Høgskulen på Vestlandet

MASTER'S THESIS

"The Beeches Were their Favourite Trees":

An analysis of peoples' relationships with Trees in J. R. R. Tolkien's "*The Hobbit*"

«Bøk var yndlingstreet deres»:

En analyse av folkeslags forhold til trær i J. R. R. Tolkiens «*Hobbiten*»

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May 15th 2022

I confirm that the work is self-prepared and that references/source references to all sources used in the work are provided, cf. Regulation relating to academic studies and examinations at the Western Norway University of Applied Sciences (HVL), § 12-1.

Thank you

... to Lykke for patient, accurate and wise supervision, as well as creativity and enthusiasm throughout the process

... to Anne Beth, Avan, Elisabeth, Jonas & Maren for excellent feedback

… to mom and dad for comfort, understanding and encouragement

... to Joakim for being you, reminding me to see the bigger picture

… to Lucius (the Dark and Powerful) for reminding me that trees are for scratching, food is for eating, and to just quit being stupid and refill the food

Abstract

This Master Thesis investigates the relationships the different peoples of J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* have to trees. Plants exist in nearly all forms of literature, but are often reduced to the background, and seldomly play a large part in the story. Over the last years, the fields of ecocriticism and critical plant studies have developed to investigate the representation of nature in literature. Drawing on research from these fields, I here analyse one of the classics in children's fantasy literature, *The Hobbit,* to investigate the relationships between the different peoples in the story and the trees that surround them.

In this thesis, I pay analytical attention to both the verbal text and the illustrations, to gain a better understanding of the ways in which Hobbits, Elves and Humans interact with, use, and describe the trees around them, as well as the ways in which trees are presented in their environments. In the analysis, I have not least used the Phyto-Analysis Map, an analytical tool developed by Lykke Guanio-Uluru (2021) to facilitate investigations of plant representation in children's literature.

The findings show a striking similarity in the ways the different peoples in *The Hobbit* value trees. Their main value to all the three peoples analysed here is utilitarian. Trees are overwhelmingly passive in the narrative, suggesting anthropocentric attitudes.

Sammendrag

Denne masteroppgaven undersøker forholdene de ulike folkeslagene i J. R. R. Tolkiens *Hobbiten* har til trær. Planter finnes i stort sett all litteratur, men reduseres ofte til bakgrunnen, og får sjelden hovedrollen i fortellingen. Fagfeltene økokritikk og kritiske plantestudier har satt søkelys på fremstillingen av ulike naturelementer i litteraturen. På bakgrunn av studier innenfor disse fagfeltene studerer jeg en av barnelitteraturen og fantasysjangerens klassikere, *Hobbiten,* for å se hvordan boken fremstiller forholdet mellom tre av de ulike folkeslagene i fortellingen og trærne som omgir dem.

I denne masteroppgaven undersøker jeg både vebalteksten og illustrasjonene, for å få en bedre forståelse av hvordan hobbitene, alvene og menneskene samhandler med, bruker, og beskriver trærne rundt seg. Jeg ser også på hvordan trærne fremstilles i deres egne omgivelser. I analysen har jeg blant annet tatt i bruk Phyto-Analysis-Map, et analyseverktøy utviklet av Lykke Guanio-Uluru (2021) for undersøkelser av planterepresentasjon i litteratur.

Funnene fra analysen viser at de ulike folkeslagene i boken har svært like syn på trærs verdi. For alle de tre gruppene er det i hovedsak trærnes nytteverdi som er fremtredende. Trærne fremstilles som passive, noe som tyder på antroposentriske, eller menneskesentrete, holdninger.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Thesis Statement

In this thesis, I focus on a literary classic for children: John R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, examining in detail how the different peoples in the book relate to trees. The reason why I wanted to investigate this topic, lies in the challenges facing the world today, in terms of climate change and the dangers this situation poses to the world's ecosystems. Plants are invaluable for life on earth, and threats to their existence further endangers other species. In a comprehensive, global analysis of the modern extinction of plants, Humphreys et.al. (2019) state that although direct data on modern extinction is well documented for birds and mammals, no previous global analysis has included plants (p. 1043). They further state that:

> This is problematic if we are to make accurate predictions of future losses of plants, as well as of other organisms, because extinctions are not expected in one group of organisms independently of others (for example, co-extinction of insects and their host plants). (Humphreys et.al., 2019, p. 1043).

Their study found that although the extinction rate of plants is lower than that of mammals and birds, their geographical patterns are strikingly similar, suggesting the existence of biodiversity "hotspots" undergoing drastic habitat change (Humphreys et.al. 2019, p. 1044). The recent effects of climate change caused by human activity, such as droughts, wildfires, and rising sea levels, have severe effects on biodiversity (United Nations, 2022). The species loss occurring in this situation has thus been labelled "the sixth mass extinction" (Barnosky et.al., 2011). It is clear therefore, that change is needed, both in our behaviour and in our understanding of the world.

The new Norwegian core curriculum for primary and secondary education and training (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017), states as one of its primary goals that "[s]chool shall help the pupils to develop an appreciation of nature so they can enjoy and respect nature and develop climate and environmental awareness" (1.5). This goal influences the teaching in all subjects. As a teacher, I therefore find it necessary to investigate how the teaching of literature can influence the development of environmental awareness. In my master studies in Children and Young Adults' Literature at Western Norway University of

Applied Sciences, I was introduced to ecocriticism, and made aware of the role of literature in the development of critical consciousness of environmental issues. This further motivated me to investigate the representations of and relationships with nature communicated in the canon of children's literature. Children and young people are frequent readers of fantasy literature, and this genre is therefore important to examine ecocritically in the work towards developing environmental awareness. Due to its importance for the genre of children's fantasy, I have chosen to analyse one of the classics in children's literature, J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*. While the story is inspired by fairy tales, it has since its publication influenced the genre of fantasy.

Tolkien's interest in trees has been widely discussed and is perhaps most prevalent in his later *Lord of The Rings* trilogy, where he introduces the Ents – tree shepherds, and thereby gives voice to the trees of his fictional world (Tolkien, 1986, 1989, 2009). The elves in his later works also display an affinity for trees. I was thus curious to see how trees are represented in his children's book, *The Hobbit.* This book, which has a younger target audience than Tolkien's later books, has been the subject of far fewer studies. A study of this book in an ecocritical light is therefore important in light of the new curriculum goals, both due to its popularity and its impact on the genre.

In this study, I have included the original drawings for *The Hobbit,* which were drawn by J. R. R. Tolkien, and published along with the first edition of the novel. Although these illustrations show a variety of places and peoples, they are mainly focused on the story environments, which makes them particularly interesting for a study of the representations of trees. I have formulated this thesis statement:

> What relationships do the different peoples in Tolkien's *The Hobbit* have with trees, and how are these relationships communicated in the novel's text and illustrations?

Although, as I mentioned, far fewer ecocritical studies have been done by *The Hobbit* than by Tolkien's later works, there has been some studies on the subject. In his honors thesis "*Far Over the Misty Mountains Cold: An Ecocritical Reading of J.R.R. Tolkien's The Hobbit"* (2015)*,* Benjamin M. Garner establishes *The Hobbit* as a nature-text, due to "the general concern with nature and the environment the text possesses" (p. 90). He further investigates

the environmental ethics of the text through the concept of Oikophilia, which he defines as the love of homeland. Here, he discusses how Thorin Oakenshield's greed affects his relationship with nature, and how the construction of dwelling in Hobbiton functions as an example of living with, rather than on, the environment (Garner, 2015, p. 90). In other words, Garner's study addresses several issues related to ecocriticism and the character's relationship with nature and focuses largely on some individuals' development and actions. Amiril Bachtiar's thesis *An Ecocritical Analysis of Nature Condition and Environmental Stewardship in J.R.R. Tolkien's The Hobbit* (2019) takes a similar approach, here focusing on the hobbits' agricultural lifestyle and stewardship of nature. Bachtiar argues that *The Hobbit* sets an example of environmental ethics, displaying the protagonists as protectors of nature, while the antagonists, such as the dragon Smaug, actively destroy nature for their own gains.

Although these studies says something about the hobbits' and dwarves' relationship to nature, plants are not mentioned. One study that focuses exclusively on plants, however, is John Ryan's "*Tolkien's Sonic Trees and Perfumed Herbs: Plant Intelligence in Middle-earth*" (2015). In his article, Ryan discusses how Tolkien grants trees awareness, memories, and ability for speech, while denying these properties to herbs. Ryan builds on both literary plant studies and plant science in his analyses, emphasising how plants are represented either by their intrinsic or extrinsic abilities. By intrinsic abilities, he refers here to the inherent capacities of plants, or the way in which they operate on their surroundings. Extrinsic capacities, however, emphasises the plants utilitarian value, or the way in which the surroundings affect or use the plant. His analyses shows a hierarchical divide within Tolkien's flora, where the trees are granted intelligence and an ability to manipulate their surroundings, while herbs are valued for their healing capacities and pleasant odour (Ryan, 2015, p. 138). While Ryan's study operates within the same theoretical framework as my study, his subject matter is different. His article focuses on Tolkien's *Lord of The Rings* trilogy, which, while set in the same universe as *The Hobbit*, presents a different environment. Tolkien's walking and talking trees, the *Ents,* are not present in *The Hobbit*, which leads to a fundamental difference in the representation of trees. Still, my study builds on Ryan's differentiation between extrinsic and intrinsic capacities of plants, a subject which I will discuss further in Chapter 2.

While few studies focuses on the representation of trees in *The Hobbit*, the nature and flora of Middle Earth, the fictional world in which *The Hobbit, The Lord of the Rings* (1986, 1989, 2009) and *Silmarillion* (2006), is situated, has been the subject of attention in various forms. Notable among these is *The Nature of Middle Earth* (2021), a collection of Tolkien's writings relating to different aspects of nature in his works, ranging from metaphysical aspects to descriptions of peoples and animals, edited by Carl F. Hostetter. Several authors have also published books focusing on the plants in Tolkien's fictional universe from a botanical perspective. Among these are Dinah Hazell's *The Plants of Middle Earth: Botany and Sub-Creation* (2015) and Walter S. Judd and Graham A. Judd's, *Flora of Middle-Earth: Plants of J. R. R. Tolkien's Legendarium* (2017).

My study focuses not only on the verbal text of *The Hobbit,* but also the visual text, or illustrations, and their representations of trees. Currently, there are few studies that have addressed these illustrations in an ecocritical light. Tolkien's maps, however, have been studied through a variety of critical lenses. Anahit Behrooz's thesis *Mapping Middle-earth: Tracing Environmental and Political Narratives in the Literary Geographies and Cartographies of J. R. R. Tolkien's Legendarium* (2019) argues that the maps and their interactions with the text is integral to the reader's understanding of the relationships between the characters and their environments. To her, the maps also represents the political power dynamics of Tolkien's time, speaking to and critiquing imperialism and human effects on the environment.

1.2 Different versions of *The Hobbit:* text and illustrations

"The Hobbit, or there and back again" was written by J. R. R. Tolkien and published in 1937 at Allen & Unwin. It was the first book Tolkien published, and the juvenile fantasy book received wide critical acclaim at the time (Carpenter, 1977, p. 182). A revised edition was published in 1951, as Tolkien wanted to change the interactions between Bilbo and Gollum to better fit the story in *The Lord of The Rings,* which he was writing at the time (Anderson, 2002, p. 128). All later editions of the book contain the new version of events, and the 2011 edition studied here is among them. Still, a few versions of the original story remained, a point which Tolkien addresses in the prologue to *The Fellowship of The Ring,* by presenting

the original story as Bilbo's attempt to lie. Bilbo was not able to keep the truth hidden for long, however:

> Gandalf, however, disbelieved Bilbo's first story, as soon as he heard it, and he continued to be very curious about the ring. Eventually he got the true tale out of Bilbo after much questioning, which for a while strained their friendship; but the wizard seemed to think the truth important (Tolkien, 2009, p. 17).

Thus, laying the responsibility for the difference in the two versions on Bilbo, Tolkien simultaneously suggests he is the narrator of *The Hobbit*. *The Hobbit* has many of the distinguishing features of children's fantasy literature: it is situated in a fantastical world and involves a variety of imaginative creatures. The narrative takes the form of an episodic quest, whilst also emphasising the personal growth of the protagonist. Though most of the story follows the main protagonist, Bilbo, and his adventures with a group of dwarves, themes of warfare on a larger scale are also present. In Tolkien's books, both in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, there are a number of different peoples with different traditions and complex histories. The hobbits, elves, dwarves, and men all have somewhat human-like looks and recognizable personality traits, to which we as readers can relate to some extent. Still, their histories and cultures are different, and the peoples have little contact with each other in their regular lives.

In their book *The Art of* The Hobbit *by J. R. R. Tolkien* (2011), Hammond & Scull present the many illustrations Tolkien made for *The Hobbit.* When the publishers George Allen and Stanley Unwin originally wanted to cut costs by publishing the book without illustrations, Tolkien disagreed. The book was eventually published with nine illustrations, as well as a dust jacket drawn by Tolkien (Hammond & Scull, 2011, p. 13). The illustrations received favourable reviews, and it was later noted that Tolkien's illustrations served to further "draw the reader intro the world of *The Hobbit"* (p. 15). Although the book has later been reprinted without the illustrations, and with illustrations by different artists, Tolkien's drawings and paintings are well-known, and provide additional information and context to the story. For this thesis, I have chosen to study the Harper Collins 2011 pocket edition of *The Hobbit,* complete with Tolkien's original drawings. This edition is printed in black and

white, much like the original publications, and contains eleven illustrations, four of which will be analysed here.

1.3 Scope

In order to be able to study the peoples' relationships to trees in depth, as presented in both the verbal and visual text, I made some selections in which peoples to include in my study. Because this study is specifically about the relationship of the different peoples to trees, I chose to study the peoples presented to the reader in their home environments or in the place in which they live permanently. This criterion excluded the dwarves and Gandalf, whom the reader only encounters travelling in the story and left the hobbits, the trolls, the goblins in the misty mountains, the elves, Beorn, Gollum, and the humans.

I also excluded characters who only operate on their own in the narrative, or whose background the reader does not know. This applies to Beorn and Gollum, who both act alone and have somewhat mysterious backgrounds. Gollum lives alone, and we learn very little of his background, or indeed what type of being he is. Beorn lives with several animals, and it is strongly suggested that there are others like him (skin-changers). He is still the only one of his kind the reader meets, and it is, therefore, difficult to say anything in general about his people. The exclusion of Beorn and Gollum left me with the hobbits, trolls, goblins, elves, and humans. Even though Bilbo is the only hobbit we follow, the story spends a lot of time telling us about the hobbits' background, life, and habits. We learn about the Baggins family, which is a typical and respectable hobbit family, and about the Took family, who are adventurers. As Bilbo bears characteristics of both families, he is a good subject for studying the hobbits' relationship to trees.

To further limit the material for the study, I chose to focus on the groups which play the most significant roles in the story. This criterion excluded the trolls, whom the reader only encounters in one scene. Although important for the plot, the goblins are not included in this study. This is mainly because we get very few descriptions of their "home", which makes it difficult to analyse their relationship to trees in their normal lives. I was then left with the hobbits, the elves, and the men of Esgaroth. These are peoples who are presented to the reader in their homes, which allows for close study of their everyday relationship to trees.

It is important to note here that Tolkien distinguishes between two "types" of elves in *The Hobbit*: *High Elves*, many of whom live in Rivendell, and the *Woodelves*, who live in Mirkwood. In *The Hobbit,* Tolkien describes the Woodelves as "more dangerous and less wise" than the High Elves (Tolkien, 2011, p. 154). The difference is explained by the Woodelves decision to stay in their forest instead of going "to Faerie in the West" (p. 154). The story of the elves of Middle Earth is further explored in Tolkien's posthumous work *The Silmarillion* (Tolkien, 2006[1977]). Although the high elves play a small part in *The Hobbit*, the Woodelves play a larger part in this story and are therefore more relevant to this study.

For this thesis, I have selected the illustrations that show the homes of the peoples in focus. For the hobbits, I analyse the drawing of *The Hall at Bag-End* (Fig. 2). For the elves, I analyse two illustrations: *Mirkwood* (Fig. 3) and *The Elvenking's Gate* (Fig. 4), which both show the homestead of the elves. Lastly, the illustration of *Lake Town* (Fig. 5) represents the home of the men. The reason I chose these illustrations is that these are the only illustrations from the original edition that represent the homes of the peoples in question. Before outlining the scope and structure of this thesis, I will now present a summary of the main events of the book.

