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*the ROAD goes EVER ON AND ON
DOWN FROM the DOOR where it BEGAN.
NOW FAR ahead the ROAD has gone,
AND I must FOLLOW, IF I CAN,
PURSUING it WITH EAGER FEET,
UNTIL it JOINS some LARGER way
WHERE many paths and ERRANDS meet.
AND whither then? I cannot say.*

The Hobbit is a simple fairytale, written for children, dealing with the adventures of a little Hobbit that is sent out on the quest to help some dwarves to recover their long-lost treasure. It is foremost the story of an individual's growth, mostly told through the eyes of one Hobbit, starting in describing him and his life and ending in describing him many years later, smoking happily his pipe.¹

The Lord of the Rings is a kind of a great epic poem, at first sight dealing with the most important events of one era of a fantasy-land full of heroes, about the sacrificial journey of one Hobbit, filled with scenes of great battles of different races – good versus evil at its best. But at a second or a third sight, one realises that this book, consisting of more than 1200 pages, is not that shallow. It is true that the wars play an important part and great heroes influence the contemporary history but the core mission is that of a small Hobbit, who has to face his own desires and resist the temptations of evil and, only helped by one single friend, to finally destroy the One Ring of Power, forged long ago by an evil might to destroy Middle-earth.

To understand the whole world and the basic ideals that lie behind these tales, it is important to deal with the main characters of these two stories.

0. Introduction: Talking about Hobbits

In the following work, much will be talked about Fantasy-creatures created by J.R.R. Tolkien called "Hobbits", "Halflings" or the "Little Folk", so before I start, I want to explain what the differences between an average human and a "normal" Hobbit are:

i. Physical characteristics

First of all Hobbits have only half the size of humans – the height of grown ups ranges between 2 and 4 feet.² They have pointed ears and curly hair, "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 [...]; have long clever brown fingers, good-natured faces, and laugh deep fruity laughs".³ Their average life span is 100 years, they go through a teenager-like period called the irresponsible "tweens" and they are "coming of age" at thirty-three.

ii. Mentality

Hobbits like to eat much and often (they normally have six meals a day⁴) and hate haste. They are very leisurely with all they do, but that does not mean that they are slow or heavy – they just don't want to hurry. Most of them smoke pipe – especially enormous long and artistically manufactured wooden pipes, and love to garden in the *Shire* what is their home and possibly the most beautiful place in Middle-earth. They live in little hobbit-holes – that aren't "nasty, dirty,

¹ cf. Barron's Booknotes – Website, *The Hobbit*, "FORM AND STRUCTURE"

² cf. *Lord of the Rings Guide* – Website, "Hobbit Facts"

³ J.R.R. Tolkien - *The Hobbit*, Chapter 1, Page 2

⁴ cf. *Lord of the Rings Guide* – Website, "Hobbit Facts"

wet hole[s], filled with the ends of worms and an oozy smell, nor yet [...] dry, bare, sandy hole[s] with nothing in [...] [them] to sit down on or to eat”⁵. A hobbit-hole means comfort⁶.

Hobbits usually don’t leave the Shire. They don’t use advanced machines whose construction they wouldn’t understand and love to live their lives in peace and in harmony with nature while discouraging any kind of adventurous behaviour.⁷ That’s why most of them don’t know what happens outside their small countryside and are distrusting all intruders that look and speak different.

This short summary is far from being complete, but should be enough to understand, why the three Hobbits about whom I want to talk here are that extraordinary for their kind.⁸

1. The development of Bilbo’s character

i. *Bilbo’s Preconditions*

Bilbo Baggins is an about fifty year old Hobbit that lives in his hobbit-hole called Bag End in Hobbiton as the Story of *The Hobbit* begins. He grew up as the son of Belladonna Took and Bungo Baggins. The Took-side in him will play a very important part later, because “there was [...] something not entirely hobbit-like about them, – and once in a while members of the Took-clan would go and have adventures.”⁹ On the other side in his early days, “he looked and behaved exactly like a second edition of his solid and comfortable father”¹⁰ and until now, he had only shown up the Bagginses-side, which totally corresponds to the ideal of a respectable normal and ordinary life.

ii. *From Hobbiton to Rivendell*

Bilbo’s journey in *The Hobbit* is a succession of several adventures, interrupted by some scenes in which Bilbo seems to be safe (“safe havens”). He develops stage by stage and the grade of his independency grows each time. The first stage ranges from an *unexpected party* in Hobbiton (where suddenly some Dwarves visit him) to the secure home of some elves at Rivendell:

Bilbo is a content Hobbit, living peacefully in Hobbiton with no greater problems when one day Gandalf the Grey comes to visit him. Bilbo isn’t roused to anger about this sudden interference of his normal day, but when Gandalf begins to talk about an adventure, he is disgruntled – he doesn’t want to talk about such entirely not hobbit-like things like adventures and he expresses this very directly in saying: “We are plain quiet folk and have no use for adventures. Nasty, disturbing uncomfortable things!”¹¹ But Gandalf doesn’t go away. He waits silently, till Bilbo gets “quite uncomfortable and even a little cross”¹². This shows the mental immaturity of Bilbo

⁵ J.R.R. Tolkien - *The Hobbit*, Chapter 1, Page 1

⁶ cf. *ibid.*

⁷ cf. *Lord of the Rings Guide – Website*, “Hobbit Facts”

⁸ Some pictures of Hobbits can be seen on the CD (Appendix A)

⁹ J.R.R. Tolkien – *The Hobbit*, Chapter 1, Page 3

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ J.R.R. Tolkien – *The Hobbit*, Chapter 1, Page 5

¹² *ibid.*

in this state. He feels uncomfortable but doesn't know how to express that because on the one hand he wants Gandalf to go away but on the other hand, reminding his manners, he wouldn't say directly that the wizard should go away. The Hobbit now really wants him to leave, even when the wizard says his name and he is reminded of his youth when Gandalf had told him and the other Hobbit-children stories of great adventures and had made great fireworks. The Took-side in him flashes up for a short moment and the fascination in adventures touches him, but still the Bagginses-side is dominant and he goes back into his hobbit-hole (not without remembering his good manners and inviting the Wizard to tea for the next day).

The next day thirteen dwarves come to Bilbo's home one after another and begin to sing songs of lands and times far, far away. "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."¹³ As Thorin begins to speak of an adventure, "from which some of [...] [them], or perhaps all of [...] [them] may never return"¹⁴, Bilbo is shocked, but this irritation doesn't last very long. Soon he realizes that "the Took side [...] [has] won."¹⁵

After a long night he becomes uncertain once more. He feels "really relieved after all to think that they had all gone without him, and without bothering to wake him up [...]; and yet in a way he could not help feeling just a trifle disappointed."¹⁶ Gandalf has to give Bilbo a final lift and sends him immediately to the meeting place. Bilbo begins his journey without his hat, his pocket-handkerchief and without any money. He isn't happy but he is accepting his fate more and more.

