter from the storm. While the dwarves sleep, a secret door in the back of the cave opens. Bilbo's sharp senses alert him to the danger and he cries out a warning to the group. As goblins pour out of the doorway and seize the group, Gandalf magically disappears to evade capture. The goblins take Bilbo and the dwarves prisoner and drag them deep into their mountain fortress.

The Great Goblin accuses them of being spies. As Thorin tries to defend his ownership of a goblin-slaying sword, the Great Goblin approaches to kill him. Gandalf again provides help by blinding the goblins and attacking them. The wizard leads the



surprised dwarves through the caverns. Bilbo follows behind, but he accidentally hits his head in the darkness and then falls down a crevice. Gandalf and the dwarves do not notice and continue their rushed escape through the mountain.

Bilbo awakens alone in a dark, moist cavern far below the goblin fortress. He feels frightened but he gradually develops courage in the darkness. While fumbling around, he happens to find a golden ring. Without pondering it much, he slips the ring into his pocket. As Tolkien notes, finding this little piece of jewelry represents a turning point in Bilbo's career.

Before Mr. Baggins can find a way out of the cavern, he sees two glowing eyes in the darkness. The eyes belong to Gollum, a slimy creature who hopes to eat the hobbit for lunch. As they evaluate each other, they strike a deal. They will play a contest of riddles. If Bilbo loses, he will be eaten; if Gollum loses, Bilbo will be shown the exit. The contest of wits begins and each attempt to puzzle the other with riddles. In the end, Bilbo outwits Gollum. The enraged creature leaves to retrieve his "precious," the magical ring. Gollum plans to turn invisible and then kill Bilbo. However, the reader realizes that Mr. Baggins had found the ring earlier. Sensing that Gollum's anger will soon become dangerous, Bilbo fumbles through his pockets for something useful and accidentally uses the magical ring of invisibility. Gollum's anger turns to rage when the hobbit turns invisible and the slimy creature runs to the exit to prevent Bilbo's escape. At the doorway, the hobbit ponders what to do. Gollum blocks the only path of escape. Invisible and armed, Bilbo could easily kill his adversary. Bilbo then feels pity for Gollum. At great personal risk, the hobbit distracts Gollum and then dodges past him. After his harrowing experience, Bilbo finds himself outdoors on the other side of the mountains.

It becomes clear to the reader that Bilbo has developed more confidence. He has faced and survived danger in several forms; he has acquired a magical ring and an enchanted sword. This new found assurance reveals itself when Bilbo catches up with Gandalf and the dwarves.

They rest of the adventuring party debates about what to do concerning the missing hobbit. As they argue over a course of action, Bilbo magically appears in the midst of them and casually recounts how he outmaneuvered the goblin guards. For the first time, the dwarves seem impressed with Bilbo's abilities. Gandalf wonders how Mr. Baggins appeared so suddenly.

After this brief and joyful reunion, the adventures realize that the goblins might pursue them when night falls. The travelers march quickly away from the mountains. By evening, however, they sense that the goblins have pursued them. The howls of wolves fill the air. Bilbo and the others attempt to escape from the goblins and wolves by climbing trees. The goblins set the trees on fire and wait for them to be roasted alive.

Gandalf engineers the group's third miraculous escape by calling to his friends of the skies. Giant eagles swoop down and carry the adventurers to safety. These eagles feed them and then fly them closer to their destination. The adventurers say farewell to their flying allies and then encounter another interesting character. Beorn the bear-man makes their acquaintance, supplies them with rations and provides valuable advice about the journey ahead. He warns that the Mirkwood forest can be quite dangerous and that the group must remain on the forest path.

When the group arrives at the beginning of the forest, Gandalf announces that he must leave the adventurer's company. He has pressing business to the South. This news

disappoints the dwarves, but Gandalf assures the group that Bilbo can provide any needed help. The fourteen adventurers tighten their belts and enter the mysterious woods. They travel for weeks under the canopy of huge trees, vines and brambles. The travelers feel suffocated by their surroundings and also run out of food. One day, the scents of a feast reach their noses and the desperate group leaves the path to find the food. The campfires of wood elves attract them, but the elves douse their campfires and scurry into the woods, leaving the group alone and hungry in the darkness.

The wood elves do not represent a strong threat to the dwarves, but another enemy does. Bilbo becomes separated from the dwarves, hopelessly lost and desperately hungry. He sleeps and then wakes to an attack by a giant spider. Mr. Baggins fights the spider and then sets out to find the dwarves. Horrified to find all the dwarves poisoned and mummified in spider silk, Bilbo turns invisible and devises a plan to rescue his comrades. He throws rocks at the spiders, taunts them and then leads the spiders away from his friends. The spiders attempt to trap him with webs, but the hobbit proves too nimble for their tactics. While the spiders search for him in the forest, Bilbo doubles back and rescues the dwarves. Bilbo then leads the group back to the forest path.

The group rests, but they soon realize that Thorin has disappeared. As they search for him, they find the wood elves. The suspicious elves have captured Thorin and aim to also capture the remaining dwarves. Unable to resist, the dwarves surrender to the elves. The quick thinking hobbit, however, turns invisible. Bilbo follows them inside the fortress of the wood elves. Accused of spying, the elves place them in prison.