1.4 Summary of The Hobbit

The Hobbit begins in the quiet and comfortable home of Bilbo Baggins. Bilbo is a *Hobbit,* a small, plump people with hairy feet who prefer peace, quiet and decency, and has a special preference for good food and drink. Hobbits live in holes instead of houses, but as they prefer comfort above all, they furnish their homes lavishly and keep them well stocked with food, drink, and tobacco. One morning, the wizard Gandalf shows up at Bilbo's door, claiming to be looking for someone to take on an adventure. Flustered, Bilbo tries politely to decline the offer, but inadvertently invites Gandalf for tea the next day instead.

The next day Bilbo is shocked to find a party of dwarves at his door, acting as though they have been invited. Bilbo's politeness gives him no choice but to serve the dwarves food and drink, and he soon finds himself the hosting thirteen dwarves and a wizard. Bilbo is overcome by the situation, and when it becomes clear that Gandalf has made the dwarves believe he will come with them as a burglar to steal a treasure guarded by a dragon, he promptly faints from the shock. Still, when Bilbo hears the dwarves' scepticism of his fitness

as a burglar, he is offended, and soon agrees to join them, aided by Gandalf's assurance that there is more to him than meets the eye. Finding himself on the road, Bilbo manages quite well, and soon takes the role of burglar literally by attempting to steal from a group of trolls when he is sent on a scouting mission. His attempt is not successful and ends with Gandalf having to save them all from being eaten. The group soon arrives in Rivendell, where they receive guidance from the elf lord Elrond, and their road towards the Lonely Mountain and the dragon Smaug is planned. Though wanting to stay longer, they soon find themselves on the road again, this time to cross the tall Misty Mountains on their way east. Seeking shelter from a sudden blizzard, the group spends the night in a cave, only to wake up and finding themselves captured by goblins. Gandalf manages to save the group, killing the chief goblin in the process. While escaping however, they soon lose track of Bilbo, who is left wandering the deep caves of the mountain.

In the caves, Bilbo finds a beautiful golden ring on the ground, which he puts in his pocket. Not long after, he meets the strange creature Gollum, who lives deep in the mountain, eating fish from the dark pools and occasionally killing goblins. Gollum makes it clear that he wants to eat Bilbo, and in his fright, Bilbo suggest a riddle contest. If he wins, Gollum must show him the way out, and if he loses, Gollum gets his way. Gollum reluctantly agrees, and the contest ensues. Finding Gollum to be more versed in riddles than he had presumed, Bilbo only narrowly wins by posing the question: "What have I got in my pocket?". Pretending to accept defeat, Gollum tells Bilbo that he will show him the way out of the cave after fetching something from his island. The thing he wants to fetch is his golden ring, which allows him to become invisible. By using the ring, he plans to attack and eat Bilbo. Finding the ring gone however, he soon realises this must be the object Bilbo is keeping in his pocket, and races back to confront him. In his attempt to get away from the strange creature, Bilbo discovers the properties of the ring himself, and escapes the mountain under the guise of invisibility.

Having once again narrowly escaped death, Bilbo reunites with his friends, but decides not to tell them about the ring. Instead, he spins a tale of heroic escape, and the dwarves are impressed to find that he is indeed worthy of their respect. They are not allowed to rest long, however, before they are once again under attack. This time their attackers are Wargs, large wolves who are often in league with goblins. Finding themselves

trapped in trees, they are rescued by giant eagles who bring them to safety. Finding themselves off course, Gandalf guides them to the home of Beorn, a creature that can change shape from man to bear. After some persuasion, and perhaps mostly because of their common hatred of goblins and wolves, he allows them to rest in his home. They soon continue their journey and find themselves at the entrance of the forest of Mirkwood. Gandalf leaves them here, promising to meet them later, but not before warning them of the importance of sticking to the road. This turns out to be difficult however, as they soon find the forest riddled with dangers. When his companions are attacked by giant spiders, Bilbo manages to rescue them with his sword and his magic ring. Having just escaped, the dwarves are once again captured, this time by wood elves. Invisible, and thus managing not to get captured, Bilbo follows the wood elves to their stronghold, where spends some time trying to find a way to release his friends. Upon discovering how the elves receive wine and food from the city of Lake-Town, Bilbo manages to steal keys from a guard and escape with his friends, hidden in wooden barrels, down the river.

Arriving in Lake-Town, half-drowned and exhausted, the dwarves are treated as long-lost royals (which they indeed are) by the human inhabitants. Lake-Town, or Esgaroth, is a wooden trade town, built upon the lake beneath the Lonely Mountain. The humans settled here when the city of Dale, which was located directly beneath the Lonely Mountain, was destroyed by the dragon Smaug. Having rested, the party travels to the mountain, where they send Bilbo in to scout. Discovering both the dragon and his treasure, Bilbo soon finds himself in a conversation with the dragon. Smaug unwittingly reveals his weakness to Bilbo, a soft, scale-free spot on his chest.

When Bilbo steals a cup from the treasure to show the dwarves, Smaug is furious, and believing Bilbo to be one of the inhabitants of Esgaroth, he attacks the town. In the confusion and fear, most of the inhabitants flee the city, but an archer named Bard manages to shoot Smaug after being informed of his weakness by a thrush. Smaug dies, but has managed to burn down Esgaroth, and the inhabitants find themselves displaced at the lakeshore. Soon joined by the elves of Mirkwood, they march to the Lonely Mountain to ask the dwarves for help and a share in the dragon's treasure.

Thorin is overcome by greed for his treasure, and refuses the elves and humans, who soon decide to besiege the gates of the mountain, effectively trapping Bilbo and the

dwarves. However, having found the Arkenstone, the treasure that Thorin wants the most, Bilbo sneaks out and offers it to the elven king Thranduil and Bard, who is now the leader of the men of Esgaroth. Having discovered Bilbo's betrayal, Thorin is enraged, but the sudden appearance of Gandalf calms him down. Before coming to an agreement however, they are attacked by the goblins and Wargs from the Misty Mountains and must fight together against the common enemy. Nearly giving up, they are at last saved by Beorn and the eagles, who manage to scatter the remaining enemies. Thorin is fatally wounded in the battle, and in his dying words makes up with Bilbo.

After the battle, Bilbo and Gandalf travel together towards Hobbiton, visiting many of the same places and people as before, and saying long goodbyes to friends. Arriving home, Bilbo finds that his relatives have long thought him dead and are in the process of auctioning away his possessions. Though most of his fellow hobbits eventually accept that he is indeed alive, he is no longer regarded as a respectable hobbit. Preferring now the company of elves, dwarves, and wizards, he is not bothered, but is happy to once again be in his comfortable home, writing and telling stories of his adventures.

1.5 Structure of thesis

Having introduced the background, scope, and material of the thesis, I will provide a short overview of the thesis' structure. In Chapter 2, I present the theoretical framework of the thesis: In the first part, chapter 2.1, I discuss the genre of fantasy, as well as children's fantasy. I also provide a short overview of children's fantasy between the two world wars, the context in which Tolkien's *The Hobbit* was written. The field of ecocriticism is then discussed in chapter 2.2, together with a discussion of the genre of eco-fantasy. Chapter 2.3 presents the field of cultural plant studies, especially the emerging field of studies on plants in children's literature. In chapter 2.4, I discuss the medium of *The Hobbit,* the illustrated novel, focussing on the relationship between the illustrations and the verbal text.

In Chapter 3, I present the method and framework for the analysis: This chapter is divided into three parts, presenting first an overview of literary analysis and critical content analysis (3.1), which provide the basis for my method. The next two subchapters present the method of picture analysis (3.2), and the Phyto-Analysis Map (3.3), which provide the structure and specific method for my analysis.

In Chapter 4, I present my analysis of the novel. The first part of this chapter discusses the mediation of the book, or the way the story is told and presented. The rest of the chapter is divided into three parts, each focusing on one of the peoples analysed in this thesis: the hobbits, elves, and men.

In Chapter 5, I present my findings from the analysis, which I discuss before making my concluding remarks. The Appendix follows the Bibliography at the end of this thesis, providing an overview of the quotes mentioning trees or wooden objects in the story.

2. Theory

This chapter will present theory that will help me answer the thesis statement:

> What relationships do the different peoples in Tolkien's *The Hobbit* have with trees, and how are these relationships communicated in the novel's text and illustrations?

The Hobbit belongs to the genre of fantasy. It is therefore relevant to first discuss the field of fantasy studies. Since *The Hobbit* is a children's fantasy, published in 1937, I will also discuss what distinguishes children's fantasy and look at the development of British children's fantasy in the inter-war period more specifically. In this thesis, I am interested in the representation of trees in *The Hobbit* (2011). The field of ecocriticism has developed to investigate the representation of the physical environment in literature and is therefore relevant to this study. After a brief overview of the field of ecocriticism, I will present the genre of eco-fantasy, as defined by Nina Goga (2018, 2019), which is an application of ecocritical ideas in the study of children's fantasy. My emphasis on the representation of trees is derived from the field of cultural plant studies. I will therefore outline this field, with a particular emphasis on how ideas from plant studies have been applied and developed in relation to children's literature, and in relation to trees. Since I am analysing an illustrated novel, I will also discuss the various forms of interrelationship between text and image.

2.1 Fantasy

Fantastic stories are told in a variety of mediums, ranging from classic novels, graphic novels and comics to movies and music. John Clute (1997) defines fantasy as

> […] a self-coherent narrative. When set in this world, it tells a story which is impossible in the world as we perceive it; when set in an otherworld, that otherworld will be impossible, though stories set there may be possible in its terms. (Clute, 1997, p. 338)

Although the definition is descriptive, it has been criticized for being too narrow. Kathryn Hume (2014) argues that there are essentially two ways of defining fantasy. Exclusive

definitions work from a premise of fantasy as a "separable, peripheral phenomenon" (p. 8), and attempt to define the genre through specific elements, such as use of magic or fantastic creatures. These types of definitions are, to Hume, ultimately faulty, as they "do not lend themselves to the integration with the broader concerns of literary theory" (p. 19). She argues that we should view all literature as influenced by two factors: mimesis and fantasy. While fantasy includes changes to our perceived reality, mimesis is the act of imitating reality. To Hume, all literature is a combination of these two factors, uniquely blended, and she thus proposes an inclusive definition of fantasy literature as "[…] any departure from the consensus reality" (p. 21). In other words, the fantasy genre embraces a variety of stories which in some way depart from realism. Often however, fantasy is characterized by fantastic worlds, magic, and supernatural elements.

Farah Mendlesohn (2008) argues for the division of fantasy texts into four sub-genres, depending on the way in which the fantastic enters the story: the portal-quests, the immersive, the intrusive, and the liminal (p. XV). In *portal-quest fantasy*, the characters leave their home by a portal to arrive in unfamiliar or strange surroundings and are often presented with a quest or task to accomplish. The reader's perspective is tied to the main characters, discovering the world through their eyes (p. 1). In *immersive fantasy*, the reader arrives in a self-contained and unrecognizable place, which is ordinary to the characters. Common to this genre is "thinning", or the sense of threat or decay to the world (p. 60-61). *Intrusive fantasy* is characterised by an invasion of the fantastic or supernatural into the characters' environments (either a realistic world or fantasy world), which leads to conflict or change (p.115). In *liminal fantasy*, the fantastic elements are less visible, creating doubt in the reader and allowing for a variety of readings, while depending on the readers previous knowledge of fantasy (p. 183).

Applying Mendlesohn's categories to a classification of *The Hobbit* (Tolkien, 2011) shows that although there is a strong element of quest involved in the narrative, it also contains elements of immersive fantasy. Though Mendlesohn's concept of a "thinning" of the world is not prevalent)[1], the world into which the reader is invited is built to function as a complete world separate from our own world. From the perspective of the main

[1] "Thinning" is a feature of Tolkien's later work The Lord of the Rings (1986, 1989, 2009), which Mendelsohn classifies as a portal-quest fantasy (Mendelsohn, 2008, p. 31).

protagonist of the story, Bilbo, his experiences might even be classified as intrusive fantasy, where outside forces intrude on his life, bringing magic elements and eventually changing his life altogether. Whichever sub-genre of fantasy we choose to place the story in, it contains a variety of elements typical to the fantasy-genre, such as adventure, magic, and fantastic creatures.

2.1.1 Children's Literature and Fantasy

Before delving into the specific field of children's fantasy literature, to which genre *The Hobbit* belongs, I will briefly look at a few definitions of children's literature. The genre of children's literature encompasses a great variety of texts, including picture books, poetry, fairy tales and classic novels as well as works of non-fiction. The texts that are understood to comprise the field of children's literature display historical and cultural variations. Margareth Meek (2004) has observed that "[…] children's literature appears not as something which requires definition in order to be recognised or to survive" (Meek, 2004, p. 2). Levy and Mendlesohn use a wide definition of children's literature, stating that it is: "[…] fiction read to or by children, whether or not it was originally published for children and whether or not adults have approved of children reading it" (2016, p. 5). Since the field of children's literature varies both historically and culturally, such a wide definition is useful. David Rudd (2004) puts more emphasis on representations of children and childhood in his definition:

> Children's literature consists of texts that consciously or unconsciously address particular constructions of the child, or metaphorical equivalents in terms of character or situation (for example, animals, puppets, undersized or underprivileged grown-ups), the commonality being that such texts display an awareness of children's disempowered status (whether containing or controlling it, questioning or overturning it). (Rudd, 2004, p. 39)

In *The Hobbit,* we follow characters who, in the face of their surroundings, appear small or childish. Even though Bilbo is not a child, he meets the world with a naivete and innocence, and must at first be led by the "adult" Gandalf. The story focuses largely on Bilbo's metaphorical journey, where he develops strength and courage. This corresponds

with Rudd's definition of children's literature, because the book precisely deals with constructions of childhood, and children's status in the world. Dealing with constructions of childhood is not only a hallmark of children's literature, but also of fantasy literature. Andrea Immel, U. C. Knoepflmacher and Julia Briggs (2009) argue that “fantasy needs the child as mediator” (p. 239), stating that most attempts at defining fantasy overlook the child “type” in fantastic landscapes. The child perspective is less polarized, and the separation between the real and imaginary is not as apparent as with the adult position (p. 226). This might explain why children are often main characters in, as well as readers of fantasy texts.

According to Maria Nikolajeva (2012), fantasy has always held a higher status within children’s literature than in general literature. Here, it is seen as a “socialization vehicle”, providing moral and spiritual guidance through metaphors. As Nikolajeva states, “the fantastic mode allows children's writers to deal with important psychological, ethical and existential questions in a slightly detached manner, which frequently proves more effective with young readers than straightforward realism” (2012, p. 57). In striving towards the curriculum's goal of developing environmental awareness (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017), fantasy literature and its metaphorical nature provides an excellent vessel for dealing with larger themes in the classroom.

Tove Roed (2002) points out that fantastic stories are generally less adapted to a specific readership than other literature aimed at children. This, she states, is because there is no room for over-explaining without losing the magic of the story. Fantastic stories deal with larger themes, camouflaged in the epic, to be understood on several levels (p. 74). Although this in a way contradicts Immel, Knoepflmacher and Brigg's claim of "the child as mediator" (2009, p. 239), it also highlights how the metaphorical nature of the stories makes them excellent tools in the learning process. The stories rarely over-explain, and thus do not underestimate the reader. They allow for an experience of comprehension and understanding on several levels, by facilitating for different readings depending on the audience.

In Tolkien's literary world, there are also many layers of understanding and interpretation. *The Hobbit*, which serves as a prequel to *The Lord of The Rings* trilogy, is also more "childish" and less complex than the subsequent books, which tend to have an older audience. It serves as a gateway to a larger universe, while also standing as a separate

narrative. Considering the later books, and the insights this provides in the surrounding universe, *The Hobbit* can also be understood in a new light. In the following sections, I will take a closer look at the significance of Tolkien's books for the children's fantasy genre.

2.1.2 Children's Fantasy Between World Wars

In their book "*Children's Fantasy Literature: An Introduction*" (2016), Michael Levy and Farah Mendlesohn trace the development of the genre of children's fantasy historically, from folk tales to modern stories, emphasizing real world events such as the two world wars and their impact on the genre. For the purposes of this study, this sub-chapter will limit itself to the development of British children's fantasy in the interwar and post-war period, a time that led to major changes in the representation of children in literature. British children's fantasy at the start of the twentieth century was characterized by a limitation of space, often being situated in gardens and houses, reflecting the situation of many children at the time. Stories of fairies, talking toys and animals were popular, and the child protagonist was usually led or taught by an adult. During the interwar years, children's stories became more "outward facing" (Levy & Mendlesohn, 2016, p. 93), no longer depicting children as homebound, but introducing more open spaces and adventure.