The first situation in which he has to prove himself comes one evening, when Thorin and the others want him to investigate: Bilbo discovers that there are three Trolls camping. He thinks that he has to prove to be a good burglar and tries to steal the purse of one of the Trolls, but "Trolls' purses are the mischief"¹⁷ so in the end he and the dwarves become the Trolls' prisoners – he has not yet enough experience and he is not yet convinced enough of his own skills. Gandalf has to rescue them all. They find the Trolls' hidden cave where Gandalf and Thorin take swords with "beautiful scabbards and jewelled hilts"¹⁸ while Bilbo takes only a "knife in a leather sheath"¹⁹, what will be important later.

Afterwards they continue their journey and ride to Rivendell, where they rest to recover from their first adventure. For the first time, Bilbo is absolutely sure that he doesn't want to go home again. He finds this place so beautiful that he "would gladly have stopped there forever and

¹³ J.R.R. Tolkien – The Hobbit, Chapter 1, Page 17

¹⁴ J.R.R. Tolkien – The Hobbit, Chapter 1, Page 18

¹⁵ J.R.R. Tolkien – The Hobbit, Chapter 1, Page 20

¹⁶ J.R.R. Tolkien – The Hobbit, Chapter 2, Page 31

¹⁷ J.R.R. Tolkien – The Hobbit, Chapter 2, Page 40

¹⁸ J.R.R. Tolkien – The Hobbit, Chapter 2, Page 47

¹⁹ *ibid.*

ever – even supposing a wish would have taken him right back to his hobbit-hole without trouble.”²⁰ Elrond, the leader of the elves, can reveal the mystery about the two swords. They were made by ancient elves and are called Glamdring and Orcrist. “By giving names to Thorin and Gandalf’s swords, Tolkien places those warriors in the company of [...] great heroes [like King Arthur, whose sword was called Excalibur]. Notice that Bilbo’s sword isn’t mentioned, and it remains nameless.”²¹

iii. Through the Misty Mountains to the eagles’ eyrie

The next three Chapters contain the probably most important situation for the development of Bilbo’s character. Bilbo is separated from the others and for the first time he is responsible for his own life in a dangerous situation and has to prove that he is able to cope with extraordinary situations:

The company continues its way and has to pass the Misty Mountains. Driven by a heavy thunderstorm they find shelter in a dry cave. After a while goblins come out of a crack in the wall to capture the group – only because Bilbo has slept very badly, he could warn Gandalf who immediately disappears. Gandalf manages to free them a little later, but on their way out Bilbo’s head bumps on a hard rock and he loses consciousness.

As Bilbo wakes up and crawls around, uncertain in which direction the others have gone, he finds a small ring. Here the narrator tells us that “it was a turning point in his career, but he [Bilbo] did not know it.”²² For one moment, his hobbit-like behaviour shows up as he is trying to smoke a pipe, but he has no matches and so he does the only right thing and draws his sword. He got already one step further in his development to an adventurer. He walks silently through the tunnels and finally gets into a greater hall where Gollum, the previous owner of the ring, lives. Gollum wants to play riddling games with Bilbo and only if the Hobbit wins, he would show him the way out of the caves. Bilbo masters this game by asking the very unconventional riddle: “What have I got in my pocket?”²³ – what shows that even in this strange situation, Bilbo can remain down-to-earth and think in his own original way. Gollum can’t answer this question and gets angry. Bilbo immediately becomes aware of the danger he is in and tries to flee. He recognizes very fast that the ring makes him invisible and uses it to follow Gollum unseen to the exit so that he gets out of the caves. This presence of mind shows the next great step in the development he has taken: He starts to use his wit to compensate his physical weakness. As he gets back to the group and listens to the dwarves, “Tolkien shows you Bilbo as morally superior to [...] [them]. He was willing to go back into the tunnels alone to try to find them, but they prefer to leave him with the goblins rather than to risk getting caught themselves”²⁴ – what

²⁰ J.R.R. Tolkien – The Hobbit, Chapter 3, Page 55

²¹ Barron’s Booknotes – Website, The Hobbit, “THE STORY” - Chapters 1-3, NOTE: THE NAMING OF SWORDS

²² J.R.R. Tolkien – The Hobbit, Chapter 5, Page 74

²³ J.R.R. Tolkien – The Hobbit, Chapter 5, Page 85

²⁴ Barron’s Booknotes – Website, The Hobbit, “THE STORY” - Chapters 3-6

should be seen a little more differentiated, because he has the ring that makes him invisible, but the central suggestion remains. This is also the first time when Bilbo lies. He proudly tells the dwarves the story but leaves out the ring. This can be seen as the first influence of the ring's evil power, but in *The Hobbit* the ring's origin and history – especially its dark side – doesn't play any role in the development of the story, so it is probably just part of Bilbo's own development: The loss of parts of his mental immaturity and childish frankness.

The image of his growth is softened up in the next situations, when the company is attacked by Wargs and all but Bilbo can climb up the trees, followed by their escape with the help of the eagles, where all but Bilbo are carried off the battlefield and he is nearly left behind again. "He just manage[...][s] to catch hold of Dori's legs [...] and they [...] [leave] the tumult and the burning, Bilbo swinging in the air with his arms nearly breaking."²⁵ As the eagles bring them rabbits to eat, he has to confess that "he was not much good at skinning rabbits or cutting up meat, being used to having it delivered by the butcher all ready to cook."²⁶ This shows that his cleverness in one extraordinary situation wasn't a complete change of his person and didn't make a great hero of the little Hobbit. He has developed mentally, but physically he is still as disadvantaged as at the beginning.

iv. From Beorn's House to the Wood-elves

In the following chapters, the eagles deliver the group to the House of Beorn where they get instructions for their further journey. As they get to the border of the eerie forest of Mirkwood, Gandalf leaves them and they have to get through it alone. On the way, Bilbo gets separated twice while the dwarves get caught. For the first time, he has to take responsibility not only for his own life because he is the last chance for the others to get free:

The first situation in which Bilbo proves himself as a candidate for the new leadership takes place when they want to cross a river. He is the only one that discovers the boat on the other bank and has the idea of throwing the rope.

After crossing the river, the group leaves the path and they get lost as promised by Beorn. Bilbo gets separated and is attacked by a giant spider. He reacts in the right way and manages to kill the spider. After this act, Bilbo believes to be "a different person, and much fiercer and bolder"²⁷ Now he gives his sword a name and calls it Sting. He finds the dwarves bound by other spiders and frees them by invisibly singing insulting songs that he has created. This is "the beginning of his transition into the heroic world, where the use of songs and the naming of swords are commonplace."²⁸ He has gained much self-confidence, what can also be seen in the next challenge.