Taking up the role formerly held by Gandalf, Bilbo engineers an escape. After spending days observing the elves' habits, Bilbo plans an elaborate jailbreak. During a

feast day, the invisible hobbit steals prison keys from a guard, lets the dwarves free and then leads them to an underground river. Hiding themselves in barrels, Bilbo and the dwarves float down an underground passage and into an open river. Before leaves, however, Mr. Baggins takes the time to return the prison guard's keys. By doing this, he hopes to prevent the guard from getting into trouble. Happy to be free, the adventurers travel swiftly out of Mirkwood forest.

The dwarves emerge from their confinement and then introduce themselves to the humans of Laketown. Gifts and greetings pour upon the adventures as the people celebrate the return of dwarves to the region. After feasting and provisioning, the group then embarks towards Lonely Mountain.

Bilbo and the others fearfully approach the mountain and search for its secret entrance. The hobbit's keen eyesight discovers this doorway. Remembering the advice given to him by Elrond, Bilbo examines the ancient map and figures out how to open the door. Once opened, Bilbo bravely decides to enter Smaug's lair to burgle some treasure.

At the end of the secret tunnel, in a hall filled with gold and jewels, the immense dragon sleeps. Bilbo observes the vast size of Smaug and then quickly steals a golden pitcher. Returning to the dwarves, the group celebrates his small victory. Bilbo warns the dwarves of the dragon's strength and they then hear a mighty rumbling. Smaug awakens in a rage and flies to the secret entrance to find the thief. The entire group scrambles into the relative safety of the tunnel.

Bilbo offers to creep into the dragon's lair again to gather more information. He sneaks into the treasure chamber and finds Smaug awake and wary. The two have a memorable conversation; Bilbo answers the dragon's questions with riddles to disguise his

origins. During their talk, Mr. Baggins notices a weakness in the dragon's armor. The dragon, incorrectly guessing that Bilbo is a human from Laketown, decides to avenge the theft of the golden pitcher. The dragon takes flight and soars towards the unsuspecting humans of Laketown. Bilbo feels terrible about Smaug's upcoming attack on the humans. The hobbit hopes that an intelligent bird will provide information of the dragon's weakness to the humans.

Meanwhile, the dwarves rejoice in the golden vault. Bilbo becomes concerned over the dwarves' greed and lust for treasure. As a result of his concerns, the hobbit pockets a priceless gem known as the Arkenstone for possible use later. During their frolicking in the treasure vault, the citizens of Laketown encounter the wrath of Smaug. The dragon incinerates buildings and destroys everything. A captain named Bard makes a stand with his fellow archers and hears the news from Bilbo's intelligent bird. With his last arrow, the captain shoots at the dragon's weakness. Pierced in the heart, Smaug falls dead into the lake.

Instead of creating a simplified, fairy-tale ending, the author shows that the death of Smaug creates a power vacuum. The people of Laketown hope to use some of the dragon's treasure to rebuild their homes. The wood elves also have a claim to some of the treasure. The dwarves become obsessed with keeping all the gold for themselves and Bilbo is left in the middle.

Deciding to protect themselves and the treasure, Thorin and the dwarves barricade themselves within Lonely Mountain. They send for reinforcements from Thorin's cousin; Bilbo becomes concerned over Thorin's militant attitude. The humans and elves arrive

and ask for a share of the treasure. When they are denied, the two armies decide to blockade the dwarves.

Bilbo decides to encourage negotiations by sneaking out of the fortress and meeting with Bard and the Elf King. He offers the Arkenstone to the armies, giving up his share of the treasure in hopes of preventing war. The amazement Bilbo provokes by his generosity is matched only by the hobbit's amazement that Gandalf has returned. The old wizard comforts the worried hobbit and praises his actions. Later, Thorin shouts accusations of betrayal at Bilbo and Gandalf.

Within a day, Thorin's dwarvish cousins arrive, prepared for battle. Bilbo's actions temporarily stall a battle and Gandalf presents news that alters each army's purpose. A host of goblins has marched to Lonely Mountain to also claim the dragon's gold. The creatures pour through the valley, attempting to invade the entire region. The dwarf, elf and human armies forge a hasty alliance to defend themselves against their mutual foe. As the four armies fight, it becomes clear that the goblins are too strong. The battle rages until it is joined by a fifth army. The giant eagles and Beorn the man-bear appear to fight the goblins. Bilbo rejoices but is then knocked unconscious by a thrown weapon.

The hobbit wakes up alone on the battlefield. Although the allies win their fight with the goblins, Thorin and countless others have sustained mortal wounds. The dwarven leader asks for Bilbo's forgiveness, praises the hobbit's peacefulness and then dies. After mourning the loss of Thorin, Bilbo decides to return home. Gandalf, Beorn and Bilbo leave Lonely Mountain to travel back to the Shire. As he leaves, he gives some valuable jewels to the Elf King as repayment for when Bilbo secretly ate food from the

wood elf fortress. For his reward, Bilbo chooses to only take two small chests of gold and silver; he has no need of vast wealth. When Mr. Baggins finally returns home, he finds his relatives, the Sackville-Bagginses, trying to assume control of Bilbo's estate and auction his possessions. Instead of causing too much conflict, Bilbo actually buys back some of his auctioned goods and then firmly asserts his right to the estate. After a period of contemplation, Bilbo begins to write his memoirs. He entitles the book: "There and Back Again: A Hobbit's Holiday."

## **APPENDIX II**

### **TOLKIEN IN CONTEXT**

Humphrey Carpenter, Tolkien's official biographer, provides a wealth of information about the author of *The Hobbit*. Most of the information in this appendix has been derived from Carpenter's biography.