Tolkien's *The Hobbit* stands out among the books in the interwar period. Being as Levy & Mendlesohn (2016) puts it: "steeped in Nordic culture and mythology" (p. 98), Tolkien expects his readers to be able to understand the narrative without over-explaining or using the real world as a starting point. Though Bilbo and the dwarves do in many ways represent the figure of the child in the story, they are soon left by their "adult", Gandalf, and must fend for themselves (p. 98). Tolkien's story was among the first in the period to merge the genres of fairy stories, animalist folk tales and hero tales (p. 99). This was not typical for the inter-war period, where myths and fairy tales were mostly held separate from fantasy, and children were often presented as helpless, needing guidance and steady leadership from responsible adults. Tolkien's work pointed to a change towards a more adventure-oriented literary period, where children were given self-determination and independence (p. 101).

This is, perhaps, what has made *The Hobbit* a classic within the genre of children's fantasy. Though the story is suitable for children, and has a relatively childish protagonist, the story has become a classic enjoyed by people of all ages.

2.2 Ecocriticism

Tolkien's emphasis on nature, especially his frequent portrayals of trees, led me to my thesis statement: *What relationships do the different peoples in Tolkien's The Hobbit have with trees, and how are these relationships communicated in the novel's text and illustrations?* The field of literary ecocriticism, which studies the representations of nature in literary works and is closely connected to the environmental movement, is therefore a natural starting point. According to Greg Garrard (2012, p. 1), the modern environmental movement can be traced back to the short story "*Silent Spring*" by Rachel Carson (2003[1962]). In her story, Carson describes a rural town where the use of pesticides causes bird death. Carson's book received attention for her use of scientific theory combined with literary techniques in describing the consequences of human interference in nature (Garrard, 2012, p. 2). Since the '60s, Carson's claims have been largely confirmed, and a variety of environmental groups have been inspired by Carson's book. The publication of Carson's text and its aftermath gave rise to important questions: How is nature represented in literature? Can literature play a role in environmental discourse?

The field of ecocriticism is closely related to modern environmental issues. As Cheryl Glotfelty states: "Simply put, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (1996, p. xviii). Glotfelty goes on to compare the ecocentric basis of ecocriticism to feminist criticism of language from a gender-conscious perspective, as well as Marxist criticism of economy and production (p. xix). Ecocriticism is, in other words, a political form of analysis, and is, as Greg Garrard points out, closely related to "environmentally oriented genres of philosophy and political theory" (Garrard, 2012, p. 4).

Ecocriticism developed as a discipline of literary theory in the 1960s and '70s, parallel to the modern environmentalism movement and increased awareness of environmental issues. However, the field did not begin to grow fully until the late '80s and early '90s, when scholars began to undertake collaborative action and the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) was formed (Glotfelty, C., 1996, p. xvii). ASLE holds regular conferences and publishes a journal focusing on literary analysis, creative writing, environmental education, and activism. Garrard (2012, p. 4) describes ASLE as dominating the field of ecocriticism, branching out from its start in America to include literary studies

from more and more countries. Since the founding of ASLE, the field of ecocriticism has changed from focusing mainly on Romantic poetry and nature writing to a more general cultural ecocriticism.

Cheryl Glotfelty's definition of ecocriticism was published in the book *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996), and was among the first attempts to define the field. This anthology, containing theory on ecocriticism as well as ecocritical analyses of literature and drama, has become one of the foundational works of ecocriticism. Another person whose research has been important to the field of Literary ecocriticism is Lawrence Buell, the author of *The Future of Environmental Criticism* (2008). Buell and Glotfelty both describe the history of literary ecocriticism but do so using different metaphors: Glotfelty describes the development of ecocriticism in three stages, comparing it to Elaine Showalter's model for feminist criticism (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996, p. xxii). The first stage study how nature is represented in literature, and which stereotypes, tropes and metaphors are present. The second stage studies the literary tradition of nature writing examines other works that manifest ecological awareness and study the influence of place on the imagination of the author. The third stage of ecocriticism is the theoretical stage. Here, ecocritics study the construction of ideas such as species, nature, and animal (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996, p. xxiv).

Buell (2008) describes the field of literary ecocriticism as emerging in two waves: the first of these, emerging in the '80s and '90s, being mostly concerned with earth care, to contribute to preserve nature by political action and to break down hierarchical separations between human and non-human (p. 21). The second wave, emerging more recently, is closely related to the social ecological movement, concerned with breaking down the distinction between "natural" and built landscapes (p. 22). Buell does, however, warn the reader not to take his waves as an implication of a "tidy, distinct succession". Instead, he prefers "palimpsest" as a metaphor, describing the development more as a layering of trends, building on previous research (p. 17).

Scott Slovic (2010) describes what he identifies as a third wave of ecocriticism as a more comparative, trans-cultural approach (p. 6). Slovic lists the many new impulses in ecocriticism, ranging from post-ethnic and post-national visions of human experience to the analysis of culturally and ethnically specific experiences in a comparative context (p. 7). Clare

Bradford and Geraldine Massey see clear common denominators in Glotfelty and Buell's respective models: Common to these two accounts of the historical development of ecocriticism is an awareness of a move from formalist approaches, with their emphasis on studying the text in isolation, to the development of a more critical approach, conscious of the cultural forces that shape, and to some extents are influenced by, the text. (Bradford & Massey, 2011, p. 111).

Ecocritical studies no longer only focus on literature but can be used to study any aspect of the world we live in. Such studies lean on the widest definition of ecocriticism: the study of the relationship between the human and the non-human (Garrard, 2012, p. 5). As previously noted, ecocriticism is connected to various forms of eco-philosophy, such as environmentalism, deep ecology, ecofeminism, and eco-Marxism. It is, however, also linked to the natural sciences, and according to Garrard, this means that ecocritics must develop a form of "ecological literacy". Although many will argue that ecological problems belong to the natural sciences and not the literary sciences, Garrard nevertheless states that the ecological problems we now face are undesirable features of society's development, closely linked to society's relationship with nature. He further refers to John Passmore (1974), who has proposed a distinction between "problems in ecology" and "ecological problems". To him, problems in ecology and their solutions belong to the realm of natural sciences, whereas describing something as an ecological problem is a *normative* claim that belongs to the social sciences (Passmore, 1974, as cited in Garrard, 2012, p. 6).

Ecocritical studies affect a variety of different fields. In this study, I focus on the field of children's literature, more specifically children's fantasy literature. Before I go on to look at the critical field of plant studies, I will therefore take a closer look at ecocritical studies done precisely on children's literature and fantasy.

2.2.1 Ecocriticism and children's literature: Ecofantasy?

In a 2019 article, Nina Goga discusses the genre of ecofantasy. To her, the definition applies to fantasy books which discusses environmental issues by problematizing anthropocentric attitudes (Goga, 2019, p. 78). Goga further discusses ecofantasy in her article "Children's Literature as an Exercise in Ecological Thinking" (2018), where she argues that the Swedish illustrated book *The Ice Sea Pirates* (2015) can be read as an exercise in ecological thinking,

due to its focus on human exploitation of nature and the protagonist's encounters with different creatures and places (Goga, 2018, p. 57). She further classifies the book as a quest fantasy, citing W. A. Senior's definition of the genre as "a series of adventures experienced by the hero and his or her companions that begins with the simplest confrontations and dangers and escalates through more threatening and perilous encounters" (Senior, 2012, p. 190, as cited in Goga, 2018, p. 59). The similarities to *The Hobbit* (Tolkien, 2011) are striking, both in the quest-based structure, the escalating dangers of the situations, and the various encounters with wild creatures and new environments. According to Goga, the main protagonist, Siri, must also ultimately break free from her guide or helper and make her own choices (Goga, 2018, p. 59). Similarly, Bilbo and the dwarves are eventually abandoned by their guide Gandalf to face the dangers of Mirkwood. Another curious similarity lies in the use of maps, in both cases placed within the front covers. The use of maps is, according to Goga, a common trait in the fantasy genre, serving both as a visual representation of the protagonist's travels and as a guide to the reader (p. 60).

In her analysis of *Ice Sea Pirates,* Goga uses an analytical model, The Nature in Culture Matrix (Goga et. al., 2018) to uncover the representations of nature. This matrix is a conceptual tool for analysis of ecocritical perspectives in children's texts. The Nature in Culture Matrix consists of two axes: the vertical axis ranges from celebration to problematization of nature, while the horizontal axis ranges from the anthropocentric to the ecocentric perspective (Goga et. al, 2012, p. 12). The matrix further encompasses a third dimension: *techne*, which signifies that nature in children's texts are mediated, or crafted representations of nature (p. 13). In my thesis I use a similar approach, The Phyto-Analysis Map (Guanio-Uluru, 2021), which I will present in Chapter 3. This model is particularly suited to my purpose as I focus on analysing the representations of trees in *The Hobbit.*

2.3 Cultural Plant Studies

A growing scholarly field, closely related to ecocriticism, is cultural plant studies. Gagliano et. al. (2017) describes the emerging field of human-plant studies (or as they term it: Critical Plant Studies) as "[...] a broad framework for re-evaluating plants, their representations, and human-plant interactions" (p. 10). In the same way that literary ecocriticism developed in the wake of a greater focus on ecological problems, it seems that the recent growing focus

on plants in literature is linked to an increased focus on the impact of human activity on ecosystems. Although there has in recent years been a large collective movement towards a more ecocentric worldview, many researchers argue that there is a clear hierarchical divide within our understanding of non-human nature. Looking back to Aristotle's "The History of Animals", we realize that the hierarchical understanding of nature is not new:

> […] the whole genus of plants, while it is devoid of life as compared to an animal, is endowed with life as compared with other corporeal entities. Indeed, as we just remarked, there is observed in plants a continuous scale of ascent toward the animal. So, in the sea, there are certain objects concerning which one would be at a loss to determine whether they be animal or vegetable. (Aristotle, 1995 [n.d.], p. 922)

By describing this "continuous scale of ascent", Aristotle places plants firmly below animals on a scale of sentience and advancement, a view that has later influenced the position of plants in western philosophy, art, and literature (Laist, 2013, p. 12). According to Matthew Hall (2011), a more detailed biological and behavioural understanding of animals has led to a prominent focus on the reestablishment of human-animal relationships on more moral terms. He further states that although our view of the moral rights of animals is changing, there is still little focus on the largest component of the natural world that surrounds us, namely plants (p. 2-3). In his book *Plant Theory* (2016), Jeffrey T. Nealon seconds this view, using Michel Foucault's concept of biopower, a technology of power for managing large populations, to argue that plants, or vegetable life, are forgotten lifeforms that should be given more attention. As he states in his introductory chapter: "...it became clear to me that the plant, rather than the animal, functions as that form of life forgotten and abjected within a dominant regime of humanist biopower" (Nealon, 2016, p. x). The human tendency to overlook plants although they constitute the largest part of our world, led botanists James H. Wandersee and Elisabeth E. Schussler to coin the term *plant blindness*:

> We define *plant blindness* as (a) the inability to see or notice the plants in one's environment; (b) the inability to recognize the importance of plants in the biosphere and in human affairs; (c) the inability to appreciate the aesthetic and unique

> biological features of the life forms that belong to the Plant Kingdom; and (d) the misguided anthropocentric ranking of plants as inferior to animals and thus, as unworthy of consideration. (Wandersee & Schussler, 1999, p. 82)

They further attribute our lack of recognition of plant life to five factors: our lack of knowledge and meaningful educational experiences involving plants, the homogeneity of green growth, the plant's lack of mobility which leads us to see them as "backdrop", the non-threatening appearance of plants, and their relative lack of changeability in space, time, and colour (p. 83-84). As these factors make plants comparably different from both humans and animals, it is perhaps not surprising that plants are often devalued in comparison. Although our understanding of non-human nature seems to contain a certain dualism, the degradation of plants might in some ways be a result of what John Ryan (2011) describes as a mechanization of botanical research after the Renaissance. Before the 17th century, plants were studied and classified based on therapeutic properties. Taste, smell, and experience were important in the classification process, and the place of origin of the plants was carefully mapped. In this way, plant species were seen as an integral part of their environments and connected to human experience through sensory information (Ryan, 2011, p. 125-126).

Post-Renaissance, plant research has leaned more towards genus-based classification, where Latin names for species made the studies more technical. The plants were now abstracted from their surroundings and cultural connection, to be put in a hierarchical system based on species and family. This later strategy is a part of what Ryan calls "[…] the epistemological disjunction between science and the humanities" (p. 129), the contemporary divide between classical science and the culture-anchored humanities. He further argues for the need to reconcile these two cultures to "[...] engage a more ecologically conversant literati and, conversely, scientific professionals who are more sympathetic to the methods and perspectives of the humanities" (p. 130-131), aiming to establish a more sustainable relationship between humans and the biosphere.

Ryan proposes a need for more transdisciplinary research into plants, not merely cooperating, but creating new forms of knowledge through the merging of separate disciplines (p. 132-134). Though ecocriticism aims to uncover the relationships between the

human and non-human, the field does not in Ryan's assessment transcend from the field of literary studies (p.138). One exception here is the field of "floral poetics", where authors such as Henry D. Thoreau, Aldo Leopold and George Seddon combined science and poetics, contributing to more than one field through their work. Ryan's vision for transdisciplinary research culminates in his proposition of a "Cultural botany", defined as "[...] a transdisciplinary model that attempts to fuse the arts and sciences divide, offering the possibility for enquiry-driven research into plants to attain embodied, poetic character" (p. 143). A transdisciplinary starting point makes literary plant studies more relevant and reveals useful knowledge.

As previously mentioned, one of the goals in the curriculum is for students to develop both an appreciation for nature and environmental awareness (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017, 1.5). In school, these subjects are separated, plants are studied in science, and literature in other subjects. It is not surprising then, that this distinction shapes our understanding of the world around us. Through a transdisciplinary stance, where these themes are united and understood to be connected, this can contribute to the development of an understanding and respect for nature. Environmental awareness then, can be developed by making students aware of both how plants are presented in the literature and how the nature around us works.

In a later article, Ryan (2012) further develops his vision of a cultural botany. Ryan here addresses our understanding of plants as inactive objects to be acted upon, rather than with an agency of their own. He suggests observing plant agency as well, thereby recognizing the "[...] dual aspect of the human-vegetal dynamic" (Ryan, 2012, p. 105). Building on the increasingly established scholarly field of human-animal studies, he proposes the establishment of human-plant studies (HPS), a field which "[...] would provide a framework for conceptualizing plants as active partners in knowledge production and cultural practices" (p. 115). To develop such a field, it is important to actively address the biases carried in our culture in encounters with plants, or as Ryan stipulates:

> Most crucially for the development of human-plant studies is the differentiation between botanical intelligence - plants acting upon people to co-orchestrate cultural beliefs and practices in the umwelt of living organisms - and the intelligent use of

> plants - people acting upon plants in utilitarian and potentially exploitative ways that posit “intelligent” animals against “passive” plants. (Ryan, 2012, p. 116)

This understanding also forms the basis of my analysis, as I examine how the trees are represented in *The Hobbit*, either as active or passive entities. In their contribution to the field, Gagliano et. al. (2017) emphasise the importance of language in our understanding of plant life, proposing a differentiation between the *extrinsic* and *intrinsic* language of plants. Extrinsic language is employed by humans, and describes the scientific language, as well as the philosophical and literary ways we describe the properties of plant species. The intrinsic language of plants, however, describes the ways in which plants communicate, biochemically, through multi-sensorial expressions or ecological interactions with other species and animals (p. 11). This understanding of language, as not only limited to humans, is according to Gagliano et. al. (2017, p. 11) critical to dissolve the hierarchical distancing between humans and plants and allow us to see the relationships and interdependencies between us in new ways.