²⁵ J.R.R. Tolkien – *The Hobbit*, Chapter 6, Page 120

²⁶ J.R.R. Tolkien – *The Hobbit*, Chapter 6, Page 121

²⁷ J.R.R. Tolkien – *The Hobbit*, Chapter 8, Page 170

²⁸ Barron's Booknotes – Website, *The Hobbit*, "THE STORY" – Chapters 7-9

Freed from the spiders, the dwarves run directly into the arms of the Wood-elves. Once more, all but Bilbo are captured and imprisoned. After a while, he takes responsibility for all members of the group and hatches a plan. He takes great risks, but in the end his plan proves right and they can all escape and additionally get closer to their destination. “Bilbo has grown from a helpless, foolish hobbit into someone who can take responsibility not only for himself, but for the lives of others.”²⁹ But he also still depends on the dwarves, because he only does what they want him to do and even when he is in danger of losing his friends (as they all are packed up in barrels and going down the river while he is standing besides with no chance to be packed up in one as well), he only thinks of their fate and “what on earth would happen to them without him”³⁰

v. *Over Lake-town to the Lonely Mountain*

In Lake-town, they get supplies and ponies from the men and travel further on to the Lonely Mountain. There it is again for Bilbo to find the secret entrance to the tunnel what shows once more how dependent on Bilbo the dwarves have become. He has emerged to be their real leader, but they can't admit that because of their arrogance – they still claim that this all is the work he has to do because he is the burglar. With this argumentation they also want to send him alone to the dragon Smaug.

The situation is pretty similar to the situation in the second chapter when the dwarves had sent Bilbo to the fire where the Trolls were, so the change in Bilbo's character can be seen very clearly. When they send him down to Smaug for the first time, he acts at the dwarves request but points out that he has already earned his share of the treasure. Just before he is at the end, he hesitates. This is also similar to the second Chapter, but while there he had tried to steal to prove the others his courage, he now only has to carry a victory over himself, what is for him the bravest thing he ever did. As he walks down for the second time, he has left behind all dependence on the dwarves. He has become self-confident and only wants to challenge Smaug. With his cleverness, he reveals the dragon's weak spot what will be later the key to the victory of the Towns-folk. After his second visit Smaug gets angry and forces them all to flee into the tunnel. Now the dwarves see their treasure for the first time and become bewitched by it. Bilbo now takes Gandalf's role and remains down-to-earth – they have not yet killed the dragon.

vi. *From the Lonely Mountain back to Hobbiton*

Smaug attacks the village but he is killed due to Bilbo's revelation of Smaug's weak point that a thrush had delivered to an archer called Bard. Now the Wood-elves join the Towns-folk and claim their share of the treasure. Thorin doesn't want to share the treasure and it's again for Bilbo to prevent greater trouble.

²⁹ Barron's Booknotes – Website, The Hobbit, “THE STORY” – Chapters 7-9

³⁰ J.R.R. Tolkien – The Hobbit, Chapter 9, Page 200

He delivers the Arkenstone (the most precious jewel of the treasure) to the enemy so that they can trade with the dwarves. This plan fails because Thorin's cousin approaches from the other side of the camp of the besiegers. A battle between the Wood-elves, the Towns-folk and the dwarves is at hand as goblins attack and the three armies join together to fight the new enemy. After that, all quarrels are forgotten. Gandalf, Bard and the Elven-king have praised the hobbit for his actions before, now the dying Thorin ranges among them and says: "There is more in you of good than you know, child of the kindly West. [...] If more of us valued food and cheer and song above hoarded gold, it would be a merrier world."³¹ Now Bilbo earns all fame that had been refused to him before. He returns home, where he finds his personal property auctioned off but after this great adventure he has the experience to cope with this problem and soon regains ownership of Bag End.

vii. Short synopsis

You see that Bilbo's development is very straight-lined. He starts his journey only fascinated by the songs of the dwarves and without any experiences. After his first contact with evil forces, when he is on his own with Gollum, he fast becomes self-assured but ever remains down-to-earth with unconventional ideas to solve problems. As he loses his dependence on the dwarves, he is at the highest point of his development. His character has grown to that of a real hero from Tolkien's point of view – not necessarily physically strong but witty and with great courage.

2. The development of Frodo's character in comparison with Bilbo's

i. Frodo's preconditions

Frodo's genetic background is very similar to that of Bilbo. Frodo's mother was Primula Brandybuck, Old Took's granddaughter, and his father was Dongo Baggins.³² As I explained before, the Tookes were known for their adventurous behaviour (in addition, the Brandybucks lived on the other side of the Brandywine River, near the Old Forest that is known for its strangeness to the Hobbits) while the Bagginses were honourably ordinary. Frodo's parents died when he was 12 years old³³ and Bilbo adopted him. Bilbo told him many stories about his adventures and taught him a little bit of the language of the elves. That is why he is not as unprepared for his journey as Bilbo had been, but he still is just a young little Hobbit that never has left the Shire before.

ii. Comparison of the outward circumstances

In *The Hobbit*, the ring was just a toy to get invisible and Bilbo used it very often and for long periods. In *The Lord of the Rings*, Gandalf reveals the ring's evil side and advises Frodo not to use it. For Bilbo, the ring was a tool to compensate his physical disadvantages. For Frodo, the ring symbolizes an additional danger as a result of the temptation of evil strength.

³¹ J.R.R. Tolkien – *The Hobbit*, Chapter 18, Page 315

³² cf. J.R.R. Tolkien – *The Lord of the Rings – The Fellowship of the Ring*, Book 1, Chapter 1, Page 45

³³ cf. J.R.R. Tolkien – *The Lord of the Rings – The Return of the King*, Appendix C, "Family Trees", Pages 474 & 476

The structure of *The Lord of the Rings* is quite similar to the structure of *The Hobbit*: The story develops from one safe haven to another, but the danger that lies in the ring's might is omnipresent and grows with the sinking distance to the aim. Besides, Frodo's motivation is less selfish than that of Bilbo, who at least started with thoughts of great treasures.

iii. Out of the Shire to Rivendell and Moria

At his 111th Birthday, Bilbo leaves the ring to Frodo. About twenty years later, Gandalf returns and imposes on Frodo the quest to bring the ring to Rivendell, where a council should decide what will be done with it. Frodo is scared but he accepts the quest.

As Frodo leaves the Shire together with Sam and Pippin, they are soon pursued by a Black Rider. They have to hide themselves twice and both times, when the Black Rider is very close, Frodo has an overwhelming desire to put on the ring but he can resist. These are the first challenging situations Frodo has to pass, but he must not fail like Bilbo could and did in his first challenge with the Trolls, because then the ring and Middle-earth would be lost immediately. He passes the test, probably because he was trained by Bilbo and was not as innocent as Bilbo had been at the beginning. This situation also shows the change of the type of challenges: In comparison to Bilbo, who had to act actively and to try to steal, Frodo has not the chance just to say that he doesn't want to be tempted to put on the ring. He is tempted to slip it on and has to resist – most of the challenges come to Frodo, he doesn't force them to happen and must *react* while Bilbo acted. This is a far more challenging situation because he can't pause and rest for a while. There is no recess for him, what will play an important role later on.