John Ronald Ruel Tolkien was born in Africa in 1892, son to Mabel and Arthur Tolkien. Although J. R. R. frequently looked back on his childhood fondly, much of it was filled with instability. John moved to England with his mother in 1895. The next year, John's father, who stayed in Africa, died of rheumatic fever. Left without an income in Birmingham, Mabel lived with her family and helped to educate John and his brother. In 1900, Mabel converted to Catholicism and lost the support of her family.

Mabel moved her two sons several times around the areas of Birmingham, Moseley and Edgaston. By 1904, Mabel Tolkien was hospitalized for diabetes. She died that year, leaving John and Hillary orphaned. For the rest of his life, John would view his mother as a martyr to her faith. Keeping with his mother's wishes, J. R. R. maintained his mother's ethical and religious beliefs. Till his death, Tolkien adhered to the Catholic faith. Under the care of Father Morgan, the family priest, John received a strict education. J.R.R. showed great promise studying Old English, Gothic and Old Norse. John's fascination with philology inspired him to begin inventing his own dialects and languages.

In 1908, he met Edith Bratt, his future wife. Father Morgan feared that an early marriage between Edith and John would jeopardize Tolkien's career. Father Morgan



forbade J.R.R. from dating Edith until he turned twenty-one. The young Tolkien concentrated on academic subjects and studied classical languages at Exeter College. During a vacation in 1910, he hiked with a group in the mountains of Switzerland. During this hike, the group encountered a fearsome storm. Later, Tolkien would incorporate this experience into his story, *The Hobbit*.

After several attempts, J. R. R. was accepted to Oxford University. He studied philology under Joseph Wright and also began crafting a mythological world. This imaginary world, which he named Middle-Earth, formed the foundation for his writings of *The Silmarillion*, *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. During this time, he made several important friendships with fellow academics and joined an informal group of scholars which called itself “The Inklings.” In 1913, John Ronald turned twenty-one and contacted his sweetheart Edith. The two became formally engaged the next year.

At the same period, England declared war on Germany, but J. R. R. decided to complete his studies before serving in the army. In 1916, he married Edith and was commissioned as a battalion signaling officer. During the first part of that year, Tolkien witnessed the horrors of the First World War. Several of his fellow “Inklings” were killed in battle. After observing the bloody conflicts at Somme, Tolkien succumbed to trench fever in November. While spending most of 1917 hospitalized, the author contemplated the terrible effects of mechanized warfare. Many elements of his experiences were incorporated into his writing of *The Hobbit*. According to William H. Green, Tolkien’s creation of the goblin race in Middle-Earth reflect the territorial, destructive aspects of man.<sup>1</sup>

After Tolkien's recovery from trench fever, he returned to academic life. Between 1918 and 1926, he occupied himself as a modest professor at Leeds and Oxford. His wife Edith, meanwhile, gave birth to three sons, John, Michael and Christopher. In addition to enjoying his new domestic life, Tolkien worked on the *Oxford English Dictionary*, *The Middle English Vocabulary* and worked on his own translation of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. In 1926, Tolkien became friends with C. S. Lewis and the two encouraged each other's writing. Two years later, as Tolkien waited during an examination, he wrote down the first sentence of his famous book: "In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit."<sup>2</sup> J. R. R. Tolkien's inclusion of Bilbo's ring of invisibility paralleled his society's interest in the subject. William Green notes that H. G. Wells' *The Invisible Man* was a hit movie the same time Tolkien was writing *The Hobbit*.<sup>3</sup>

Tolkien infused his personal beliefs into his writing. According to Green, he wrote his story "to explore and demonstrate how a hero who is timid, bourgeois and ethically Christian might achieve at his own level feats comparable to Beowulf's. However inexperienced and small we are, like Bilbo we can show courage and make a difference."<sup>4</sup>

By 1932, C. S. Lewis had read Tolkien's manuscript of *The Hobbit* and encouraged its publication. Three years later, Tolkien's book was still not finished because he could not decide how to end his story. In 1937, the book was finally published and met with commercial and critical success. Houghton Mifflin Publishing secured the rights to the text in the United States in 1938 and Tolkien's text was praised by the *New York Herald Tribune* as the best children's book of the year.

Encouraged by his friends and publishers, Tolkien began writing a second book on hobbits. This project soon became too massive for a single volume. After a decade of

writing, Tolkien finally completed a three-volume story called *The Lord of the Rings*. Tolkien's publisher, however, was concerned that this new text was not intended for young readers. Although the second book became incredibly popular, it received its readership from adults rather than children.

Encouraged by his success, Tolkien retired from Oxford to concentrate upon *The Book of Lost Tales*, which supplemented *The Silmarillion*. By 1970, however, Tolkien had still not completed his master work. A year later, his wife Edith died. Although he received an honorary doctorate from Oxford in 1972, J. R. R. continued to grieve the loss of his wife. In 1973, Tolkien died at the age of eighty-one, leaving his son Christopher to complete the history of Middle-Earth.

As noted in the first chapter, Tolkien's two major works, *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* have been world best-sellers. Each text has been translated into at least twenty-five languages and has experienced revivals in popularity. In the 1960s, the pacifistic message of two stories became associated with students who possessed anti-war sentiments. Although Tolkien himself might have objected to the drugs and sexuality also associated with the period, the ethical issues within his writing struck a cord with students and protesters who objected to brutality and mechanized warfare.