In his 2015 article *Tolkien’s Sonic Trees and Perfumed Herbs: Plant Intelligence in Middle Earth,* Ryan also distinguishes between the intrinsic and extrinsic capacities of plants. Here, he is not only limited to language, and defines extrinsic capacities as “those capacities registered as environmental elements or other living beings exerting force upon plants” (Ryan, 2015, p. 129). In other words, this includes all influences from the environment and other actors that affect the plants. This wider understanding of the term is also more relevant to me in my analysis, which focuses on the representation of trees in a literary work. When this perspective is dominant in a literary context, plants are presented as passive. Intrinsic capacities, however, refers to “those attributes generated actively by plants in relation to their surroundings” (p. 129). These capacities emphasize plants as active players, participating in communication with their surroundings. Ryan classifies the latter as “phytocentric (or, at least, ecocentric)”, because this view highlights the plants as independent actors that can exert influence on their surroundings (p. 130). Guanio-Uluru’s *Phyto-Analysis Map* (2021), developed to uncover how plants are represented in literature and to counteract plant blindness, places emphasis on the intrinsic and extrinsic capacities of

plants. Since I use The *Phyto-Analysis Map* as part of my method, this distinction is important in my study as well.

As plant studies is still a new field of research, studies specifically analysing plant representation in children's literature have until now been few and far between. As I discuss in the following subchapter however, recent publications point to a new trend in critical plant studies, specifically focusing on children's and young adult literature.

2.3.1 Plants in children's literature

In the introduction to their anthology *Plants in Children's and Young Adult Literature* (2021), Duckworth and Guanio-Uluru state that though there has been an upsurge in ecocritical studies on children's literature, very few studies have been done on plant representation in literature for children and young adults (p. 2). Critics such as John Ryan, Zoe Jaques and Lydia Kokkola are among the few they mention who have recently argued for the application of plant studies on children's literature (Duckworth & Guanio-Uluru, 2021, p. 7). Kokkola (2017) argues for the importance of children's literature in the development of ecopedagogy. Ecopedagogy, a form of critical pedagogy influenced by philosopher Paulo Freire (Kahn, 2010), is described by Kokkola as differencing from environmental education by focusing on the unsustainability of endless growth. She further states that "understanding that plants – not humans – hold the balance of power over the future of the earth, as critical plant studies promotes, is a key step in this endeavour" (Kokkola, 2017, p. 279).

As I mentioned in the introduction, one of the main goals of the new curriculum (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017) is that "[s]chool shall help the pupils to develop an appreciation of nature so they can enjoy and respect nature and develop climate and environmental awareness" (1.5). They further emphasize the role of young people in solving the challenges of climate change, pollution, and loss of biological diversity through "necessary changes to our lifestyle". If we take this goal seriously, we need literature that problematizes human place in nature and our impact on the environment by challenging the anthropocentric worldview. It will also be necessary to develop tools to uncover how plants are represented in the literature.

Duckworth & Guanio-Uluru (2021) emphasize that although it is frequently repeated that animals hold a higher status than plants in children's literature, this observation could in

itself be a symptom of plant blindness. Though plants are often backgrounded, they might, at a closer look, be integral to the story (p. 9). Before moving on to a discussion of the illustrated novel, I want to take a look at the specific genus of plant I study here: the tree.

2.3.2 Trees

Historically, trees have been of great importance to human lives, and continue to influence us both directly and symbolically. Trees provide shelter from the elements and give us materials to build and live. Tree related metaphors are common in most languages, where they can symbolise life, knowledge, strength, and growth. As Duckworth & Guanio-Uluru (2021) note, "trees seem to hold a privileged place in the plant kingdom in the beliefs and imaginations of many peoples" (p. 4). Trees are, as they further state, especially connected to the traditional European fairy tales.

Fairy tales have had a strong influence on modern fantasy literature. From selfless mother figure in *The Giving Tree* (Silverstein, 2004[1964]) to the violent Whomping Willow in the world of Harry Potter (Rowling, 1999), trees have often been given active roles, sentience, and human personality traits in fantasy literature. In Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (Tolkien, 1986, 1989, 2009), we meet the Ents: sentient, walking and talking tree-shepherds, whose role it is to take care of the forest and the trees in it. In his investigation of the representation of plants in Tolkien's Middle Earth, Ryan (2015) notes that while the trees are attributed qualities of consciousness, such as speech and memory, herbs are not given the same qualities, instead being classified by their utilitarian value (p. 138).

Zoe Jaques (2015) argues that although strongly connected to European myths, trees are, even when given posthuman agency, generally presented as servants to humans (p. 139). Often presented as a "useful friend", Jaques compares the representation of trees in literature to that of pets, being both held in reverence and appreciated for their utility (p. 112). They are, in this sense, seen as holders of both intrinsic and extrinsic capacities (Ryan, 2015). In my quest to uncover the relationships with trees expressed by the different peoples in Tolkien's *The Hobbit,* it is useful to be aware of the complex interplay between the intrinsic and extrinsic capacities of trees.

2.3.3 Value positions: anthropocentric, instrumental, ecocentric & phytocentric

In my analysis of the representation of trees and attitudes to trees in Tolkien's *The Hobbit,* as expressed by the hobbits, elves, and men in the story, it will be of interest to discover which value positions these people express. By value positions I mean whether their attitudes are anthropocentric, instrumental, ecocentric or phytocentric.

In my previous presentation of ecocriticism and plant studies, I have focused on the development of the fields in connection with a growing focus on environmental challenges. I have also discussed how plant studies challenge the hierarchical view of nature, where man is often placed at the top. This hierarchical view of nature is closely linked to anthropocentrism, a value system which Rob Boddice (2011) describes as "a charge of human chauvinism" (p. 1), which has shaped our understanding of the world, placing human beings at the centre. He further points to historian Lynn White Jr., who was, according to Boddice, the first to link "the root cause of the environmental crisis to the doctrine of anthropocentrism" (Boddice, 2011, p. 308).

As I have discussed before, it is important to uncover precisely which value systems are communicated in the literature in order to be able to raise awareness and challenge our attitudes. Nina Goga's analysis of fantasy books for children and young adults, which I discussed in Chapter 2.2.1, also focused on values and attitudes. Here, she classifies books that "problematize anthropocentric attitudes" as ecofantasy (Goga, 2019, p. 78).

Ecocentrism is the often-posed alternative to anthropocentrism, as it sees humans as inseparable from nature (Rowe, 1994, p. 106). This view is also central to ecocriticism, which examines the relationship between literature and the physical environment (Glotfelty, 1996, p. XVIII). Some researchers find ecocentrism insufficient however, claiming, as Michael Marder does, that they still neglect vegetable life. Marder instead postulates *phytocentrism*, a philosophy of "growing beings", which includes plants as well as animal life (Marder, 2014, p. 248). The phytocentric position is central in plant studies, and also in my analysis, which is based on *The Phyto-Analysis Map* (Guanio-Uluru, 2021). Guanio-Uluru points out that plants in the literature often have primarily *instrumental* value, because they are used by someone and for something (2021, p. 14). Such a view of plants is closely linked to anthropocentrism because it is not the intrinsic value of the plants that is emphasized, but the value they have

for someone else. This is also closely related to Ryan's (2015) discussion of extrinsic and intrinsic properties of plants, or whether the plants are presented as passive or active.

In my analysis of the relationship the various peoples in *The Hobbit* have to the trees around them, it therefore becomes important to examine which values the text communicates, whether they are anthropocentric, instrumental, ecocentric or phytocentric.

2.4 The Visual and the Verbal

Having now discussed the main fields of research in which this study is situated, it is time to discuss the medium of the text, that of the illustrated novel. Though *The Hobbit* (Tolkien, 2011) contains few illustrations, and has been published with illustrations from other authors, and even in some cases with no illustrations, the author's original illustrations as well as the written text are the material of this study. I find it necessary therefore, to discuss the types of interactions that exists between word and picture, and the ways in which they cooperate to create meaning. In this chapter, I will therefore take a closer look at this interaction.

In their book *How Picturebooks Work*, Maria Nikolajeva & Carole Scott (2006) point out the two levels of communication present in books with illustrations: the visual and the verbal. On the visual level, illustrations communicate through icons, directly representing their meaning to the reader. On the verbal level, the reader must decode the signs, having no direct relationship with the signified object (p. 1). According to Nikolajeva & Scott, the complex interaction between the two modes of communication "[…] creates unlimited possibilities for interaction between word and image in a picturebook" (p. 2). For the reader, the reading of picturebooks leads to a *hermeneutic circle,* where s/he observes the whole and then the details, before looking again at the whole with a better understanding. The visual and the verbal both influence our perception of the other, and in going back and forth, the reader gains a more complex interpretation (p. 2). Nikolajeva & Scott further present an overview of steps towards defining the medium, citing Kristin Hallberg's distinction between illustrated books and picturebooks using the concept of iconotext. Iconotext refers here to "an inseparable entity of word and image, which cooperate to convey a message" (Hallberg, 1982, as cited in Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006, p. 6).

Other authors do not make the same distinction, and Torben Gregersen instead divides books with pictures into four categories based on the relationships between pictures and text: exhibit books, picture narratives, picturebooks and illustrated books, wherein the first can exist independently of the verbal text, and the latter text can exist independent of the illustrations (Gregersen, 1974, as cited in Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006, p. 6). Emphasising the functions of pictures and text to the narrative, Nikolajeva & Scott further reference scholars such as Joseph Schwarcz, who outlines nine ways of cooperation between words and pictures (Schwarcz, 1982, as cited in Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006, p. 7) and Joanne Golden, who outlines five types of interactions (Golden, 1990, as cited in Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006, p. 7).

Though different scholars use a variety of different classifications, they all seem to classify books with pictures as situated somewhere between two extremes: the pictureless text and the wordless picturebook (Nikolajeva & Scott, p. 8). The illustrated story is defined by Nikolajeva & Scott I the following manner:

> A verbal narrative may be illustrated by one or several pictures and thus becomes an illustrated story: the pictures are subordinated to the words. The same story may be illustrated by different artists, who may impart different interpretations to the text (often contrary to the original intention), but the story will remain basically the same and can still be read without looking at the pictures. (Nikolajeva & Scott, 2006, p. 8).

This type of verbal-visual relationship is to Nikolajeva & Scott similar to that of adaptation, the same way a filmmaker translates a verbal text into a visual medium, or a bible story is illustrated (p. 8). There are clear parallels to Tolkien's *The Hobbit* here. Being at first illustrated by the author, the verbal narrative has later been accompanied by the works of several different illustrators, among which Alan Lee and Tove Jansson's contributions are perhaps most well-known (Tolkien Gateway, 2017, 2021a). We could, in this sense, choose to see the text as wholly independent of the illustrations, treating them as two independent works. In this thesis however, the object of analysis is a novel illustrated by the author, and in my attempt to uncover the relationships with trees communicated in the book, the visual representations of trees are of importance.

In his 2014 book *Reading the Visual: An introduction to Teaching Multimodal Literacy,* Frank Serafini discusses the interaction between the verbal and the visual texts in *multimodal ensembles.* Multimodal ensembles, he states, refers here to "texts that utilize a variety of modes to communicate or represent concepts and information" (Serafini, 2014, p. 14). Multimodality, then, is a combination of different modes or modalities, such as photography, painting, mathematics, music, and written language. Serafini further divides the modes of multimodal ensembles into three general categories: written language, visual images, and design elements.

These modes express meaning in different ways, and contain material, physiological, technological, and sociocultural aspects. Different modes are often utilized together because they each contain affordances and limitations (p. 15). *The Hobbit*, which I examine here, contains a number of different modalities that complement each other. Here there is verbal text, but also maps and illustrations. While the maps contribute to a greater understanding of how the characters move in the world, the illustrations help the reader to visualize the surroundings. Although the verbal text carries the narrative, and the illustrations therefore become, as Nikolajeva & Scott point out, subordinate to the text (2006, p. 8), the illustrations and maps contribute through different modes, thereby supplementing the verbal text.

Serafini further discusses the basic components of visual images and multimodal ensembles. These components, he states, "should be seen as starting places for interpreting visual images and multimodal ensembles" (Serafini, 2014, p. 55). As the interpretation of visual images are subject to cultural bias, Serafini's components serve as a starting point for discussions of meaning potentials, not as revealers of truth in all contexts. In my analysis of the illustrations in *The Hobbit* (Tolkien, 2011), Serafini's elements of visual art, multimodal ensembles and visual grammar provide useful concepts for the discussion of the representations of trees. These elements will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

3. Method

In this chapter, I present an overview of the methods I use to answer my research question: *What relationships do the different peoples have with trees in Tolkien's The Hobbit, and how are these relationships communicated in the novel's text and illustrations?*

In this study, I make a qualitative literary analysis of *The Hobbit* (2011). I also analyse the book's illustrations, and this has consequences for my methodological approach to the story. Within literature studies, there is a comprehensive field that studies the interaction between words and images, specifically regarding picture books for children. Theorists such as Nikolajeva and Scott (2006) have, as previously noted, theorized this interaction. Nevertheless, I do not want to carry out a pure picture book analysis here. The reason for this is that *The Hobbit* (Tolkien, 2011) is not a picture book, but an illustrated novel. The pictures, which Tolkien drew for the first edition of the book, are not always printed together with the text. The text often stands alone, and the pictures, in the cases where they are present, are printed in different places in the book. Instead of a pure picture book analysis, I have therefore chosen to look at the pictures and the text, but as two separate modes of communication. I will discuss how they interact with (and possibly contradict) each other, both in the analysis and in the conclusion, but I relate here to image analysis and text analysis as two separate methods.

In the first part of this chapter, I discuss the method of literary analysis. As I will discuss further there, this analysis is shaped by my theoretical framework, specifically ecocriticism and plant studies. The literary analysis is nevertheless the overall method here, and in this chapter, I lean on theorists such as Rolf Gaasland (2009) and Erik Bjerck Hagen (2004). Furthermore, I discuss the field of critical content analysis, which theorists such as Kathy G. Short (2019) refer to as literary studies done with a critical or political starting point. Since a literary study focusing on plants is just that, these are useful perspectives to discuss.

In the second part of this chapter, I discuss picture analysis. I have previously discussed the relationship between visual images and verbal text in the theory chapter. This is also outlined by Serafini in what he terms *elements of multimodal ensembles*, which I will discuss here. Although I, in this analysis, see the illustrations as separate from the verbal text, they contain a verbal element: titles. These titles, and their effect on the reading of the

pictures, will be discussed in more detail in the analysis, and Serafini's theory will be used there.

After discussing the two main forms of analysis, I will go into more detail on how these are linked to the critical framework for the thesis. The Phyto-Analysis Map presents a method for uncovering the representation of plants in literary works. This map, which takes the form of a flower (Figure 1), presents concrete steps in such an analysis. In my analysis of *The Hobbit,* the structure of both the analysis form (see appendix) and the analysis chapter is shaped on the basis of the map. The starting point of the analysis is the phytocentric perspective. By using the Phyto-Analysis Map in my analysis of *The Hobbit*, I hope to uncover what relationship the different peoples have to the trees around them.

I believe that the combination of image analysis and text analysis is the best method for uncovering how the peoples of *The Hobbit* relate to the trees around them. Furthermore, the Phyto-Analysis Map contributes with useful concepts intended to uncover the representation of trees and discuss the values the various peoples express through their interaction with the trees in their surroundings.

In the last part of this chapter, I go into more detail on the limitations of my method and thesis. Then I discuss, among other things, how I as a reader have cultural and social biases. I will also discuss limitations with regard to the scope of the thesis and my selections.

3.1 Literary Analysis and Critical Content Analysis

The methods I use when analysing *The Hobbit* is that of literary analysis and picture analysis. In literary analysis, the object of study is a literary work, or a group of works (Hagen, 2004, p. 13). Here, literary works can be understood as either autonomous or heteronomous. An autonomous analysis is a study of a text where the main focus is the internal structures within the text. A heteronomous analysis, however, sees the text in its cultural and historical context, including external references and reactions to the text (Hagen, 2004, p. 17). My analysis of *The Hobbit* is in this context an autonomous analysis. I consider the internal structures in the text and look specifically at how the peoples' relationship to trees is represented within the book.

Though the main focus of the literary analysis is the text, the interactions between the text and the reader is of importance. Hagen (2004, p. 38) argues that the readers must

explore and understand their own *self,* both as researchers and readers, to fully understand their interpretation of the text. A particular text will be interpreted differently by different readers, due to their different contexts, histories, and personalities. Thus, this might be a weakness in my method, both in terms of my comprehension of the text and illustrations, my selections of quotes, and my interpretations of them. Nevertheless, I have attempted to select the quotes which represent the hobbits', elves', and men's relationships with trees without letting my personal biases shape the selection. Being aware of one's own prejudices, influences and biases is an important step towards a thorough and more objective analysis.