After a short stop at the house that Frodo bought to cover up that he will leave the Shire, they continue their way through the Old Forest together with Merry, another Hobbit. Soon they are lost and an old willow captures Merry and Pippin. This situation seems to require active action of Frodo, who tries to help his friends by crying for help – but he is not yet able to cope with such a problem alone. Tom Bombadil rescues them and takes them to his house, what is the first safe haven where they can take a rest. As Frodo asks Tom whether his cries for help had brought him to them, his last active part in the rescue is counterbalanced because Tom answers “Nay, I did not hear: I was busy singing.”³⁴ Tom has to rescue them a second time and then gives them each a sword. “The swords are a sign that the hobbits must start learning to take responsibility for themselves.”³⁵ They wonder whether the swords “would be of any use. Fighting had not before occurred to any of them as one of the adventures in which their flight would land them.”³⁶ This whole episode shows that Frodo's development is not as straight as the development of Bilbo was, what becomes clearer in the next challenge he must face.

³⁴ J.R.R. Tolkien – *The Lord of the Rings – The Fellowship of the Ring*, Book 1, Chapter 7, Page 175

³⁵ Barron's Booknotes – Website, *The Lord of the Rings*, “THE STORY” – Book I, Chapters 7-12

³⁶ J.R.R. Tolkien – *The Lord of the Rings – The Fellowship of the Ring*, Book 1, Chapter 8, Page 201

They reach Bree and meet Strider, who will escort them on their further way to Rivendell. One night, they have to camp on a mountain called Weathertop and the Black Riders find them. Frodo is tempted to put on the ring once again and this time he can't resist. He slips the ring on to hide from the attackers but his plan fails. They can see him even better and hurt him seriously. This shows once again that his development isn't as comic like as that of Bilbo was. Bilbo gained experience each time he was challenged and when he developed to a higher level, he (figuratively speaking) stood there and never fell down from it again. Frodo resisted the temptation three times but he couldn't resist for a fourth time and put the ring on. He is a more realistic character that has more depth than Bilbo had. Besides, Bilbo has only once been wounded and this wound is never mentioned afterwards. He refreshed fast after each challenge and no physical disadvantages remained. This time it is the same for Frodo, because he is brought to Rivendell unconscious and there he can rest until he is fully refreshed, but the high number of injuries he collects on his journey will play an important part at last.

Arrived in Rivendell, they meet Bilbo and Gandalf again. A great council is held about what should be done with the ring and after many stories concerning the history of the ring and the elves Gandalf declares that the ring must be destroyed.

Frodo chooses to bear the ring and to go with it to the Cracks of Doom in Mordor where it can be destroyed. This is another step in Frodo's development because now he acts actively for the first time. When he says "I will take the Ring"³⁷, he wonders "to hear his own words, as if some other will was using his small voice."³⁸ This can be seen as if he acts with the determination of a force that lies in him but that he had not yet discovered.

Eight people are chosen to go with him and they start their journey. They want to go through the Misty Mountains but are forced to go through the Mines of Moria where they are attacked by orcs. At this point, Frodo can show up the development he has made: He has to fight together with the others and finally kills an orc – he has grown from the little uncertain Hobbit to a beginning hero, but still the disadvantages caused by his height and weakness remain.

They can flee but Gandalf falls down from the bridge of Kazad-dûm. Depressed, but driven by their sense of duty, they go on to the forest of Lothlórien where they are safe again.

iv. With the rest of the Fellowship to the Eryn Muil

Frodo meets Galadriel, who is a ring-bearer, too, and offers her the ring. This shows that parts of him are still the same Hobbit that he was in Hobbiton, where he offered the ring to Gandalf. As Gandalf at that time, Galadriel refuses now. She shows him what she would become if she used the ring and expects that this should frighten Frodo so that he would not offer it to others later. Frodo needs this knowledge as they have travelled on to the point, where he has to decide in which direction he wants to go on, because then Boromir follows him. He as a human could not

³⁷ J.R.R. Tolkien – The Lord of the Rings – The Fellowship of the Ring, Book 2, Chapter 2, Page 354

³⁸ *ibid.*

longer resist the ring's temptation but Frodo's experience has grown, he sees "the strange gleam in Boromir's eyes, yet his face was still kindly and friendly"³⁹ and he can slip away by putting the ring on. With this solution comes the next challenge, because now Sauron tries to wipe out Frodo's free will and to corrupt him, but soon Frodo regains his full consciousness and realizes that he has to take off the ring. After this test of the strength of his character, he decides to go on alone for the rest of the way – only Sam can find and convince him that they have to go on together. This is the end of the first part of the story.

From this point, Tolkien tells the story divided into two parts and I will only go on with one of them. Book three, that I will drop, tells of the further way of Merry, Pippin, Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli. Book four tells of Frodo and Sam, continuing their journey to Mordor:

v. *Guided by Gollum to Shelob's Lair*

Closely pursued by Gollum, the two Hobbits get lost in the Eryn Muil. They manage to catch him and Sam wants to tie him up and leave him, what would mean to kill him, but Frodo remembers a conversation with Gandalf, in which the wizard told him that nobody deserves death because "even the very wise cannot see all ends."⁴⁰ That he remembers the wise words of Gandalf shows that he has gained experience and learned to use his knowledge. In addition, he pities Gollum because he himself has to bear the ring now, and he can duplicate the misery that the creature went through. Some people even think that not killing Gollum signals that Frodo fears to end like this creature did, because he knows that Gollum had been a Hobbit-like creature, but at this point Frodo's will to reach Mordor and his self-confidence are still big enough to displace such thoughts, what can be seen very clearly in the way Sam sees Frodo and Gollum: "For a moment, it appeared to Sam that his master has grown and Gollum has shrunk: a tall stern shadow, a mighty lord who hid his brightness in grey cloud, and at his feet a little whining dog."⁴¹ Frodo's pity for Gollum can also be seen in the way he calls him, because he uses Gollum's old name, Sméagol – perhaps to encourage Gollum to develop into his old personality again. Bilbo never had to deal with such high demands as feelings concerning his opponents. His only genuine enemy was the dragon Smaug, but he never thought of the dragon's rights or felt pity for him. When the time came that the elves and men besieged the dwarves, Bilbo never saw the others as a potential danger for him because he always had the ability to slip away by putting the ring on.