Bilbo Baggins continues to be a hero for readers of all ages. Each published edition of the text notes the increased numbers of copies sold. Despite this strong indication of popularity, J. R. R. Tolkien would probably be more interested that children around the world had been introduced to his friendly little hobbit.

## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Green, William H., *The Hobbit: A Journey into Maturity* (New York: Twayne, 1995) 71.

<sup>2</sup> Tolkien, J. R. R., *The Hobbit* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1966) 1.

<sup>3</sup> Green, 75.

<sup>4</sup> Green, 9.

## **APPENDIX III**

### **PLOT SUMMARIES OF THE FIVE ADAPTATIONS**

#### Plot Summary of Adaptation by Patricia Gray

The script by Patricia Gray opens with Bilbo Baggins contentedly eating his second and third breakfasts of the morning. He sighs with pleasure, surrounded by the comforts and luxuries of his home. Gandalf then enters and engages the hobbit in a conversation. During their talk, several other hobbits curiously listen and then scurry off when Gandalf mentions adventure. Mr. Baggins grows concerned with the wizard's cryptic remarks. Gandalf stays for tea and watches as Bilbo meets his other unexpected guests.

Knocks at the door distract Bilbo from his fears and dwarves begin to pour into his little home. Like Tolkien's story, groups of two or three dwarves enter at a time. As a host, the hobbit attempts to provide food for them as Thorin speaks of the upcoming adventure. Mr. Baggins worries that his neighbors might gossip about having dwarves in his home. The stress of these unexpected visitors and of impending danger becomes too much for Bilbo. He succumbs to anxiety, shrieks and falls trembling to the floor. The wizard and the dwarves question his bravery and Bilbo defensively states that he will defend his family's reputation. The hobbit realizes his mistake and attempts to retract his statement. Too late, the dwarves have already accepted him into the company and have started to plan their journey.

The hobbit seems unwilling to believe that he will actually go with the group; even when he appears ready in the morning. Gandalf thoughtfully provides the hobbit with traveling supplies and also gives some extra food to Bombur, the overweight dwarf.

The next scene occurs in the forest, dozens of miles from Bilbo's home. Patricia Gray uses Bilbo's diary as a device to provide background information of their travels. The hobbit remarks about the pleasures and pains of their journey. After he reads from his journal, tragic news interrupts his thoughtful mood. Kili and Fili announce that the supply ponies have been washed away in a torrential flood. Gray then adds a scene to show Bilbo's generosity. Thorin points out that Bombur still possesses the food Gandalf gave him and Bombur admits that he has eaten a few of the cakes. Thorin angrily chastises the large dwarf for his gluttony. Bilbo defends Bombur and compensates for their loss of supplies by sharing his ration with the dwarf. His generosity and thoughtfulness wins Bombur's friendship.

The second scene continues as the group smells roast mutton in the air. It falls upon Bilbo to investigate the troll camp and steal some food. In Gray's adaptation, instead of portraying all the dwarves captured by the trolls, only Bilbo becomes a prisoner. As a result of this change, Bilbo does not become responsible for endangering the entire group. Luckily for Bilbo, Gandalf arrives and distracts the trolls until sunrise. They then find the troll lair and the magical swords. When asked about his disappearance, the wizard reveals that he went ahead and met with some elf friends who warned him of the trolls. These elves appear on stage (representing the group's stay with Elrond) and lightheartedly sing to dwarves.

At the beginning of the third scene, Bilbo once again reads from his diary, recounting the events that led them to their camp in the mountains. The group has found a cave to protect them from the storm outside. Gandalf tells the group that his sword glows and that goblins must be nearby. Bilbo does not provide the warning in this script. The Great Goblin and his followers appear and immediately attack. Thorin and Gandalf kill several goblins and Bilbo helps them. During the violent battle, Bilbo receives a blow on the head. Gandalf then calls for a retreat and the howling goblins follow them.

After a blackout, Bilbo sits alone in a cavern. In the darkness, the hobbit builds up his courage and tries to find an exit. He instead finds the magic ring and Gollum. The slimy creature and Bilbo engage in a contest of riddles. Like Tolkien's original story, Bilbo wins the contest and avoids Gollum's anger by accidentally turning invisible. While trying to escape, Bilbo dodges around Gollum and then finds a way out of the caverns.

The final scene of the first act begins with the dwarves searching for their lost burglar. Invisible, the hobbit kicks one of the dwarves who wants to leave Bilbo behind. Mr. Baggins becomes visible and shocks the entire group. After their happy reunion, Gandalf urges the group to press onward into Mirkwood forest. Their encounters with the wolves, the giant eagles and Beorn have been eliminated. The wizard informs the group that he must attend some pressing business. At the end of the first act, the adventurers march towards the forest after Gandalf warns them to stay on the path.

The second act begins in the forest, after the group has traveled for weeks through the woods. The dwarves grumble about food. Eventually, the dwarves succumb to hunger and leave the path to investigate a wood elf campfire. Bilbo turns invisible as he watches the dwarves' capture by the elves. The Elf Queen interrogates the hungry

dwarves, but Thorin and the company refuse to answer any of her questions. Patricia Gray does not include Bilbo's encounter with the spiders but instead skips directly to the elf prison.