According to Gaasland (2009), a framework for literary analysis must meet certain requirements. Firstly, the method should act as an intermediary between the researcher and the text, supplying either a procedural structure or a set of terms and conceptions. Secondly, the method should be unambiguous, in the sense that its main concepts should remain clear and free of contradictions. Thirdly, the method must make it possible for the researcher to choose passages from the text as presumptive evidence for their conclusions. If a method meets all the beforementioned requirements, the analysis gains a valuable verifiability and transferability, minimizing the component of subjectivity and bias (p. 13-14). Although literary criticism has historically been deeply rooted in societal matters, focusing on the political, social, philosophical, and historical context of the work and its author, the leading method in the field is now the textual analysis. Here, the text is analysed independently of its surroundings, not relative to the environment, but rather as an absolute and synchronous phenomenon. A textual analysis can, however, be framed by external perspectives, for instance biographical or ontological (Gaasland, 2009, p. 16). My analysis, which is based on ecocritical perspectives and plant studies, is here an autonomous study largely influenced by external perspectives. I am doing a literary analysis here precisely with the aim of helping to raise awareness about the presentation of plants in literary works.

A method that relies heavily on external perspectives and societal context is that of critical content analysis. According to Kathy G. Short (2019, p. 4), content analysis is an umbrella term describing different methods of text analysis, including both qualitative and quantitative approaches. She defines critical content analysis as "bringing a critical lens to an analysis of a text or group of texts to explore the possible underlying messages within those texts, particularly as related to issues of power" (Short, 2019, p. 9). In content analysis,

meaning is in the reading event, or between the reader and the text, not in the text itself. A text, therefore, has multiple meanings, but the purpose of the reading influences the research findings. The theoretical framework used by the researcher can be critical, social, or political, as it involves the researcher taking a stance, using a specific critical lens throughout the analysis, intending to uncover, understand and transform social practices. Such readings, when performed quantitatively, count the presence of specific phenomena in texts. In qualitative readings, the critical theoretical position shapes the research questions, and the text can inform or supply meaning to external topics (p. 5).

My study uses both quantitative and qualitative methods in the analysis of *The Hobbit.* I have collected all quotes related to trees, and thus made a quantitative analysis (see Appendix). I have then analyzed these according to my research question and examined in how the pictures and text references present the different peoples' relationship to trees, relying on qualitative methods.

In this thesis, the stance is that of plant studies, which supply the critical lens for the analysis. Though this mode of analysis is political, and might therefore be said to be subjective, an important advantage of the method is the transparency in stance: the researcher makes their angle explicit and public. Another benefit of critical content analysis is, to Short, the potential to uncover societal biases by questioning what is presented as "truth" and reveal underlying values and ideologies. Though the stance of the reader is always affected by the social and historical setting of the reading, the book and its perspective are also affected by cultural biases and written to communicate certain understandings of the world. Due to this, Short states, a critical analysis requires a conscious questioning stance towards the representation of truth in literary works (2014, p. 6).

My analysis of the verbal text of Tolkien's *The Hobbit* (2011) takes the form of a qualitative literary analysis. Though I use elements of quantitative analyses when collecting, counting, and organizing quotes, I perform an analysis of a literary work based on the critical theoretical position of plant studies. My thesis therefore takes the form of an autonomous study, drawing on quantitative and qualitative methods, to perform a literary analysis in a political mode. In the following chapter, I present an overview of the methodical approach I use when analysing the illustrations.

3.2 Picture analysis

In this thesis, I not only analyse the verbal text of Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, but also the visual illustrations drawn by the author. To accomplish this, a set of tools for picture analysis is needed to uncover the complex ways in which pictures communicate meaning. In the following sub-chapters, I provide an overview of the elements of visual composition by Frank Serafini (2014), which is further divided into three categories: elements of visual art, multimodal ensembles, and visual grammar.

3.2.1 Elements of visual art

In an analysis of visual art, the starting point should be the basic elements that comprise the image. Frank Serafini relies here on the categorization by Donis A. Dondis, who suggests ten elements that "comprise the raw materials for all visual communication" (Dondis, 1973, as cited in Serafini, 2014, p. 56). Serafini further divides these into four categories: dot, line, and shape, colour, size and scale, and position.

Firstly, the *dot, line and shape* that make up the image should be considered. According to Serafini (2014, p. 56), these can be bold or thin, large, or small, and be positioned and connected in various ways. Horizontal lines may be associated with calmness and tranquillity, vertical lines with stability or separation, and diagonal lines with movement. The weight, colour, length, and direction of lines also communicate meaning, and lead the viewer's gaze. Shapes can be angular or rounded, closed or open. Meaning can also be communicated through the use of classical shapes. Here, the circle is often associated with comfort and continuity, the square with stability and conformity, and the triangle with conflict or energy. Patterns, repetition of shapes, may also suggest themes and meanings (p. 57). The illustrations in *The Hobbit*, which I analyse here, make extensive use of different lines, shapes, and patterns, and this therefore becomes an important part of the analysis.

Colour is another element of visual art that provide meaning through its cultural connections with emotion. These meanings and associations are closely connected to the ways these colours were manufactured and used historically. In visual art, colours can differentiate, highlight, and provide historical or cultural settings. While the colour red may communicate energy and activity, green provides a calming and cooling effect (p. 58). While

the illustrations considered here are printed in black and white, that choice is in itself interesting. What happens to the representation of trees when colours are not present?

When considering the *size and scale* of visual elements, we must consider them relative to the objects surrounding them. Bigger elements draw the attention, whereas objects similar in size are understood as more closely connected. Larger objects are more likely to catch the eye and are perceived to be more important than smaller objects (p. 59). The *positioning* of visual elements in relation to their surroundings also carries the potential for meaning. Objects placed in the centre of the image are eye-catching and might receive more attention than those placed in the periphery. Placing an object or a character above or below another may also indicate relative power or dominance.

3.2.2 Elements of multimodal ensembles

Having first considered the basic elements of visual art, one should consider the multimodal elements that comprise the book, such as orientation, typography, borders, motifs, and symbols. According to Serafini (2014), these elements "add to the cohesiveness of multimodal ensembles and help bring unity to the work as a whole" (p. 59). When discussing *orientation*, we consider the formatting of the book. Horizontally oriented books may seem more lifelike and soothing, whereas vertically oriented books are more dynamic. Though these are the most common, books for small children are sometimes printed in a square shape, which makes them easier to handle, and communicates stability (p. 59). Orientation is also culturally dependent, reflecting reading direction. In some cases, an unusual orientation can also reflect the book's theme.

As written language is always presented through a form of *typography*, the selection of script can also communicate meaning. The font and arrangement of letters might vary in size, weight, colour, slant, and framing, adding to the meaning carried by the verbal narrative. Using *borders* to frame visual elements creates the effect of isolating or marking objects as separate from others. A border around an image sets it apart from the verbal text by presenting a "window to the world" (p. 60) and highlighting specific elements of the story. While borders set limits for the viewer, the absence of borders serves to draw the reader more closely in to the story. Borders can also be decorative or offer additional information. In his discussion of borders, Serafini (2014) also considers the use of negative

space, which can be used to highlight specific elements or create context. In *The Hobbit,* Tolkien makes frequent use of borders to surround his illustrations. This has consequences for the viewer's experience and will be discussed further in the analysis chapter.

The communication of meaning and themes in visual images is often carried through *motifs and symbols*. Serafini defines *motif* as "a recurring symbol used as a visual component that refers to a theme or expresses a particular meaning potential" (p. 61). The meaning of a motif or symbol is created through social and historical contexts, and the interpretation of these therefore requires prior knowledge. In my analysis, I also discuss intertextual references in the text and images, which are closely related to motifs and symbols. I will return to this in the next chapter.

3.2.3 Elements of visual grammar

An image is not a neutral or objective representation of the world, but rather an interpretation of the world by an author in a specific cultural context. In an analysis of visual images, it is therefore necessary to look at *how* meaning is communicated, not only what they present. In his discussion of the elements of visual grammar, Serafini relies on Michael Halliday's three metafunctions, which help organize the analysis of visual elements. These metafunctions are the representational, interpersonal, and compositional structures (Halliday, 1978, as cited in Serafini, 2014, p. 62). According to Serafini (2014, p. 62), "representational structures are used to convey meanings, construct narratives, and suggest conceptual relationships". He further identifies two types of representational structures common to visual images: narrative structures, which highlight the actions and behaviours communicated in the visuals, and conceptual structures, which highlight the classification and characteristics of objects and characters (p. 63).

The interpersonal structure of a visual image emphasises the communication between the visual and the viewer. An image's *perspective* shapes what the viewer sees by highlighting or omitting information. Perspective can here refer to the format and size of the illustration, but also to what type of vanishing point is used. The *gaze* of the characters in the image, whether meeting the viewer's eyes or not, shapes our connection to the characters and our attitudes towards them. The *distance* perceived to the object or character in the image affects the connection experienced by the viewer. The *point of view* also shapes our

interpretation with the image, by positioning us in relation to the objects and characters depicted, creating a sense of equality, inferiority, or power (Serafini, 2014, p. 64).

Compositional structures refer to the ways in which elements in a visual image relate to each other. Here, the *placement* of visual elements, either in focus or in the periphery, shape our interpretation of their importance and value. According to Serafini (2014, p. 65), objects placed in the top half of an image is often seen as "ideal", while the bottom half of the picture represents the "real". Cultures that read from left to right tend to read images the same way. The right side of an image might therefore suggest newness and possibility, as opposed to the left side, which represents the historic or outdated (p. 65). Though the subject of borders has already been discussed in relation to multimodal ensembles, Serafini also emphasises the technique of *framing* in relation to visual grammar. The use of framing draws our attention, and shapes what we see. Frames can also separate objects or highlight specific aspects of an image.

Serafini defines *modality* as "the degree to which we are to consider the realistic or fictional qualities of an image or multimodal ensemble" (2014, p. 66). A photography is considered high in modality, as it seems lifelike or realistic. Unrealistic, abstract, or fantastical images are low in modality, as it is further removed from our perceived reality. The highlighting of objects through *salience*, creates a hierarchical divide within the visual image, and draws the attention of the viewer. This highlighting can be done through relative size, colour, and contrast, or foregrounding of specific objects.

In my analysis of *The Hobbit*, I pay specific attention to four of the author's illustrations, which show the homes of the hobbits, elves, and men of the story. The elements of visual art, multimodal ensembles and visual grammar discussed here are useful in the analysis of these illustrations. As I have now given an overview of the method of literary analysis as well as the specific method I employ when analysing the illustrations, it is time to consider the connection between the theoretical framework and the methodology that shapes my thesis.

3.3 The Phyto-Analysis Map

In her article "Analysing Plant Representation in Children's Literature: The Phyto-Analysis Map", Guanio-Uluru (2021) presents an analytical framework for plant-oriented analysis of

literary texts. Presented as an antidote to the previously discussed plant-blindness, the *Phyto-Analysis* map holds a phytocentric orientation (p. 7). As discussed in chapter 2.3.3., the phytocentric position is the philosophy of growing beings, which includes plant perspective as well as the human and animal perspective (Marder, 2014, p. 248). Though the Phyto-Analysis map is structurally different, it builds on the previously mentioned *Nature in Culture Matrix* (Goga et. al. 2012), and its ecocentric perspective. The Phyto-Analysis map further employs a phytocentric perspective, by foregrounding plants and making them analytically visible.

The Phyto-Analysis Map is shaped like a flower (see Figure 1), with a centre, six petals with a stem and a root-system (Guanio-Uluru, 2021, p. 5). The flower's centre, and the starting point for analysis, is the previously mentioned phytocentric position, where plants are foregrounded as the objects of analysis (p. 6).

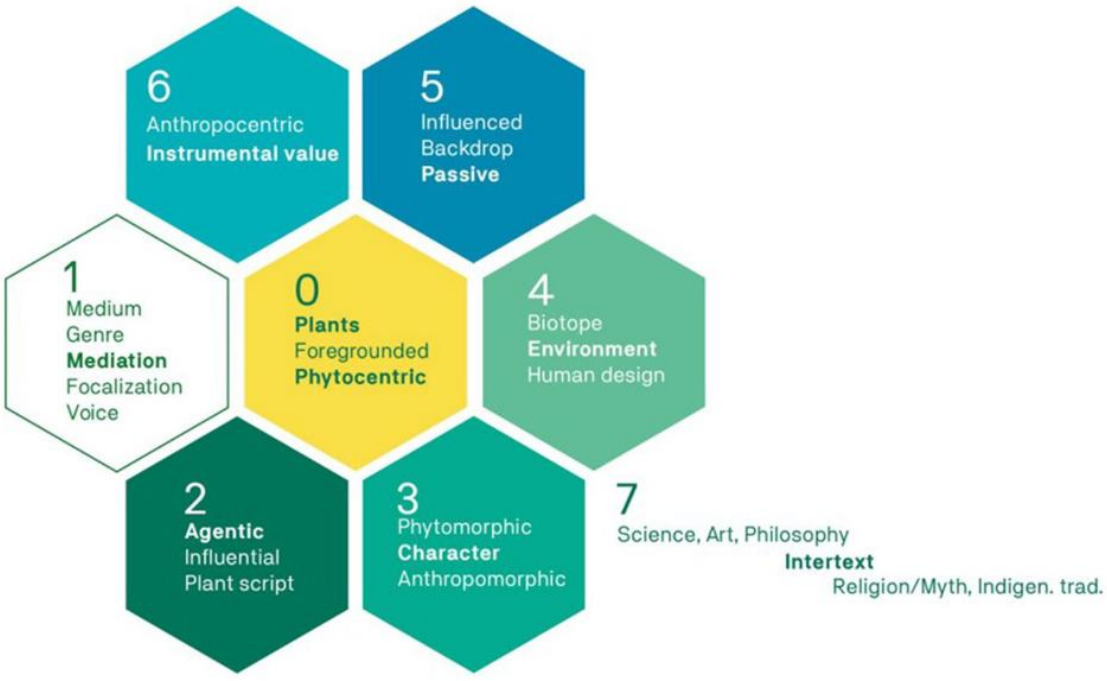

Figure 1 - The Phyto-Analysis Map (Guanio-Uluru, 2021, p. 6)

The first petal, *Mediation,* considers the form of the text, acknowledging the different ways in which medium and genre affects the representation of plants and plant relationships. Here, the mode of focalization and voice are also important factors, uncovering relationships with and attitudes to plants (p. 6-7). In my analysis, I emphasize

mediation, which plays a major role in uncovering the different peoples' attitudes towards trees. In my analysis, this is also closely related to Serafini's modes of multimodal ensembles (2014, p. 14). Different modalities communicate in different ways, which must also be considered in encounters with different representations of trees. An image will always present a tree in a different way than the verbal text will. In some cases, trees can also be presented in a contradictory way in image and verbal text, which leads to an additional complexity. Focalisation and point of view also affect the representation of trees. Do trees have a voice in the story, or are we simply hearing about them?

Guanio-Uluru further discusses how genre affects the representation of plants, emphasising the mythological heritage of fantasy literature, which often foreground plants. Here, she states, plants are often presented as active, with magical properties (Guanio-Uluru, 2021, p. 8). While this is certainly the case for Tolkien's later works, this is not necessarily the case for *The Hobbit.*

The second petal, *Agentic,* refers to Ryan's (2015) previously discussed distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic capacities of plans. Here, the representation of plant agency, and the types of actions performed by plants in the narrative can be discussed (Guanio-Uluru, 2021, p. 8-9). Here too, it is important to notice which actions the trees perform. Are these actions reflective of the way plants act in real life, through for instance pheromonal transmission, or are they performing "human" activities (Guanio-Uluru, 2021, p. 9)?

The third petal, *Character,* discusses the representations of plants in terms of behavioural and physical characteristics, whether plant-like (phytomorphic) or human-like (anthropomorphic) (p. 9-11). The anthropomorphic plant is not uncommon in children's literature, where we can find phyto-realistic plant characters with added human limbs. In such books, Guanio-Uluru states, the goal is for the child to recognize the plant while simultaneously identifying with the plant (p. 9). In *The Hobbit,* trees are presented as phytomorphic both in the verbal and visual text. There are instances, however, when trees are described as "walking", "leaning" and "listening", which seems to imply anthropomorphic qualities. These instances will be further discussed in the next chapter.