Gollum guides the Hobbits to the Black Gate of Mordor but it is heavily guarded and Frodo has to trust Gollum once more, who says that he knows another, safer way. In this scene can be seen, that Frodo is now aware of the dangers he will be in to destroy the ring. It seems almost impossible to pass through the Gate, but since Frodo doesn't know another way in, he is willing

³⁹ J.R.R. Tolkien – The Lord of the Rings – The Fellowship of the Ring, Book 2, Chapter 10, Page 515

⁴⁰ J.R.R. Tolkien – The Lord of the Rings – The Fellowship of the Ring, Book 1, Chapter 2, Page 93

⁴¹ J.R.R. Tolkien – The Lord of the Rings – The Two Towers, Book 4, Chapter 1, Page 285

to take the risk of being caught and murdered. This leads some people to the opinion that Frodo is a saint, because “Frodo is sacrificing his own desires to save the rest of the world. And through his sufferings, he’s transformed. [...] Frodo’s face looks peaceful, very ancient, but also beautiful. This serenity and inner light is often used to characterize saints.”⁴² Tolkien is known for his Christianity and some people even see the whole “Lord of the Rings” as a Christian tale, but Tolkien himself strongly denied that his work should be seen as an allegory or as an analogy although he uses many themes of the Bible⁴³. Frodo can be seen as a kind of a saint, but it would be a too rough interpretation of his character to limit him simply to that.

They meet Faramir, the brother of Boromir, and follow him to Henneth Annûn. After a short pause, they continue their way to Mordor through the stairs of Cirith Ungol, where they are trapped by Shelob, a giant spider. The dark passage is very similar to the hidden passage that Bilbo uses to confront Smaug. The psychical and physical development of the heroes is also very similar: Both are forced to go through the darkness to come nearer to their aims. They both don’t like that but they devote to the mission-goals. They hesitate, but they soon know what to do and face their enemies although they both aren’t equal to their opponents. By getting invisible, Bilbo can once again slip away in the last moment, but Frodo – who could also escape the first time – is caught and then carried away by orcs. Sam had taken the ring and Sting and he is now the only hope left at the end of *The Two Towers*.

The division of the story is continued in the fifth book. Like the third book it tells only the story of the others. They are attacked by Sauron at first but can drive him off with the help of the Rohirrim; then they start a hopeless attack against Mordor at the Black Gate.

vi. From the tower of Cirith Ungol to the Cracks of Doom

Frodo, still in an exhausted condition at the beginning of Book six, having horrible visions of orcs around him, is saved by Sam. When he first notices Sam, he is very happy, but as Sam returns the Ring to him, he realizes that Sam had taken it from him and he calls him a thief, falling back into a short vision in which Sam appears to him as an orc “leering and pawing at his treasure,”⁴⁴ but soon he regains full consciousness and deeply regrets it. For this short moment, the ring had gained control over him once again, but in the mean time Frodo has learned much about the danger that lies in the might of the ring. He is experienced enough to know that what he said was the result of the control that the ring has more and more over him. Sam also knows this and so their friendship isn’t touched by this slip. Frodo is completely naked, what could also be seen as a symbol for his temporary loss of all control and his generally terrible condition. Sam fetches him some orc clothes and guides him out of the tower of Cirith Ungol. They continue their journey through the dark wasteland. Soon, the burden of the ring is that heavy

⁴² Barron’s Booknotes – Website, The Lord of the Rings, “THE STORY” - Book 4, Chapters 1-5, NOTE:FRODO AS A SAINT referring to J.R.R. Tolkien – The Lord of the Rings – The Two Towers, Book 4, Chapter 3, Pages 313-315

⁴³ cf. Tolkien’s Christian symbols – Website & J.R.R. Tolkien - Letters, #131, “to Milton Waldman - 1951”

⁴⁴ J.R.R. Tolkien – The Lord of the Rings – The Return of the King, Book 6, Chapter 1, Page 230

that Frodo couldn't even talk while walking straight towards Mount Doom. His condition is described through Sam, who always keeps an eye on Frodo. In this description, Frodo seems totally passive and nearly out of control over his body (His left hand *is raised* "to screen his shrinking eyes from a dreadful Eye that sought to look in them"⁴⁵; his right hand is creeping to his breast and then slowly, as the will recovers mastery, it is withdrawn⁴⁶). His senses are strongly restricted by his struggle: Sam sees that Frodo walks "half-bowed, often stumbling, as if his eyes no longer saw the way before his feet"⁴⁷ and the next day, Frodo himself expresses it once more while talking about his remembrances: "No taste of food, no feel of water, no sound of wind, no memory of tree or grass or flower, no image of moon or star are left to me"⁴⁸. This is very important, because what guaranteed him (and Sam and also Bilbo in *The Hobbit*) the energy and strength when confronting despair was the memory of his roots – the beautiful gardens of Hobbiton and the peace and quietness of the Shire. Now as his memory is affected that strong, it remains no longer something beautiful to think of while dealing with hopelessness. None the less, in speaking about his condition, Frodo has found some new strength for a moment, but this strength doesn't last very long, it seems to be only the concentrated rest of his energy.

The next day, Sam has to carry him the last part of the way, because Frodo can't even stand up. Just before they reach the Cracks of Doom, Gollum reappears – wicked to get the ring. Sam stays behind to cover Gollum while Frodo has to walk the last steps alone, but as a consequence of the physical and mental struggle, he has no strength left and gives in to the might of evil and by saying: "I have come, [...] but I do not choose now to do what I came to do. [...] The Ring is mine!"⁴⁹, he puts the ring on. He had resisted the ring's temptation up to the very end, but now he gives in to the power of evil.

This is the climax where the whole story fits together again. Gollum, completely in rage, bites off Frodo's finger with the ring and falls down with it into the Cracks of Doom. The quest is fulfilled, the ring is destroyed and Sauron is beaten. Sauron's armies and towers fall and Frodo and Sam are taken to Ithilien where Aragorn is crowned king.

vii. From Ithilien over Rivendell to Hobbiton

After a short visit in Rivendell where they meet Bilbo again, they head homewards to the Shire. Although one year has passed since a Ringwraith hurt him, Frodo feels again the pain of the wound in his shoulder and the "memory of darkness" didn't vanish⁵⁰. This is the first sign for the fact, that Frodo's wounds are heavier than Bilbo's were. Bilbo could return home without

⁴⁵ J.R.R. Tolkien – The Lord of the Rings – The Return of the King, Book 6, Chapter 3, Page 261

⁴⁶ cf. *ibid.*

⁴⁷ *ibid.*

⁴⁸ J.R.R. Tolkien – The Lord of the Rings – The Return of the King, Book 6, Chapter 3, Page 264

⁴⁹ J.R.R. Tolkien – The Lord of the Rings – The Return of the King, Book 6, Chapter 3, Page 274

⁵⁰ cf. J.R.R. Tolkien – The Lord of the Rings – The Return of the King, Book 6, Chapter 7, Page 331

any physical or mental wounds left at the end of *The Hobbit*. Frodo is still ill and though the main part of his journey has come to an end, he is not yet at the end of his whole adventure.