In the second scene, Bilbo reads from his diary. He admits that he does not know how to help the dwarves. He forgets to turn invisible and is almost caught by the guards. Thorin and Bilbo then devise a plan to escape. Bilbo manages to steal the guard's keys and he then lets the dwarves out of their cells. As the group wonders what to do next, Bilbo decides that their only option is to hide in the wine barrels and float down the river. The dwarves hate the plan but go along with it. They climb into the barrels and Bilbo realizes that he cannot seal his own barrel. Forgetting to plan ahead, the hobbit must jump into the water after the dwarves.

The third scene appears to have been included to allow time for the final scene change. In front of the curtain, the dwarves complain about their barrel ride and Bilbo reads from his diary. They then plan their march to Lonely Mountain.

Patricia Gray's script suggests that the stage be split by a scrim that hides Smaug's lair. The visible section of the stage shows the lair's entrance. The dwarves and Bilbo contemplate how to open it. Thorin and Bilbo together figure out the door's riddle and prepare to go inside.

Patricia Gray then makes a significant departure from Tolkien's story. The Queen of the wood elves arrives and offers an alliance. In return for her rightful share of the treasure, she offers to give Thorin a sword capable of slaying the dragon. Thorin and the Queen begin to argue and Bilbo attempts to encourage the alliance. His attempts fail until Gandalf arrives to resolve the conflict. He has knowledge of the dragon's weakness, (not



Bilbo) but will not reveal this information unless Thorin shares the treasure. Thorin agrees and the elves become his allies.

The moment for Bilbo to enter the cavern arrives and Thorin follows him. The lighting then reveals Smaug and the vast treasure. Bilbo and the dragon engage in a conversation similar to the one found in Tolkien's text. The hobbit appeals to Smaug's vanity and persuades the dragon to show off his diamond encrusted torso. At the precise moment, Bilbo signals Thorin to plunge the sword into the dragon. Smaug dies and the entire group rejoices.

Patricia Gray omits the last five chapters of Tolkien's story. This play ends as the elves and dwarves part as allies, Gandalf displays his happiness and Bilbo says goodbye. During the rapid denouement, Bilbo decides to only take a small share of the treasure.

#### Plot Summary of the Musical Adaptation

The musical adaptation's book, written by Ruth Perry, begins with Bilbo's nephew arriving for a visit. Mr. Baggins has not yet returned home, so the nephew sits down to read an adventure book while nibbling on cookies. Bilbo arrives and talks about the book his nephew has been reading. Bilbo displays hesitance to travel or face danger. Following this conversation, the uncle and nephew leave the stage and are replaced by Gandalf. After singing a song that introduces the guardian character, the wizard invites the dwarves onto the stage. The dwarves enter, marching and singing.

After making introductions, Gandalf calls for Bilbo and tells him that he has been selected as the fourteenth member of the expedition. Bilbo receives encouragement from his nephew to go with them. Gandalf encourages him by singing the song "Adventure."

Bilbo responds with his song, “No, Thank you.” The two then sing simultaneously, each asserting their opinions. After the dwarves tell the story of Lonely Mountain and of the dragon Smaug, Bilbo decides to go along on the adventure. He seems enthusiastic and begins to cheerfully pack for the journey.

The next scene opens with the group exhaustedly climbing in mountain terrain. As several of them complain about their tired legs, a crash offstage signals the landslide that washes away their pack ponies. Faced with the prospect of going hungry, Bilbo tries to encourage the dwarves by singing “A Tale of Two Frogs.” After the dwarves cheer up, they smell roast mutton and Bilbo investigates the trolls. Like Tolkien’s original story, the creatures capture Bilbo and then chase after the dwarves. Unlike Tolkien’s story, however, the hobbit develops the plan to keep the trolls distracted until sunrise. Using ventriloquism, the hobbit and the dwarves encourage an argument among the three trolls. The trolls turn to stone and the dwarves free themselves. They investigate the camp, finding gold and weapons. Gandalf and Thorin each take a sword; Bilbo takes a knife. The group then exits, singing their marching song.

While the adventurers think they have found a safe passage through the mountains, the audience knows that goblin guards have been spying on them. In a scene that shows the goblin headquarters, the spies report back to their goblin leader and plan an ambush. The next scene returns to the protagonist and his friends as they continue their trek. Bilbo notices that his blade glows and warns the group that goblins may be near. Quickly, an attack by the goblins occurs and a large melee takes place. During the battle, Thorin and Gandalf kill several goblins, including the leader. Bilbo helps with his dagger, but then

falls unconscious from a blow. The battle continues and then sweeps offstage, leaving Bilbo alone in the darkness.

Bilbo finds the ring and then encounters Gollum. The slimy creature hopes to eat Bilbo for lunch, but the hobbit manages to win the game of riddles. After portraying Bilbo's discovery of his ring's power, this adaptation includes another alteration of Tolkien's plot. Gollum tries to deceive Bilbo by pretending to be pleasant. Although he almost catches the hobbit, Bilbo sees through Gollum's plan and escapes.

While searching for the dwarves, Bilbo congratulates himself on his victory. Singing the song "Invisibility," the hobbit rejoices in his newfound power and confidence. He finds the dwarves, teases and molests them, and then becomes visible. After a joyous reunion, Gandalf announces that he will not travel much longer with the group. He warns them of the dangers of the forest, singing "Mirkwood." He also encourages them to stay on the path. The first act ends as the dwarves march away, singing a refrain of the song.