The fourth petal, *Environment,* discusses the location of plants in texts, whether placed in human-made environments, or parts of a larger biotope (p. 11). Here, plants can be foregrounded as characters, or presented as part of the landscape. While there are no plant

characters in *The Hobbit,* they still play a large part in the story. As I will discuss further in the next chapter, the forest of *Mirkwood* plays a role in both the verbal and the visual text and affect the characters of the story, and there are also varying degrees of human manipulation of the environment. While trees may be backgrounded in the story, landscape may still play a part in the theme, reflecting human emotions and states of mind (p. 13).

The fifth petal, *Passive,* studies the role of plants as background, landscape, or parts of scenery in stories, and opens for new readings also of apparently plant-less stories. Though seemingly of no importance to the narrative, plants may be crucial to the story, if only in a passive way (p. 14).

The sixth petal, *Instrumental Value,* discusses the use of plants by human and animal characters, as well as by the author. Here, the analytical focus is on the way plants are acted upon, or used for food, tools, scenery, or as symbols (p. 14). This also relates to my previous discussion of value systems, where the emphasis on plants for their instrumental value is closely linked to anthropocentrism, which places man at the centre.

The seventh petal, or the stem of the flower, *Intertexts,* places the text in a historical and cultural context, drawing upon previous works of art as well as indigenous traditions and their roles as motifs in children's texts. Here, I have chosen to focus on trees from a mythological perspective, and I use of Richard Folkard's book *Plant Lore, Legend, and Lyrics: Embracing the Myths, Traditions, Superstitions, and Folk-lore of the Plant Kingdom* (1884) for this purpose. In his book, Folkard summarizes myths and traditions associated with different plants. The fantasy genre, to which *The Hobbit* belongs, makes extensive use of myths, where plants often have specific symbolic meanings. In an analysis of the relationships of the peoples in *The Hobbit* to trees, it is therefore interesting to examine how these coincide with mythological ideas, and how these possibly affect the values presented.

In this thesis, the Phyto-Analysis map will be used for the analysis of the different peoples' relationships with trees in Tolkien's *The Hobbit,* as presented in text and illustrations. As Guanio-Uluru states, the map is intended as a starting point for an ecocentric approach, aiming to reveal "hidden" plants as well as provide an analytical framework (p. 16). When collecting quotes relating to trees from *The Hobbit,* I first organized them according to the petals in the Phyto-Analysis Map (See Appendix). This provided me with a helpful overview when writing the analysis. The Phyto-Analysis map further provides the

structure for the analysis chapter and has helped me reveal the attitudes to and relationships with trees in the book.

3.4 Limitations and validity

Before I start with the analysis, I will briefly explain what limitations this study may have. Firstly, I now make an analysis of the book's text and images based on my own observations. Such an analysis will naturally be shaped by the reader's (mine) cultural and social biases. In addition, it involves a certain risk that I may have overlooked important points. I have taken steps to counteract this by using clear structures and recognized methods in the analysis, in order to best ensure that the analysis is replicable. In the analysis of the verbal text, I have collected all the quotes related to trees in a table (see Appendix). These quotes are further sorted within the various categories in The Phyto Analysis Map (Guanio-Uluru, 2021). The aim of this table was both to create a structure that makes it easy for both me and the reader to find the quote, as well as to create a good basis for the analysis chapter.

Due to the size of the study, I have narrowed the scope, both in the selection of illustrations and of peoples. This makes it more uncertain whether my findings are transferable to the book in its entirety. Nevertheless, I believe that the selection I have made makes it possible to study the main peoples in the book in more depth, and in that way create a detailed picture of these peoples' relationship to the trees around them. The peoples that have been chosen are also the ones the book follows most closely, which I believe makes the findings relevant to the book as a whole.

The theoretical framework for this study, ecocriticism, and plant studies, are both politically motivated forms of analysis. This also means that several basic perceptions of nature underlie the analysis and the motivation for conducting such a study. I believe that such studies are important in revealing the attitudes that our literature promotes regarding nature, plants, and climate. The Phyto Analysis Map (Guanio-Uluru, 2021), which I use in the analysis, is a relatively new analytical tool. I believe the fact that there are few previous studies that have used this tool to uncover how trees and other plants are presented in the literature, makes the study even more interesting, as it can serve as an example for further studies.

4. Analysis

In this chapter I answer the thesis statement: *What relationships do the different peoples have with trees in Tolkien's The Hobbit, and how are these relationships communicated in the novel's text and illustrations?*

This chapter is divided into four main parts. The first part discusses *mediation* in *The Hobbit* (Tolkien, 2011), and discusses how the book's form, narration and use of visual images affect the presentation of trees. In The Phyto-Analysis Map (Guanio-Uluru, 2021), mediation serves as the start of an analysis, and since I am discussing the book here in general, I choose to set aside a separate subchapter for this. The next three subchapters deal with each of the peoples in the order in which they appear in the book: hobbits, elves, and humans. Within each of these chapters, I begin with an analysis of the illustration, before considering each of the six remaining petals in The Phyto Analysis Map: tree agency, characterization, environment, silent backdrop, instrumental value and intertexts. Here I discuss both excerpts from the book's verbal text and discuss the findings from the image analysis. In this way, I seek to uncover how these peoples relate to the trees around them in their homes, and which values they convey through speech and behaviour. The locations and representations of trees in the illustrations of these sites are a valuable source of information in this analysis.

In my reading of *The Hobbit*'s verbal text (Tolkien, 2011), I also developed a schematic overview to keep track of quotes from the book that specifically referred to trees. Here, I first arranged the quotes according to the people and area they referenced, before I sorted them by the petals in The Phyto-Analysis Map. This helped to make the work with the analysis more transparent and structured. This table is attached to the thesis (see Appendix).

4.1 Mediation in Tolkien's *The Hobbit*

According to Guanio-Uluru (2021), the starting point of an analysis of the representations of plants in literary texts should be *mediation,* considering the form of the text. In this section, I will focus on mediation in the book as a whole, to see how the book's form affects the presentation of trees. I have divided this chapter into two parts, where I first focus on the narrator's voice, and then on the visual composition of the book.

4.1.1 Mediation through narration

The verbal text of *The Hobbit* is narrated in the third person, following Bilbo's story with an outside perspective, though also communicating the thoughts and feelings of the protagonist. This type of narration is described by Nikolajeva & Scott as a limited omniscient verbal narrator (2006, p. 123). There are, however, a few instances in which the narrator addresses the reader directly, thereby applying a second-person point of view. Though the narrator seems mostly omniscient, he or she does in some cases admit to not knowing, such as in the meeting between Bilbo and Gollum, when the narrator states "I don't know where he came from, nor who or what he was" (Tolkien, 2011, p. 68). The narrator's point of view seems, in other words, to be variable, though mostly keeping at a distance from the narrated events.

The question of narration is addressed in Tolkien's later *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, where he describes Bilbo's writing of his previous adventures. Here, as I discussed in Chapter 1, Bilbo is described as an unreliable narrator, at first lying about his story to place himself in a better light, pretending that Gollum gave him the ring freely.

The illustrations analysed here were drawn by Tolkien for *The Hobbit*, presenting the environments he envisioned for the story. The drawings here are selected from the eleven drawings published with the original story (Carpenter, 2000, p. 203). The illustrations in the novel do, due to their nature, provide a more fixed perspective than the verbal text. In the illustration accompanying the end chapter of the story, Bilbo is pictured in the hall of his home (Tolkien, 2011, p. 277). Here, the point of view is not that of the main character but provides an overview of the situation from a neutral perspective. This is the only illustration in the book that shows the protagonist, which suggests that the other pictures in the book could be from Bilbo's point of view. The illustrations seldom picture living creatures, the exceptions being a few men in a boat in the illustration of Lake-Town (p. 177) and trolls in the forest (p. 37). The absence of people is in itself curious, such as in the illustration of the Elvenking's Gate (p. 160). In these cases, it is hard to imagine, if we are to trust the verbal narrative, an instance in which the main character would be able to see the situation as presented.

If we accept Bilbo as the narrator of the verbal text, another interpretation could be that he drew the illustrations according to his memory upon his return to Hobbiton. In that

case, the lack of people in the drawings could be explained as an attempt to convey the environment rather than the people. In this case, the drawing of Bilbo in his home (Fig. 2) could be considered a self-portrait. Though it is interesting to visualize Bilbo writing and drawing the story, he is, of course, a fictional character, whether implied to be the narrator or not. Another problem that arises when discussing the narration of the story, is the way in which trees are presented. Though we see several different people interacting with trees here, they are all filtered through the perspectives of the narrator. We must assume that the narrator's perspectives on trees influence the way in which the peoples' relationships with trees are communicated. The book is also written by a human being, which gives rise to an interesting question: can a human being present trees in a way that is not influenced by anthropocentric attitudes? This would be an interesting topic for further research, though far too large for this thesis.

4.1.2 Mediation through visual composition

Another important factor to discuss in relation to mediation, is the ways in which the medium and genre affect the representations of trees. Tolkien's illustrations are not photorealistic representations of trees. They are drawn in black and white, and stylistically simplified. The book and image format are also limited to a flat, two-dimensional presentation, which differs from our real-life interactions with living trees. Serafini's concept of *modality,* or the perceived realism of the illustration, is also relevant here (Serafini, 2014, p. 66). The trees in these illustrations are low in modality: drawn in a simplistic style and rarely showing single leaves.

The absence of colour highlights this impression further. The colours we usually associate with trees, green in spring and summer, and red and golden tones in autumn, are absent in all the illustrations. The black and white rendering contributes to the trees being perceived as more static and inactive. Instead of showing leaves and branches in the illustrations, the trees are sometimes drawn as an outline filled with black colouring, thereby simplifying their representation.

Serafini further highlights the positioning of visual objects as an important element in the analysis of visual images (2014, p. 59). Here it is interesting to observe that trees play a significant role in all the illustrations in our analysis. Not only are trees present in all the

illustrations, but they are also often placed in the middle of the picture, so that they are the first to meet our gaze. According to Serafini, this positioning serves to give the objects more attention, thereby highlighting their significance. In the illustration of Mirkwood (Fig. 3) and The Elvenking's Gate (Fig. 4), the trees play particularly large roles, something they also do in the verbal text when the action takes place there. In the illustrations of The Hall at Bag-End (Fig. 2) and Lake-Town (Fig. 5), on the other hand, the trees are hardly mentioned in the verbal text. Nevertheless, they are present, and very visible in the illustrations. This is especially prominent in the illustration of Bag-End, where the trees have a centred position, and are thus the first thing to draw the gaze.

The version of *The Hobbit* that I am studying here is vertically oriented. However, all the illustrations studied here are horizontally oriented. The illustration by Mirkwood (Fig. 3) is placed in the book's preface, and placed sideways, so that the reader must turn the book over to study the picture. It is reasonable to assume that this step has been taken because the image itself is horizontally oriented, and thus must be placed this way for the reader to observe the details. Nevertheless, this choice leads to a greater distance between the reader and the illustration, since the visual image does not become a natural extension of the text, but a separate element that the reader must take steps to choose to look at. The fact that the illustration is not placed in the story itself, but in the preface, also contributes to this distancing. When I as a reader arrive in Mirkwood, I must first know that there is an illustration, then turn to the preface and then turn the book over to observe it.

The illustrations of the Elvenking's gate (Fig. 4) and Lake-Town (Fig. 5), on the other hand, are placed in the "right" place in the book's narrative, making them more accessible to the reader. The illustration of The Hall at Bag-End (Fig. 2) is located at the very end of the book, which is an interesting choice considering the story. The picture depicts Bilbo in his home, and it will initially be reasonable to think that it belongs to the beginning of the book rather than at the end. This location, and its implications, will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

In an analysis of how a book's mediation affects the representation of trees, we must not overlook the fact that the book itself is a product made of trees. This analysis addresses the relationship of the different peoples to the trees around them, but the medium itself also says something about our culture's relationship to trees. In this case, the tree is always

present in our reading of the book. As readers, we also suffer from plant blindness (Wandersee & Schussler, 1999, p. 82) because we tend to forget just this.

4.2 The Hobbits in Hobbiton

In the following chapters, I present my analysis of the hobbits', and mainly Bilbo's, relationship with trees. Though Bilbo is initially presented in Hobbiton, a hobbit settlement, the story takes Bilbo out of his surroundings and into new and unknown territories. Much can be drawn from Bilbo's interactions with trees throughout the story. Here, I will focus on the relationship between trees and hobbits in their home – Hobbiton. The illustration of Bilbo in his home at "The Hall at Bag-End" (Fig. 2) will also be analysed here.

4.2.1 The Hall at Bag End – Picture analysis

In this illustration, we see Hobbiton from inside Bilbo's home. The door is open, allowing the viewer to look out at the road. Bilbo is placed in the lower middle part of the drawing, smoking his pipe. His home is portrayed as having round walls, decked with wood, and filled with wooden objects. Through the round, open door we can see two juniper-like trees placed on either side of the porch. These trees stand in what looks like square flowerpots. Down the road too, in the distance, similar trees are visible along the road, and a few trees grow in the field on the right. The trees on Bilbo's front porch are clearly placed there for aesthetics, planted in pots, or uprooted from somewhere else and placed there. The trees along the road too seem planted, as they appear to grow evenly spaced apart at the bottom of the hill. When it comes to the trees in the field and in the distance, however, it is harder to tell.

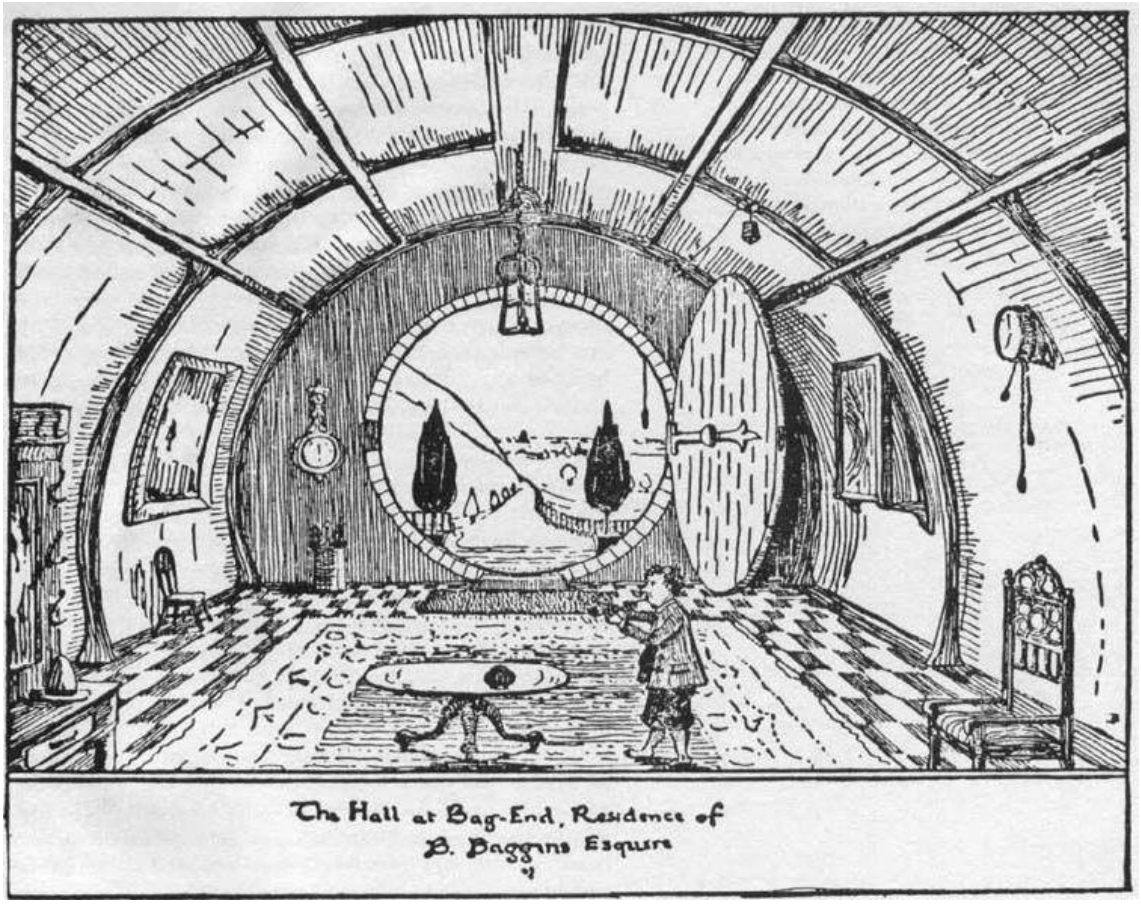

Figure 2 - The Hall at Bag End. *Illustration by J. R. R. Tolkien in* The Hobbit (Tolkien, 2011, p. 277)

The illustration of "The Hall at Bag End" (Tolkien, 2011, p. 277) is drawn in black on a white background. The drawing is highly detailed, comprised mainly of thin lines with occasionally larger blots of black or white. There are both organic and geometrical shapes present, as well as suggestions of different textures. The wooden texture of the interior is presented through parallel lines and white spaces, suggesting shadow and light. The lines also draw the viewer's gaze towards the centre of the picture, where the open door shows the road circling around a hill in the distance. Though the inside of Bilbo's home is highly detailed, the outside shows a space that is more blank, only interrupted by the two large trees on the porch. These trees are the most highly coloured objects in the drawing and are the first objects that meet the gaze of the reader, both due to their placement and the contrast they create to the blank background.