When the four Hobbits reach the Shire, they discover that there is little of the openness and kindness left that had been the nature of the Shire-folk. There are some ruffians and half-orcs about, who set up many new rules that handicap the normal life. The four heroes rouse the Shire and drive the Chief and his men out. Frodo has become wiser and doesn't want anyone to be killed – not even these ruffians or their leader. This is similar to the situation in *The Hobbit*, when Bilbo returns and finds his house and stuff for sale. He also had become wiser and didn't want to fight a long fight (in his case only with words) to get his stuff back. Bilbo simply bought it all back, and in this "tradition" Frodo has extended his kindness to these ruffians, and even after their Chief attacked him, he wants to spare his life. As Saruman is killed by his own fellow, the Shire is swiftly rebuilt but Frodo can't fully enjoy it, because he still suffers from his wounds. One day he leaves the Shire together with Galadriel, Elrond, Gandalf, Bilbo and some elves and sails away together with them, leaving Sam, Merry and Pippin behind. Through this, the ways of Bilbo and Frodo merge together at last and they both are set into the company of beings of great power. The fairytale-ending for Bilbo in *The Hobbit* is superseded by this reunion of the Ring-bearers and by an end that could be interpreted as a symbolic death of the heroes⁵¹ – but this interpretation is already very distant from the real story – it could be seen as a mixture of both, a happy fairytale-ending mixed with tragedy, what is characteristic for Tolkien.

viii. Synopsis

As a short synopsis, it can be said that the characters of Bilbo and Frodo are very similar at the beginning, but Frodo benefits from the fact that Bilbo has told him much of his experiences. The two journeys are differently written and so the characters grow in different ways: *The Hobbit* has much more of a fairytale than *The Lord of the Rings*, and so Bilbo in *The Hobbit* is much more a fairy-tale figure. Tolkien himself had to confess that *The Hobbit* was not very carefully written⁵², he said that "Frodo is not intended to be another Bilbo"⁵³ - he isn't the successor to Bilbo of the first book, because he has to be high-minded and has a vocation.⁵⁴ Bilbo's straight-line development leads from one stage to a higher – ever upwards. His quest is much easier to complete because he can use the ring to slip away anytime so his physical disadvantages against his enemies are compensated. *The Lord of the Rings* is an epic and was for Tolkien "a study of a hobbit broken by a burden of fear and horror – broken down, and in the end made into something quite different."⁵⁵ His quest is less selfish as he can't earn a treasure, and more sacrificial because (not from the beginning, but starting at the Black Gate) he knows that he might never come back, but nevertheless he goes on. The immanent presence of the temptation

⁵¹ cf. Barron's Booknotes – Website, *The Lord of the Rings*, "FORM AND STRUCTURE"

⁵² cf. J.R.R. Tolkien – Letters, #153, "to Peter Hastings - September 1954"

⁵³ J.R.R. Tolkien – Letters, #151, "to Hugh Brogan - 18 September 1954"

⁵⁴ cf. J.R.R. Tolkien – Letters, #93, "to Christopher Tolkien - 24 December 1944"

⁵⁵ J.R.R. Tolkien – Letters, #151, "to Hugh Brogan - 18 September 1954"

of evil, represented through the ring casts a cloud over the whole journey. Frodo's character develops in a far more realistic manner, because he sometimes fails (even in the end). At the very end, both are reunited when sailing away. They are both signed by the temptation of the ring and have to leave Middle-earth in order to be released from the "wounds that can not be wholly cured"⁵⁶. "Many epics, such as Beowulf, end with the death of their heroes"⁵⁷ and so they have to go away, what is significantly similar to *pass* away. With their departure, the Third Age ends, and the Dominion of Men begins.

3. The development of Sam's character and his role in *The Lord of the Rings*

i. Sam's preconditions

Frodo is introduced to us as a queer person at first in *The Fellowship of the Ring*. The first thing we get to know about him is, that his parents drowned under mysterious circumstances and he is often visited by "outlandish folk" – the other Hobbits think that Bag End (where Bilbo lives together with Frodo) is "a queer place, and its folk are queerer"⁵⁸. The first person that one can really identify with is Samwise Gamgee or just Sam. He is introduced as Bilbo's gardener, a normal Hobbit, curious about the stories that Bilbo tells of his adventures. He is the person, through which the strangeness about Bilbo and Frodo is revoked a little, always knowing the hottest news about what's going on in Bag End. He is actually not only Frodo's gardener but one of his best friends, what will prove as one of the major themes of his role in *The Lord of the Rings*.

ii. The development of Sam's character

The first scene, in which his character is plainly shown, is the scene when Gandalf reveals to Frodo that the ring is the One Ring and has to be brought out of the Shire. Sam had listened to it hidden below the window and is finally discovered by Gandalf. To the question what he has heard, he answers: "I heard a deal that I didn't rightly understand, about an enemy, and rings, [...] and Elves, sir."⁵⁹ And already while speaking his fear is pushed aside by his curiosity and he adds: "Couldn't you take me to see Elves, sir, when you go?"⁶⁰ This reveals much of his character. He has no Tookish side like Bilbo or Frodo but nonetheless he has a strong childish curiosity of all "outlandish" things. His childish frankness seems more distinct than that of Bilbo or Frodo at the beginning. He realizes even less than Frodo what this quest is about, and when Gandalf tells him to accompany Frodo, he is enthusiastic and shouts: "Me go and see Elves and all! Hooray!"⁶¹

⁵⁶ J.R.R. Tolkien – *The Lord of the Rings – The Return of the King*, Book 6, Chapter 7, Page 331

⁵⁷ Barron's Booknotes – Website, *The Lord of the Rings*, "FORM AND STRUCTURE"

⁵⁸ J.R.R. Tolkien – *The Lord of the Rings – The Fellowship of the Ring*, Book 1, Chapter 1, Page 47

⁵⁹ J.R.R. Tolkien – *The Lord of the Rings – The Fellowship of the Ring*, Book 1, Chapter 2, Page 98

⁶⁰ *ibid.*

⁶¹ *ibid.*

The wish to see Elves is soon fulfilled, when they start their journey and are rescued from a Black Rider through the coming of High-elves. The meeting remains in Sam's mind "as one of the chief events of his life"⁶² and the next day Frodo recognizes an "odd change" and that Sam's face is "unusually thoughtful"⁶³. In speaking with the Elves, Sam has become more aware of what his own journey is about. He wants to accompany Frodo on his further journey not because he is curious about new adventures, but to be a good fellow and friend and help Frodo. This motive is probably the most loveable of all of the three characters – while Bilbo had the chance to gain a great treasure and the destruction of the ring was specially appointed to Frodo, Sam has no other motive than serving Frodo and helping him. He is also beginning to realize the meaning of Gandalf's words, who said that they have to leave the Shire for a long time and probably will never come back.