The second act shows the dwarves sing the same refrain with much less enthusiasm. They have marched through the forest for weeks and have exhausted their food supplies. The group then encounters the giant spiders. Bilbo does not save the dwarves, however. Instead, the wood elves arrive and scare away the giant spiders. Too weak to resist, the dwarves follow the elves' orders to return with them.

In the elf prison, Bilbo and the dwarves sing a lullaby to the prison guards to put them to sleep. Bilbo then comes up with the plan to escape using the wine barrels. He also returns the keys to the jail keeper. Later, after extricating themselves from the barrels, Bilbo stands aside and sings his song "I Want to go Home." The next scene

eliminates the people of Laketown and instead cuts directly to the entrance of Smaug's lair.

In this adaptation, Bilbo does not find the secret entrance. Instead, Thorin finds it and Gandalf opens it. Bilbo, protective of his ring, refuses to lend it to any of the dwarves. Instead, he contemplates the ethics of stealing treasure from the dragon. Gandalf and the dwarves sing "Benevolent Burglary" to Bilbo and convince him. Gandalf also informs Bilbo of the dragon's weakness. The hobbit then bravely enters the cavern and converses with Smaug. The dragon sings "Breathin' Fire" to intimidate Bilbo. As their conversation ends, Bilbo goads the dragon into exposing his underbelly. Bilbo throws his dagger into the dragon's exposed weakness. The dragon dies.

The last scene shows Bilbo back at the Shire, trying to stop the auction of his home. As he greets his relatives, the dwarves then arrive and give Bilbo his share of the treasure. The play ends as they sing "Fare Thee Well."

#### Plot Summary of Adaptation by Brainerd Duffield

Duffield begins his script with an expository monologue by Bilbo. The hobbit talks directly to the audience and reveals his desires for comfort, food and safety. Duffield includes several notes which state how this monologue should be delivered in an amicable tone. Gandalf then arrives and the two carry on a cordial conversation. After the wizard departs, Bilbo writes in his diary and tells of his fears regarding adventure.

Bilbo begins to prepare tea as dwarves begin to arrive. Surprised by their presence, the hobbit becomes increasingly frustrated and angry by their demands for refreshments. When all the dwarves and the wizard have all entered, Bilbo grows bitter

and hostile regarding his invitation to go on the adventure. He throws a tantrum and then apologizes for his behavior. The dwarves display surprise at the hobbit's violent temper and Gandalf condescendingly reproaches Bilbo for his outburst. The dwarves question the hobbit's bravery, and Bilbo defensively asserts himself. Suddenly, Bilbo commits himself to the journey. It appears, however, that he has no real choice in the matter; Gandalf states that the journey has been foreseen by the stars. They depart the next morning.

The second scene opens with Bilbo again writing in his diary. In his writing, he reveals that the supply ponies disappeared in a flood and that they no longer possess food for their journey. Gandalf approaches Bilbo and demands that he enter the troll campground to steal food. The three trolls have been changed by Duffield into bloodthirsty females with appetites for roasted dwarves. Bilbo sneaks into their camp and comments about the trolls' table manners. The trolls catch Bilbo and then the dwarves. Gandalf saves them in a fashion similar to Tolkien's original text.

At the conclusion of this first encounter, Gandalf chastises Bilbo for his fearful reaction to the trolls. Several dwarves also complain about Bilbo's performance as a burglar. Bilbo pulls Gandalf aside and begs to return home. To bolster Bilbo's morale, Gandalf leads the dwarves in a cheer for the hobbit. After provisioning themselves with swords and food, the adventures continue their march. Duffield then inserts an intermission into his script.

A large section of Tolkien's story disappears as Duffield skips to the encounter with the goblins. Bilbo's diary entry describes their travels to this point (but does not mention Elrond or Rivendale). During his reading, Bilbo finds the magical ring on the floor. The hobbit finishes the diary exposition and then talks with the others. The goblins

suddenly enter the cavern and then attack. After a violent conflict, everyone runs off stage, leaving Bilbo behind.

Disappointed that no one noticed that he had been left behind, Bilbo searches around the cave. The hobbit senses that he is not alone. Gollum enters and threatens Bilbo. The hobbit returns the threat by showing his sword and offering to stick it in his throat. The standoff results in a contest of riddles. Bilbo wins the contest on an unfair technicality, turns invisible, and threatens to kill Gollum if he does not leave. The creature slinks off stage and then Gandalf returns with a powerful ally. The wizard has found Elfrida. The Elf Queen and her army want to fight the goblins. A huge battle takes place; the wizard and Elfrida use magic to paralyze their opponents and then kill them.

After their victory over the goblins, the Elf Queen provides further assistance by giving them food and by interpreting Thorin's map. She also arranges for transportation to Smaug's lair with the Lord of the Eagles. Finally, she tells Bilbo that his sword is the only weapon capable of slaying the dragon. Brainerd Duffield eliminates the episodes with Beorn, the wolves, Mirkwood, the giant spiders, the wood elves and Laketown.

In the next scene, the adventurers have been transported to Lonely Mountain. They find the secret entrance, but Bilbo refuses to enter. Reluctantly, Mr. Baggins finally agrees to steal some treasure and he enters the dragon's lair. The dragon and the hobbit have a conversation similar to the original text, but Brainerd Duffield includes some additional dialogue. At the end of the conversation, Smaug admits that he has a toothache. Bilbo offers to help and approaches the dragon's mouth. Finding a weakness, Bilbo plunges his sword through the dragon's throat. As blood splashes, Bilbo sarcastically observes the dragon's naive mistake.