According to Serafini (2014, p. 57), circles are often associated with comfort and continuity. As circles are prominent in Bilbo's home, this might be a nod to his personality and preference for comfort. The scale of the interior is also interesting. Most of the interior

seems appropriate for the hobbit, though the door and the trees outside are unusually large. This suggests a greater emphasis on these objects and draws the attention of the viewer. The door might be large to create a better view of the outside, or suggest that Bilbo is, deep down, longing for adventure. The placement of the door, above Bilbo in the illustration could also be seen in light of Serafini's compositional structures (2014, p. 65), which suggests that objects placed in the top of the picture present the ideal, and objects placed below represent the real or concrete. In this illustration then, the door and it's outside might present the dream of adventure, and the inside, with its furniture and comfortable carpets and present Bilbo's reality.

It is also interesting here to notice that the trees are placed above Bilbo in the picture and appear larger than him. If we look at this as a representation of an ideal, as Serafini (2014, p. 65) points out, it can open for interesting interpretations. One possible interpretation is to look at the form of the trees, and the fact that they are planted and arranged in a certain way, as an ideal for Bilbo. In this image, there is much to suggest that the hobbits like order and structure, and it is reasonable to think that this is transferable to their view of the trees around them.

As a part of the book, the illustration of "The Hall at Bag-End" is a part of a multimodal ensemble, and the placement of the drawing within the book should therefore be considered. The version of *The Hobbit* studied here places the illustration on page 277, at the very end of the story. Considered along with the verbal text then, this might be a portrayal of Bilbo after having arrived home from his travels. Though the book is vertically oriented, the illustration is printed horizontally, so that the reader has to turn the book on its side to study the drawing. This, does, I have previously noted, add a layer of distance between the viewer and the illustration. The border surrounding the drawing also sets limits for the viewer, making the scene seem lined up and artificial, rather than organic.

Another element that should be mentioned here is the hand-written title below the illustration. The title reads "The Hall at Bag-End, Residence of B. Baggins Esquire". For the reader of the book, this title seems at best redundant, as there is little doubt of who and what the drawing portrays. If it was intended to be placed in the front of the book, however, this would make more sense. The title also gives the illustration the appearance of an

historical document, which fits the narrative suggested in Tolkien's later Lord of The Rings trilogy (Tolkien, 1986, 1989, 2009), that the story, or a version of it, was written by Bilbo.

"The Hall at Bag End" (p. 277) is the only illustration that shows Bilbo, while the other drawings show the various places he travels through. It is plausible, within the story, that Bilbo drew the various environments, also adding a self-portrait at the end of the book. The question of who drew the illustration also affects the reader's impression of the picture's modality. This is by no means a picture that pretends to be a photograph, but rather appears as a portrait-like attempt to show Bilbo situated in his home. It is believable however, that Bilbo drew or had the picture drawn specifically for the purposes of adding it to his book. It becomes, in a sense, both high and low in modality. Though the story is fantastical and not believable in our universe, and the illustration seems at best an impression of the events, it is highly believable that the drawing exists within the story.

When looking at the interpersonal structures of the image (Halliday, 1978, as cited in Serafini, 2014, p. 62), the emphasis in on the communication between the image and the viewer. Here, perspective, gaze, distance, and point of view become important elements. The presentation of trees, and Bilbo's interaction with the trees in the picture thus come into focus. As previously mentioned, this is one of the few visual images in the book that portrays characters. Bilbo is in the picture, looking towards the left side of the illustration. Bilbo looks neither at us nor at the trees in the picture, but at an indefinite point. Nevertheless, he interacts with trees here, as he seems to be busy lighting his pipe, which is presumably made of wood. That this is his focus, says something about his relationship to trees, as it is first and foremost the usefulness of the trees that is promoted in the picture. Bilbo's interaction with the pipe can also be seen as an example of narrative structures in the illustration (Serafini, 2014, p. 63), where emphasis is placed on the character's actions and behaviours. Another example of interaction with the surroundings is seen in the planted trees that are located outside his door. It is reasonable to assume that Bilbo has planted these himself, which may indicate that he not only thinks trees are useful, but also decorative. At the same time, he does not want the trees to grow wild, but to be placed where he wants.

As viewers, we are located some distance away from both Bilbo and the trees in the picture. This means that we get an overview of the situation, but that we are also further distanced from the story. We are not invited to participate, neither by gaze nor proximity,

but are given a presentation of the situation. Our point of view places us slightly above Bilbo, which might be an intentional nod to the height of the character. We are still not placed so high that we directly look down on Bilbo, but high enough that he is portrayed as small. Not only are the Hobbits small in size, but they are also small in in relation to the outside world. In the verbal text the reader learns that Bilbo and the hobbits are unfamiliar with the reality outside Hobbiton, mostly preoccupied with their own affairs. Bilbo, does, in a sense, represent the child in the story, smaller both in relation to the reader and his world.

4.2.2 Square pots and round doors - Tree agency in Hobbiton

The first meeting with the Hobbit Bilbo takes place in his garden. Standing by his "perfectly round door like a porthole" (p. 3), Bilbo smokes tobacco from an "enormous long wooden pipe that reached nearly down to his woolly toes" (p. 5). This idyllic scene introduces the reader to life in *The Shire,* where hobbits live in what is known as *hobbit-holes:* comfortable underground houses, well-furnished and cared for.

In the descriptions in the verbal text, there are no actions performed by trees themselves, and no mentions of plant agency of any kind. The important capacities of trees are, to the hobbits, extrinsic: their value as useful objects. Nearly all of Bilbo's interactions with trees are in the form of wooden objects: his hobbit-hole is furnished with wood; he smokes a wooden pipe and keeps beer in wooden barrels. Only a few places are trees spoken of in their natural form, and in these situations the trees are still passive. When Bilbo speaks of how axes "are used for trees" (p. 21), he aims to portray hobbits as peaceful and traditional. This also reveals the hobbits' view of trees: useful objects to be cut down and made into something else.

When Bilbo throughout his travels dreams of his home, he states "I wish I was at home in my nice hole by the fire, with the kettle just beginning to sing!" (p. 30). When he dreams of his home, his focus is on the usefulness of wood: how it can be used to light a fire to provide warmth. This view on trees changes little throughout the story, and the representations of trees and his relationship to them do not differ much between the first and last chapter. On one occasion however, Bilbo speaks of wanting to "hear the pine-trees and the waterfalls" (p. 16). This could, in one sense, be interpreted as granting the trees intrinsic capacities, the ability to make sound. A more plausible explanation, however, is that

it is a reference to the effects of the wind. The overwhelming majority of the trees and wooden objects in the illustration seems to be manipulated in some way by the hobbits, either made into wooden objects such as chairs and clocks, or carefully placed to achieve a certain effect. The illustration seems therefore to support the text rather than contradict it, showing the hobbits' valuing of trees as instrumental.

4.2.3 An abundance of Junipers – Tree characterization in Hobbiton

In Hobbiton, trees are not described by their behavioural characteristics, and few comments are made on their physical appearance. Here, the reader must rely on the illustration for further descriptions. As previously mentioned, the there are two trees placed on the doorstep of Bilbo's house in large flowerpots. These are similar to junipers in appearance, growing thick and pointed, seemingly well-tended to. These two trees are coloured in with black, while the trees in the distance are not coloured. This seems to reflect the main style of the black and white drawing, where objects in front are more distinctive and carrying more detail than those in the back. The two trees on the porch easily catches the eye, since they are placed in the centre, and more heavily coloured (in black) than the rest of the picture. Bilbo himself, who is placed a little to the right and below centre, is not as easily distinguishable in this illustration. While the verbal text focuses on Bilbo then, the visual text seems to focus on these two trees. These two junipers are never mentioned in the verbal text, and their distinction in the illustration is therefore particularly interesting.

One possible reason why the trees are emphasized in the illustration may be to put them in relation to the hobbits. The trees have few characteristics, and as mentioned are clearly useful to the hobbits. This underlines the impression that the hobbits actively manipulate their surroundings to facilitate their way of life. Such an interpretation also suggests that the hobbits have an anthropocentric value system, and actively shape the environment to suit their lifestyle. Based on this interpretation, trees are perhaps taken for granted, and it is thus not surprising that trees are so little emphasized in the verbal text, and that hobbit-made objects of wood dominate both the text and the illustration.

4.2.4 Tilled earth and felled trees – Environment and Biotope

Bilbo's home is an especially luxurious hobbit-hole and is described as being in a hill (often referred to as "The Hill") with meadows beyond and a slope leading down to the river (p. 3). The reader is not introduced to any other plants in the first chapter, and might therefore assume that the landscape surrounding Bilbo's home is relatively treeless. From Bilbo's window, however, he can see "the wood beyond The Water" (p. 16), and the reader learns that hobbits are able to move quietly in woods (p. 32) and that "axes are used for trees" (p. 21). This seems to suggest that Hobbiton is a farmed land, with woods not far away. The woods are not described here, and it is hard to know whether these have been planted by the hobbits or not. Though these trees are described in the plural, referred to as woods rather than trees, the reader does not know much about their biotope. The overall impression seems to be that Hobbiton is *made,* farmed, and cultivated by the hobbits through generations. This impression is further emphasised in the illustration, by the previously discussed planted junipers. Except from the trees on his porch, the trees along the road, and the few trees in the distant fields, the surrounding area seems to consist of farmland and meadows. There is no sign of wilderness in the nature of the illustration, which seems ordered and intended by hobbit hands, rather than developing on its own accord.

4.2.5 The shape of the Land - Trees as Silent Backdrop

As underlined in the previous sections, trees do not take centre stage in Hobbiton. They serve rather as a carefully cultivated backdrop. One mention of trees stands out however: When Bilbo finally returns to his home in the last chapter of the book, he speaks of the nature surrounding his home:

> As all things come to an end, even this story, a day came at last when they were in sight of the country where Bilbo had been born and bred, where the shapes of the land and of the trees were as well known to him as his hands and toes. (Tolkien, 2011, p. 273).

Here, Bilbo does not think of trees for their usefulness, but rather as the surroundings of his home. Though he speaks of "knowing" the trees, his interpretation of them seems static: he

knows them as backdrops to his life, not important in themselves, but rather as integral objects to life in Hobbiton. Trees are part of the scenery for Bilbo, mentioned because they signify his home. This sense of static, or changelessness, serves here to emphasize Bilbo's growth and change. He is a different person, but to him the trees have not changed. This seems counterintuitive, though, as the trees must indeed have changed as seasons pass in Bilbo's year away. The passage seems to imply that Bilbo see the trees of Hobbiton as an unchanging backdrop to his life, thus overlooking the ways in which their intrinsic abilities lead them to change as time goes by.

4.2.6 Of walking sticks and axes – the Instrumental Value of Trees

As the predominant way in which trees are presented in Hobbiton is in the form of wooden objects, they seem to be mostly valued for their instrumental usefulness. The people of the Shire must, first of all, have a strong woodworking tradition, judging by the interior of Bilbo's house. Some people, Bilbo's father Bungo included, seems to have a certain affinity for woodwork, having originally built the house under The Hill for his wife Belladonna Took (p. 4). Bilbo's home is described as having "a perfectly round door like a porthole", "…with panelled walls", "polished chairs", "lots and lots of pegs for hats and coats" (p.3). Bilbo is also mentioned as having a clock on his mantelpiece and beer barrels in the cellar (p.16), and an important scene at the end of the book describes the theft of Bilbo's furniture by his cousins "the Sackville-Bagginses" (p. 274). It turns out to be difficult for Bilbo to get his possessions returned, and in the end, he resorts to buying them back. We may safely assume that much of Bilbo's wealth lies in items originally made from wood, such as furniture and books.

Another way hobbits make use of trees is as weapons or tools. The reader learns early on of Bilbo's distant relative, Bullroarer, who "charged the ranks of the goblins of Mount Gram in the Battle of the Green Fields, and knocked their king Gol-firnbul's head clean off with a wooden club" (p. 18). This is not a typical example of hobbit behaviour, and it is clear that Bullroarer belongs to the eccentric Took family, which Bilbo also does on his mother's side. Bilbo is, at least at first sight, more likely to be seen with a walking stick than a club. The Took family is however known for doing "[a]nything from climbing trees to visiting elves…" (p. 7), something which is seen as outrageously strange behaviour from a hobbit.

Whether Took or not, though, hobbits seem to use wooden objects for nearly everything in their day-to-day life, preferring to fill their homes with wooden furniture and decorations.

The illustration of Bilbo in his home (Fig. 2) shows a variety of wooden objects surrounding him. In fact, the well-furnished home seems only to contain very few objects which do not appear to have been made from wood; that being Bilbo's clothes, hat, and carpet, which one can assume is made from cloth, and some of the hangings in the roof, which might have been made of some sort of metal. Bilbo's perhaps most prized possession, his wooden pipe which he carries everywhere, is also pictured here. The verbal and visual text do not differ much in the representations of Bilbo's home. Though not all objects mentioned in the verbal text are pictured, the impression is much the same, and underline the way that trees are represented by way of their instrumental value to the hobbits.

4.2.7 Intertextual elements in Hobbiton

Most of the intertextual references in the text are found here in allusions to fairy tales, which is a classic feature of the fantasy genre. In this section, I would rather focus on references to trees, as that is the focus of the thesis.

When describing the fireworks he saw in his childhood, Bilbo states: "They used to go up like great lilies and snapdragons and laburnums of fire and hang in the twilight all evening!" (p. 7). This seems to be the only tree-related simile used by Bilbo, and a very literal one. Bilbo does also, as previously mentioned, speak of using axes for trees (p. 21) instead of fighting, and speaks of climbing trees (p. 7) as something that only happens in strange stories. These in-speech references to trees tell us much about the ways of the hobbits, who prefer the former to the latter. As previously mentioned, the illustration of *The Hall at Bag-End* (Fig. 2) shows two juniper-like trees on Bilbo's front porch. In his 1884 book *Plant Lore, Legend, and Lyrics: Embracing the Myths, Traditions, Superstitions, and Folk-lore of the Plant Kingdom,* Richard Folkard describes the historical traditions surrounding the Juniper:

> The Juniper has always been looked upon as a protective tree; its powerful odour is stated to defeat the keen scent of the hound, and the hunted hare at the last extremity will seek and find a safe retreat in the cover of its branches. It sheltered the prophet Elijah from the persecutions of King Ahab, and we read in 1 Kings xix., 4,

> that the prophet lay and slept “under a Juniper-tree.” According to a tradition common in Italy, the Virgin Mary fled for safety with the infant Jesus, pursued by the relentless soldiers of King Herod. Whilst on their road, the Brooms and the Chick-Peas began to rustle and crackle, and by this noise betrayed the fugitives. The Flax bristled up. Happily for her, Mary was near a Juniper: the hospitable tree opened it branches as arms, and enclosed the Virgin and Child within their folds, affording them a secure hiding-place. (Folkard, 2014[1884], p. 396).

The presence of Junipers on Bilbo’s doorstep is then perhaps a nod to this idea, a protection against the evil of the world outside. The idea of succour, receiving help in distress, could be a parallel to the dwarves finding Bilbo and asking him for help, as well as Bilbo’s longing for home on his travels.

4.3 Woodelves in Mirkwood

The Woodelves are presented in two main locations: the forest of Mirkwood, where most of them live their lives, and the halls of the elven king. Though much of the narrative in this first chapter featuring elves is not centred around the actions of the elves, it does present their surroundings and home, Mirkwood. It also contains a few descriptions of elves feasting while on a hunt. Aiming to answer the thesis question, this chapter will focus on the scenes where the elves are present, though descriptions of Mirkwood will be considered for comparison. Among Tolkien’s illustrations for *The Hobbit,* his drawing of *Mirkwood* (see Figure 3) and *The Elvenking’s Gate* (see Figure 4) present the environments here and will be analysed together with the verbal text in this subchapter.