The rest of his development in *The Fellowship of the Ring* takes place quietly and his further role as an active hero is very little. As they finally reach Bree and meet Strider, Sam has the part of the sceptic for the first time: He is the last one to be convinced that the person is the real Strider and he never completely trusts him until they reach Rivendell. This disbelieving attitude towards others will get more distinct later. When Frodo is hit and they all feel depressed, he makes up a song to encourage them, this also shows one of his very own skills: Though everything seems depressing, he has still the power to free his mind from the discouraging thoughts - even to spread some of his motivation. These scenes are the only ones before they arrive in Rivendell in which Sam takes an active part, the rest of the time he is just following the others.

In Rivendell, it becomes clearer that Sam is Frodo's closest companion because through the dialogues we are told that he was sitting at Frodo's side for a long while holding his cold hand while Frodo still suffered from the wound. As Frodo is chosen to bear the ring to Mordor, it is out of the question for Sam to come with him.

As the Fellowship sets out, Sam bears all the items he thinks Frodo has forgotten without mentioning it, just for the little chance that Frodo might need some of them and he could draw them out and be honoured by his master. On the journey, he deals with the small things no one else takes care of, for example of Bill, the pony that served them for a long time and that they have to leave it behind at the Gate of Moria. He feels pity for it and seems to worry more about it than about what will happen to them as their way back is blocked. As they are attacked by the orcs, he is forced to fight for the second time (after the battle at Weathertop) and this is the first chance for him to prove that he has gained the strength to fight. He is doing very well and after slaying his first orc he has only "a scratch along the scalp"⁶⁴.

⁶² J.R.R. Tolkien – The Lord of the Rings – The Fellowship of the Ring, Book 1, Chapter 3, Page 121

⁶³ J.R.R. Tolkien – The Lord of the Rings – The Fellowship of the Ring, Book 1, Chapter 4, Page 127

⁶⁴ J.R.R. Tolkien – The Lord of the Rings – The Fellowship of the Ring, Book 2, Chapter 5, Page 422

As the company leaves the Elves, his affinity for the Shire is expressed through the gift he receives from Galadriel – though it's not yet clear what he can do with it, it will turn out to be something to beautify the Shire.

At Amon Hen, where Frodo wants to leave the whole company behind Sam is the only one who can duplicate Frodo's thoughts, find him and then finally convince him in his kind-hearted way to take off together for a journey with an uncertain ending. He now has developed from one friend of many Hobbits over the closest friend of many heroes to the only and closest friend left that Frodo accepts as a companion. Though he advanced in fighting and got a clearer idea of what the whole quest is about, he still remains down-to-earth and takes his courage out of his love to his homeland, the Shire.

In *The Two Towers* he still keeps an eye on the small things. While they stray through the Eryn Mui, one of the first things that he complains about is that he can't see the *lembas* (waybread) of the elves anymore and he is thirsting for "a bit of plain bread, and a mug - aye, half a mug - of beer"⁶⁵. This shows that he can still keep his thoughts on beautiful things in this dangerous situation. The narrator always tells us little about Sam when more important things happen, such as for example the capture of Gollum, but before Gollum is captured (still in *The Fellowship of the Ring*), we hear much about details that Sam noticed step by step (for example Gollum's shadow near the boats), just to discover at last that all the others had known about it before. As the capture takes place, it is mostly Frodo who acts and who has the command anytime. Only as the situation is cleared and the main story goes on almost meaninglessly, it is time for Sam again and we hear more about him and his fears concerning Frodo's decision to take Gollum with them. The focus on Sam has its culmination in the Chapter *Of Herbs and Stewed Rabbit* when he cooks rabbits in the midst of a wasteland, risking much only to have a change of food. Then they watch a battle of men against men in which a dead guy falls down right beside Sam. Sam has a "flash of thought" and wonders "what the man's name was and where he came from; and if he was really evil of heart, or what lies or threats had led him on the long march from his home; and if he would not really rather have stayed there in peace."⁶⁶ This shows how sensible and wise Sam can be. After this short moment, Sam's curiosity turns out again as he becomes aware of an Oliphaunt, but the deeper description of Sam is ended for the present as they have to discuss their mission with Faramir and his men. His qualities have no immediately visible effect on such an important business and so he keeps in the background.

His only active parts concerning Faramir are first to distrust him and then in the end to tell him by mistake that Frodo is the bearer of the One Ring. This mistake could have been very dangerous, but all turns out even the better and they can return to their real journey.

⁶⁵ J.R.R. Tolkien – *The Lord of the Rings – The Two Towers*, Book 4, Chapter 1, Page 266

⁶⁶ J.R.R. Tolkien – *The Lord of the Rings – The Two Towers*, Book 4, Chapter 4, Page 341

Frodo and Sam, guided by Gollum, reach the Stairs of Cirith Ungol and climb up to Shelob's Lair where Gollum has set a trap for them. Gollum attacks Sam. In this duel, Sam turns out to be a better warrior than it could be expected. In his rage, he attacks Shelob and hurts her as hard as "not the doughtiest soldier of old Gondor"⁶⁷ had done before. In this scene it gets clearer that not Frodo is the successor to Bilbo, but Sam.⁶⁸ As Bilbo was attacked by a giant spider, he acted in exactly the same way (the only difference is, that Sam attacks Shelob to save Frodo while Bilbo attacked the spider to save himself). After this heroic act, Sam is changed. He decides to take the ring and go on to finish the quest alone but as he is leaving the place and sees orcs approaching, he realizes that he can't be the Ring-bearer without Frodo and returns to observe what the orcs are doing to his master. In listening to the orc-leaders, he learns that Shelob never kills her victims and so Frodo is still alive, just poisoned and unconscious for a while. The orcs take Frodo to their tower but still in *The two Towers* Sam decides to free his master, encouraged by the way the orc-leaders described him: "The great big elvish warrior that's loose"

At the beginning of Book six in *The Return of the King*, everything depends on Sam. He is the current Ring-bearer, but Frodo is selected to be the one to take the ring to its destiny, so Sam has to free him first and then escort him to the Cracks of Doom. While he is alone, Sam has to recall the danger that Frodo is in to encourage himself to perform a feat, which he wouldn't have endured for himself alone. His plain hobbit-sense helps him to confront the temptation of the powers of the ring - for example as he is lured by visions of turning Gorgoroth into a huge garden, he resists and is content with "one small garden [...]; his own hands to use, not the hands of others to command"⁶⁹ as subject of his goals. He manages to free Frodo and to get him out of Cirith Ungol, setting off for the last but most dangerous stage of their journey.