The hobbit proudly calls to the group that he has killed the dragon. The rest of the adventurers rush into the cave and celebrate their victory. Swimming in treasure, Thorin gratefully gives the Arkenstone to Bilbo as a reward. Bilbo announces that he would like to return home. Thorin offers to “book a flight” with the giant eagles, but Bilbo states that he would prefer walking. Bilbo then says goodbye. Duffield’s script does not include the last four chapters of Tolkien’s story.

#### Plot Summary of Adaptation by Markland Taylor

Markland Taylor’s script incorporates almost all of Tolkien’s plot elements, but displays an incredibly fast pace. Instead of dramatizing a large group, Taylor has Thorin represent all thirteen dwarves. This adaptation begins with Bilbo Baggins taking a nap outside his home. Empty trays of food surround him as Bilbo fitfully dreams of a dragon. Gandalf then arrives and observes the hobbit. Bilbo awakens and displays surprise at the wizard’s arrival. Gandalf and the hobbit converse and then the wizard introduces Thorin Oakenshield. Thorin describes the adventure and Bilbo reacts with shock and surprise. Thorin and Gandalf exit, leaving the hobbit to talk with the audience about the surprising turn of events.

The next scene begins in a forest, with Bilbo building a campfire. Thorin exits to look for firewood and three trolls enter the camp. Bilbo hides but the trolls catch him. The hobbit convinces them that he is too small to eat, but then Thorin enters and tries to fight the monsters. Luckily, Gandalf arrives and turns them into stone. Bilbo, Thorin and Gandalf then investigate the troll cave and find the magical swords. Bilbo again talks to the audience and tells them of the next two days.

For a brief moment, the adventurers meet some elves and speak with Elrond. Like Tolkien's story, Elrond reveals the secret moon letters in Thorin's map. They travel on through the mountains and encounter the goblins. Bilbo does not provide a warning. Instead the Great Goblin arrives to accuse them of being spies; Gandalf disappears before he is noticed. He reappears on the other side and prevents Thorin's execution. As a chaotic battle ensues, Gandalf narrates to the audience and explains how Bilbo becomes separated from the others.

The next scene shows Bilbo alone in the dark caverns. Gollum enters and proposes a game of riddles with Bilbo. Taylor uses Tolkien's original dialogue to present a relatively long scene. Eventually, Bilbo wins the contest of riddles and asks to be shown the exit. Like the original story, Gollum plans to use the ring of invisibility to kill Bilbo. Instead, Bilbo turns invisible and escapes.

Bilbo finds himself on the other side of the Misty Mountains and he looks for his companions. He receives the welcomes of Gandalf and Thorin, but they must immediately run from wolves. After climbing trees, the giant eagles rescue them and carry them to Beorn's house. The man-bear feeds them, provisions them and gives them advice concerning Mirkwood. He sends them off and says goodbye. Later, Gandalf also says goodbye, stating that he has pressing business to the South.

Thorin and Bilbo journey alone through the forest. They begin to starve and decide to leave the path to search for food. They encounter the spiders and Bilbo battles with one of them. Immediately after his victory, he observes Thorin being captured by the wood elves. Bilbo follows them back to their fortress.



After arguing with the Elf King, Thorin finds himself in prison. Mr. Baggins quickly arrives and unlocks the cell door with the stolen keys. Although Bilbo does not return the keys, he does plan an elaborate escape. They float their barrel down to Laketown and meet with the humans. They arrive at the gates of the town and ask for food. The master of the town offers his help.

The next scene shows Bilbo and Thorin on the side of Lonely Mountain. Bilbo finds the secret doorway, tells his plan to Thorin and then bravely enters Smaug's lair. He quickly steals a golden pitcher and returns to the dwarf. The angry roars of the dragon can be heard and the two discuss what to do next. Bilbo decides to re-enter the lair and gather information about the dragon. When he does, he converses with the dragon and discovers Smaug's weakness.

In a departure from Tolkien's original story, Bilbo and Thorin run down to Laketown to warn the humans. Bard receives the news and slays the dragon with his last arrow. The humans and Thorin then discuss the treasure. Bilbo offers the Arkenstone to prevent a war, but Thorin grows angry. He desperately wants the Arkenstone returned.

Bilbo decides to go with Gandalf and the two leave Lonely Mountain without any treasure. Bilbo then talks again with the audience, narrating that Thorin went to war with the humans over the Arkenstone and was killed. Gandalf tries to console the hobbit and the play ends as the two walk away, contemplating the death of Thorin.

### Plot Summary of Adaptation By Edward Mast

Mast begins his adaptation with a recorded narrator describing the projection of a shadow play. As the narrator speaks passages from Tolkien's *The Simarillion*, the shadows of a warrior and a monster clash in battle. As the narration ends, the lights reveal Bilbo Baggins dressed in pots and pans for armor. The audience meets Bilbo as he smiles and directly addresses the audience. He treats the audience like guests of his home and he comments about his mixed feelings regarding adventure. Gandalf knocks on his door and accepts Bilbo's offer to stay for a meal. The wizard points out that he is not alone and Bilbo happily invites the dwarves into his home. Slightly frustrated by the increasing number of dwarves, he scurries about, cooking and serving refreshments. Thorin and Gandalf discuss the hobbit's potential as an adventurer. Thorin eventually invites Bilbo to sit and discuss business. The conversation occurs in a similar fashion to Tolkien's original story. Instead of being tricked into accompanying the adventurers, however, Bilbo stays behind. Fearing that he will regret his decision, Bilbo leaps out of his home to join the group.