It is now for Sam to take care that they reach Mount Doom, but right now doubts also come up to Sam: He realizes that even if they could reach Mount Doom, they wouldn't have enough strength and supplies left to be able to return home. Sam seems to fall into despair, but already in the next paragraph, the narrator gives us a hopeful hint in declaring: "But even as hope died in Sam, or seemed to die, it was turned to a new strength."⁷⁰ This new strength goes thus far that he carries Frodo with the ring half way up the mountain, because he can't carry the ring for Frodo.

When they are attacked by Gollum once more, Sam continues the succession of the Ring-bearers and feels pity for this creature. He has become as experienced in this case as Frodo had become some time before, at the beginning of their lonely journey in the Emyrn Muil.

⁶⁷ J.R.R. Tolkien – The Lord of the Rings – The Two Towers, Book 4, Chapter 10, Page 429

⁶⁸ Tolkien mentioned something about this in his Letter # 93, "to Christopher Tolkien - 24 December 1944"

⁶⁹ J.R.R. Tolkien – The Lord of the Rings – The Return of the King, Book 6, Chapter 1, Page 216

⁷⁰ J.R.R. Tolkien – The Lord of the Rings – The Return of the King, Book 6, Chapter 3, Page 259

After the destruction of the ring begins a series of feasts and celebrations of their heroism, followed by many partings until the four Hobbits are alone back in the Shire. Though this part of the story starts with Sam, waking up in Ithilien, he doesn't play an important role in it because the representative hero of their journey is Frodo, and Merry and Pippin are well known now for their heroism, gained in several battles. The only scene with Sam in the centre takes place when they discover that Bill the pony is still alive. This enforces once more the impression that Sam is only responsible for the small and ordinary things in life, but also that he has learned to have his own goals which he tries to achieve: For him, another wish has come true.

As they come back to the Shire, it is Sam who discovers first what has happened. He remembers the vision he had seen in the Mirror of Galadriel. His greatest attention is now directed towards Rosie and the wish to impress her. Through driving off the ruffians and managing the rebuilding of the Shire (not at least on behalf of Galadriel's gift), he gains Rosie's love and marries her. Rosie is soon expecting her first baby and some years later Sam is elected the Mayor of Hobbiton. After Frodo has left Middle-earth, Sam's life turns to glad and down-to-earth family business and the excellence of his gardening is soon well-known in many regions of the Shire. About 60 happy years later, his wife Rosie dies and he follows Frodo over the sea as the last of the Ring-bearers, leaving thirteen children behind. He has become "the founder of the family of the *Gardener*, later famous and influential."⁷¹

iii. Sam's role in *The Lord of the Rings*

"I think the simple 'rustic' love of Sam and his Rosie (nowhere elaborated) is absolutely essential to the study of his (the chief hero's) character, and to the theme of the relation of ordinary life (breathing, eating, working, begetting) and quests, sacrifice, causes, and the 'longing for Elves', and sheer beauty."⁷² This is the only sentence in which Tolkien makes openly clear who the real hero of *The Lord of the Rings* is. The story's centre is not in sacrifice, war and heroism but in freedom, peace and ordinary life.⁷³ Once on the track, it is not difficult to reveal this seldom recognized fact:

In *The Hobbit* Bilbo was the one and only hero we could relate to. The whole story was about Bilbo's adventure, from the *unexpected party* until the end when Bilbo returns and starts to write a book about all that had happened.

Sam is the first new character in *The Lord of the Rings* to which we can really relate. He is not someone of chosen elite like maybe Frodo, but just a normal young Hobbit, a gardener, loving to garden and paying great attention to friendship. In the first part, his role is a very silent one, taking place mostly in the background. His devotion to Frodo doesn't let him many chances to show his personality and improve it, but even here Sam plays an important role in starting a

⁷¹ J.R.R. Tolkien – *The Lord of the Rings – The Return of the King*, Appendix C, Family Trees, Page 473

⁷² J.R.R. Tolkien – *Letters*, #131, "to Milton Waldman - 1951"

⁷³ J.R.R. Tolkien – *Letters*, #93, "to Christopher Tolkien - 24 December 1944"

conspiracy in which he reveals Frodo's secret burden to the other Hobbits what is the reason why they become great warriors in the end. Sam delights not only the company but also the reader while the Fellowship is in a terrible situation – e.g. after Frodo was hurt by a Ringwraith – in improvising a song to encourage the whole company.

At the end of *The Fellowship of the Ring* it gets clearer that Sam is the centre of the whole story: Together with Sam, we discover that Gollum is following the fellowship, but when Sam wants to tell it to Frodo, it is revealed that Frodo and most of the others do already know about Gollum. Sam starts Book four in describing us the circumstances in which he and Frodo are. We are informed about his thoughts and observations that lead him to the conclusion that Gollum can't be trusted, but we are forced to fear Frodo's sense for reality for a long time until in a short moment it is revealed that it really was just kindness, not blindness, that led the Ring-bearer to the decision to trust Gollum. We get to know much about Sam's interests and dreams, such as to see an Oliphaunt or his love of *taters* (potatoes). Tolkien illustrates the evils of war (in the scene when a dead body falls to the ground near Sam – Part III, page 341) and most of his other themes (for example the importance of friendship or responsible use of power) only through Sam. At the end of *The Two Towers*, the peak of Sam's development has come: He uses *the power of common people* to beat off Gollum and wound Shelob seriously, driving her back into her lair. With the responsible use of the ring and loving thoughts by his master, he manages the nearly impossible feat to free Frodo and finally carry him almost to the doorstep of the Cracks of Doom. Even after these great deeds, he keeps his plain Hobbit-sense alive and his goals down-to-earth.

A final prove for the thesis that Sam is the chief hero lies in the structure of *The Lord of the Rings*: The story does neither end with the victory in a great battle, nor with the destruction of the ring by Frodo. The story ends with Sam, finally returning home from his adventures. "Well, I'm back,"⁷⁴ he says and has found his end in the peace of normal life, finally approving what he discussed with Frodo at the stairs of Cirith Ungol: "'[...]Don't the great tales never end?' - 'No, they never end as tales, [...] but the people in them come, and go when their part's ended.'"⁷⁵

⁷⁴ J.R.R. Tolkien – The Lord of the Rings – The Return of the King, Book 6, Chapter 9, Page 385

⁷⁵ J.R.R. Tolkien – The Lord of the Rings – The Two Towers, Book 4, Chapter 8, Page 408

*THE ROAD GOES EVER ON AND ON
OUT FROM THE DOOR WHERE IT BEGAN.
NOW FAR AHEAD THE ROAD HAS GONE,
LET OTHERS FOLLOW IT WHO CAN!
LET THEM A JOURNEY NEW BEGIN,
BUT I AT LAST WITH WEARY FEET
WILL TURN TOWARDS THE LIGHTED INN,
MY EVENING-REST AND SLEEP TO MEET.*

Resources:

A. Books:

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C. Other Media:

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(For a detailed Table of Contents see the *readme.txt* on CD)
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