Mast's next scene opens with the adventurers hoisting packs over a mountain ledge. As the wind blows around them, Bilbo expresses his regrets to the audience. Jumping back into a conversation with the dwarves, the adapter reveals that the supply ponies have been lost and that the group has *already* encountered the trolls. As this conversation continues, Bilbo wishes that the adventure could have more excitement. He hopes for a good sword fight. In an answer to this hope, a shout occurs offstage and the group becomes surrounded by goblins. The Goblin King attacks Thorin; the dwarf leader

sidesteps the attack and stabs the Goblin King. As more goblins rush to attack, the lights begin to fade.

In darkness, Bilbo again speaks to the audience. As he states his desires to return home, he finds the magic ring on the ground. Before long, Gollum enters and threatens the hobbit. The pair agree to a contest of riddles and their conversation uses Tolkien's original dialogue. As in the original story, Bilbo wins the contest and turns invisible when Gollum attempts to eat him. Edward Mast also includes Bilbo's decision not to kill Gollum. After he throws a pebble offstage, Gollum lunges at the sound and Bilbo moves to the door. In Mast's version, Gollum grabs the hobbit's leg and almost captures Bilbo. The hobbit manages to open the door, however, and Gollum is blinded by the bright outdoor light. The scene ends with Gollum, alone in the dark, shouting curses at Mr. Baggins.

This adaptation then makes a significant departure from Tolkien's original plot. The next scene returns to the goblin cave. The dwarves have been captured by the goblins, not by the wood elves. A crowd of goblins gathers around the shackled dwarves and they promise all sorts of unpleasant tortures for the captives. Two guards, named Doof and Dork arrive to guard the dwarves. Bilbo uses ventriloquism while invisible to inspire an argument between the two goblin guards. Doof angrily clubs his counterpart unconscious and then Bilbo knocks out Doof with the same club. The hobbit sets the dwarves free and the group escapes.

The next scene opens in Mirkwood, with Bilbo explaining to the dwarves how he escaped from Gollum. Suddenly, the group is surrounded by very tall human warriors. Anxious for a fight, Thorin challenges the armored opponents, but the humans react

casually to their presence; the humans thought the dwarves might have been goblins. Thorin describes their mission and invites the warriors to join them in their quest to kill Smaug. The humans, including Maxwell and Bard, display concern that angering Smaug might endanger their families in Laketown. The humans offer them food and shelter, but Thorin brashly refuses. Bilbo acts as a peacemaker by humbly thanking the warriors for their hospitality. The lights fade.

The lights rise and reveal the side of Lonely Mountain. The doorway does not require special procedures to open it. Instead, Mast portrays the dwarves arguing about who should enter. Bilbo concedes that it seems like an opportunity to behave like a burglar. He enters Smaug's lair. With the sound of the dragon breathing in the background, Bilbo voices his concerns to the audience. He suddenly remembers to turn invisible and then bravely steps into the cavern. The giant eyes of Smaug rise behind him and sweep beams of light across the stage and audience. The hobbit and the dragon engage in a conversation similar to Tolkien's original text. In the end, Smaug guesses that Bilbo comes from Laketown and then soars off to exact his revenge upon the humans. Soon, an offstage crash represents that the dragon has sealed off the secret entrance, trapping the adventurers inside the lair. Bilbo displays regret that Laketown will be destroyed.

The scene then shows Laketown in flames. Maxwell demands that Bard slay the dragon. Bard calmly notches his last arrow and waits for the dragon to approach. The scene ends with the anticipation of his shot.

Mast's adaptation returns to the dragon's lair as the dwarves frolic in the treasure. Thorin proudly displays the Arkenstone to the dwarves. One of the dwarves alerts them

that an army of humans approaches Lonely Mountain. Bard and Thorin then discuss terms and Mast utilizes Tolkien's original dialogue. Bard asks for a portion of the treasure to rebuild Laketown. Thorin refuses and the two decide to battle for the treasure. The actors then "freeze" as Bilbo addresses the audience. He decides that something must be done to prevent a war between the humans and dwarves. He turns invisible, pickpockets the Arkenstone and offers it to Bard. Gandalf appears and congratulates the hobbit for his attempt at preventing war. Thorin, insane with rage, reacts by shooting an arrow at Gandalf. The wizard protects himself with magic and then chastises the dwarf for his behavior. He then warns everyone that a goblin army approaches to avenge the death of the Goblin King. Thorin stubbornly refuses to join forces with the humans and then the goblins attack. A huge battle occurs. Bilbo receives a blow to the head and the lights fade.

After describing the dead bodies and wounded on the stage, Edward Mast then shows Bilbo walking through the battlefield and finding Thorin. The two exchange forgiveness and the dwarf then dies. A passage of time is indicated by a lighting change. Bilbo, Gandalf, Bard and Balin talk contemplatively. Bilbo feels that he failed by not preventing the battle. Bard and Gandalf insist that his actions did make a difference. They offer him the first pick of the treasure, but the hobbit refuses gold; he only wishes to return home. As Gandalf escorts Bilbo back to the Shire, they begin to talk about the hobbit's magical ring. The play ends.

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