4.3.1 Mirkwood – picture analysis

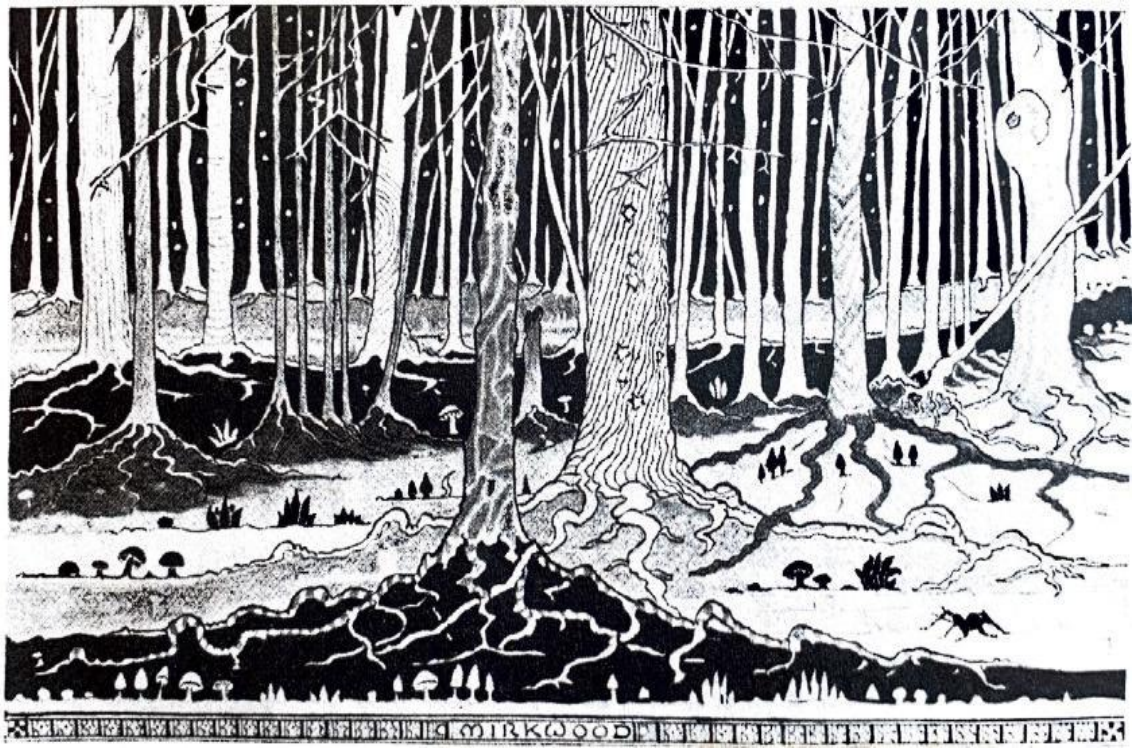

Figure 3 - Mirkwood. Illustration by J. R. R. Tolkien in The Hobbit (Tolkien, 2011, p. ix)

The illustration of Mirkwood (Fig. 3) shows a black and white drawing of the forest, growing thick and close with roots overlapping each other. Though the tree trunks take up much of the picture, the roots are in the foreground, depicting perhaps a hobbit's view of the tall forest. There are few branches and no leaves in the picture, and few other growing things, except mushrooms and the outlines of small bushes. A shape in the lower right side of the illustration can be interpreted as a spider, an animal known to inhabit the forest.

In this illustration, Tolkien uses contrasts between white and black in his representation of the trees. The trees occupy most of the picture, interrupted only by a black background with white dots, which can be assumed to be a starry sky or some other light in the distance. The trees are outlined by black lines, but Tolkien also uses different patterns to emphasize the texture of the trees. One of the largest trees, positioned in the middle also has carvings reminiscent of stars. The verbal text does not mention these, but it can possibly be a trace of the elves, who we know live in the forest. In this illustration, the absence of colour gives a feeling of darkness and shade, and the black background contributes to the sense of gloom. The contrast between the white and the black is also used to distinguish between what is close and what is further away, through alternating shading.

The size and scale of the elements in the illustration can be somewhat difficult to determine, as none of the characters are portrayed. However, there are differences in the thickness and width of the trees. The tree with carvings, which is placed in the middle of the picture, is about twice as thick as the other trees. The size and location of this tree, as well as the stars carved in the bark, contribute to its appearance as an important tree. This also makes it particularly interesting, considering that it is not mentioned in the verbal text. The spider, which is not immediately obvious in the picture, could be one of the giant spiders the hobbits meet later in the story. If it is, it is reasonable to assume that the trees are much larger than what they initially appear to be. If we interpret it this way, we must at the same time accept that the various fungi, tufts of grass and bushes in the picture are also larger than in real life.

Another interesting element in this illustration is the title, which is located below the image. The font is written in thick and dominant block letters, surrounded by a frame, with repetitive patterns on both sides. According to Serafini (2014), frames help to draw our attention to specific elements, as well as to delimit these elements from other objects (p. 60). In this case, there is both a frame around the illustration itself, and a frame around the title. The title thus does not appear as part of the illustration itself but makes the illustration reminiscent of a work of art in a museum. As I have discussed before, this is a move Tolkien uses in most of the illustrations in the book, and which helps to emphasize the impression of the book as a historical document. Another way Tolkien uses frames in this illustration is through negative space, the absence of colours and objects (Serafini, 2014, p. 61). This is actively used here to highlight individual elements, and at the same time to create an abstract context where viewers must fill in information themselves.

To gain better insight into how the communication between the illustration and the viewer takes place, it is useful to address the interpersonal structures in the image, which are communicated through perspective, gaze, relative distance, and point of view (Serafini, 2014, p. 64). In this illustration, there are no characters present, so the viewer does not know if s/he is observed. Basically, it is only the spectator who actively observes, and no one who actively addresses the viewer. This evokes a sense of distance from the situation, and if we see it in connection with the frames around the image, it is thus experienced as "only" an image of a landscape. At the same time, it evokes a feeling of loneliness, which is underlined

by the verbal text, where Bilbo and the dwarves feel abandoned and lost in the great forest. The spider, who here seems to only care about its own affairs, appears as threatening. The same applies to the trees, which have large and prominent roots, which makes them appear as the owners of the place. The stars engraved in the middle tree draws the gaze in, and in a way, this can also be interpreted as a message to the observer: this is not your place, and you are not welcome.

The perspective and point of view also situates the observer as smaller than the trees, emphasizing a sense of inferiority in comparison to them. The tops of the trees are not visible, and only some of the branches are. In other words, the viewer becomes small in the face of this mighty forest. The fact that the roots are so visible in the picture helps to enhance this experience. These roots are detailed and appear strong and uncompromising. The viewer becomes not only small in the face of the mighty trees, but also weak in the face of the roots.

I have previously discussed the location of the middle tree, and how its central location in the picture emphasizes its importance. Serafini (2014) also discusses placement as part of the compositional structures of images, or the ways in which the elements in the image relate to each other. Here he places particular emphasis on the fact that objects placed at the top of the image appear as an «ideal», while objects further down often represent the real or concrete (p. 65). In this illustration, the trees occupy the entire height of the image: the upper part shows only tree trunks, a few branches, and the black background. The lower part is largely occupied by the roots of the trees, but also by fungi, a few tufts of grass and a spider. The trees are thus both connected to the ideal, through their branches and height, and to reality, through prominent and clear roots. The trees here show two sides of themselves: the ideal, beautiful, and peaceful tree trunk, but also the threatening and dominant roots that do not allow other things to grow.

The modality of the image also conveys meaning. The image carries clear stylistic features, especially through the curved lines that are consistent throughout the illustration. This is not a realistic recreation of a forest, as, for example, a photograph would be. The absence of colours is also an element here that contributes to the low modality of the image. Although the trees here are detailed, many of the elements are only outlines and shadows. The spider on the right is basically just a spot with five legs, and interpretation is required to

see it as a creature. The title and framing, which, as I previously pointed out, contributes to an experience of this as a historical document, has a complex impact on the modality of the image. On the one hand, it demands to be accepted as a representation of reality: this *is* Mirkwood. On the other hand, it distances us from the setting, as we are made aware that the image is a representation, not a place we are invited to.

The trees are very dominant in this illustration, which gives an impression of dominance on the part of the trees. At the same time, the engraved stars in the middle of the picture hint that there are other actors in the area. In the next subchapter, I analyse another illustration that depicts a nearby area, namely *The Elvenking's Gate* (Fig. 4), which is where the elves live.

4.3.2 The Elvenking's gate – picture analysis

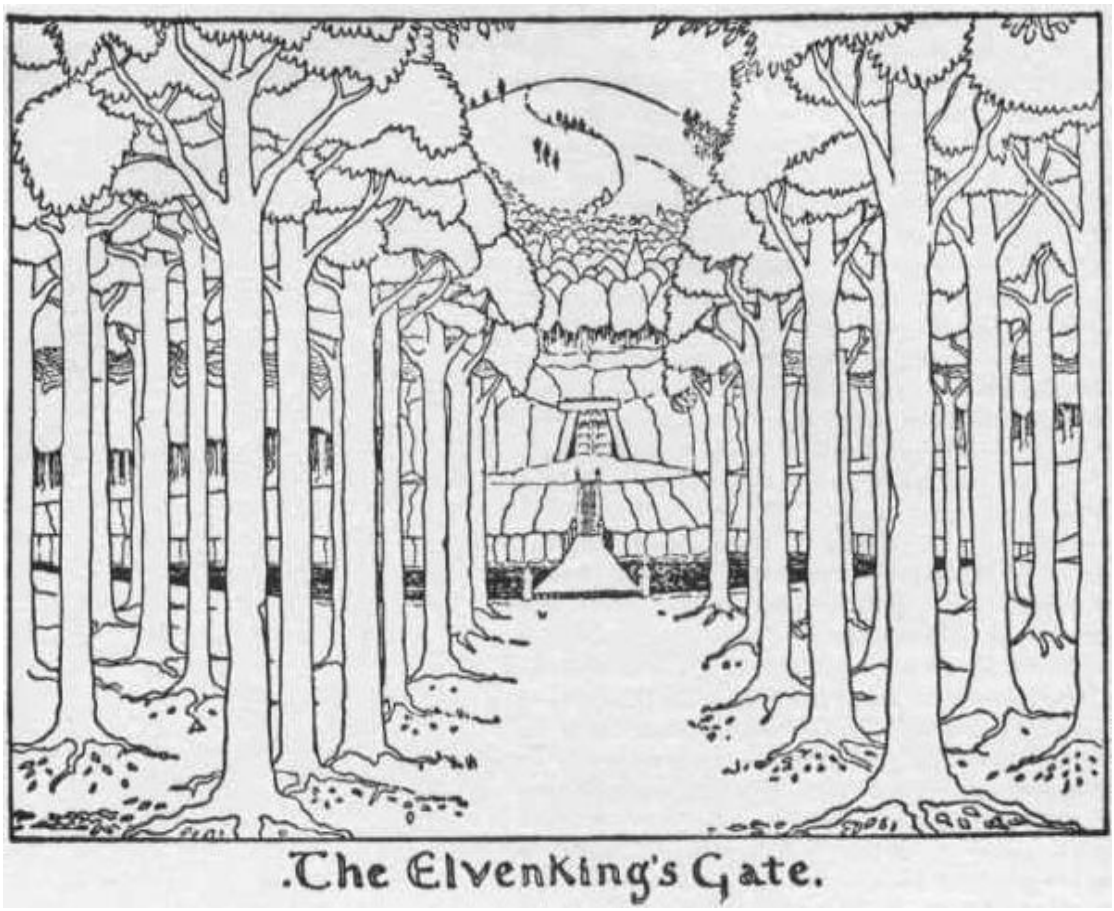

Figure 4 - The Elvenking's Gate *Illustration by J. R. R. Tolkien in* The Hobbit (Tolkien, 2011, p. 160)

The illustration of "The Elvenking's Gate" (Fig. 4) shows a path leading straight between tall trees, over a wooden bridge and up to the doors of the king's halls. There is a striking

difference between this picture and the illustration of Mirkwood (Fig. 3). Here, the wood seems ordered, growing in straight lines and not crossing the path. Where the Mirkwood-illustration is dark, this drawing is lighter, showing the open sky between the trees. The wood is no longer all-consuming, and the grass-covered hill in the distance creates a feeling of hopefulness – a light and aery place with few trees. Where we were previously in the territory of the trees, we are now in that of the elves.

The illustration is largely drawn in long, continuous, straight lines, and repeated shapes. This contributes to an experience of calm, which in turn is enhanced by the active use of negative space. Most of the shapes in the picture are only drawn with an outline, and very few details. The trees are very similar, and placed at equal distances from each other, which makes them appear as a repetitive pattern. Apart from something reminiscent of leaves at the foot of the trees, there are no details on the ground here. The picture is, like the other illustrations I analyse, not coloured. While the absence of colour in the Mirkwood illustration contributed to a sense of gloom, partly due to the active use of shadows, this illustration has the opposite effect: it contributes to a sense of lightness and optimism. Here it is white that dominates, with the exception of the river that flows past in the middle of the picture. The river is the only element in the picture that is completely black, only interrupted with small white areas.

The trees extend over the entire length of the picture, and in a way appear dominant. At the same time, we see more of the trees' tops, branches, and leaves, which makes them appear smaller than in the previous illustration. We also see the sky above in the distance, which in turn contributes to the experience of the trees as less dominant. Central to the picture there are elements that indicate that the elves are actively using the area. They have built a bridge over the river, a staircase, and gates into the mountain. Towards the bridge in the centre of the image, the forest has also been cleared, and no trees are growing in the path. The trees no longer play the main role here and have had to move (or have been moved) to make room for the elves. The trees are also not centrally positioned in the picture, and perhaps the first thing one sees is the gate into the mountain.

The title is placed below the image but is not surrounded by a frame. Instead, it is the picture that is framed, and the title is placed outside. The title is handwritten, but a lighter font is used, framed only by two dots. This gives a feeling of lightness compared to the heavy

and dominant title in the illustration of Mirkwood. The illustration has a thin frame that keeps it separate from the title. The use of borders may act as a distancing device. Nevertheless, this illustration is perceived as more open and inviting, perhaps due to the lightness of the drawing. Another possible reason for this is the active use of negative space, among other things through the absence of texture, which means that observers have a more active role in filling in information.

Apart from plants, no living beings meet the viewer's gaze. Instead, focus is on the elf-built structures in the centre of the image. The gate to the mountain is closed, which initially seems a rejection. Compared to the illustration of Mirkwood, this still appears to be a more tempting place to stay: Bilbo and the dwarves have finally found a place where the forest is not all-consuming. In this illustration, the use of one-point perspective, with a central vanishing point, leads the gaze actively towards the bridge, the Elvenking's halls, the hill behind, and the sky above. The point of view places the viewer at a natural height for a human or a hobbit, and it is reasonable to imagine that one is standing here in Bilbo's shoes, observing the scene.

As I discussed in the previous subchapter, objects placed at the top of an illustration are often associated with an ideal, while objects further down are often associated with the concrete and realistic. At the top of the drawing, we glimpse the sky, a sight Bilbo and the dwarves have not seen for a long time. It is natural to think that this sight arouses hope and joy, as well as relief at having gotten out of the suffocating Mirkwood, where they were held captive. Also, placed far up in the illustration, the hill stands almost treeless. Compared to the dense and wild tree growth the travellers have been struggling with for a long time, this must appear like a dream. There is only one problem: the only way to get out of the woods is in front of them: They must exit through door to the Elvenking's halls, which is closed. The door into the mountain, and the elven territory lie between them and their freedom, symbolizing the real danger Bilbo and the dwarves are still in. In a way, then, the illustration communicates both hope and danger, through the lightness of the illustration and the dominance of the gate.

The modality of the illustration is also interesting, as the style is very different from the drawings analysed so far. The biggest difference here is in the many straight lines used. A lot of repetition and negative space is also used here compared to both the illustration of

The Hall at Bag End (Fig. 2) and *Mirkwood* (Fig. 3). In general, this illustration appears to be low on modality, which is also reinforced by the title and frame.

The most important difference between the illustrations of Mirkwood and The Elvenking's Gate for this thesis, however, lies in the interplay between the elves and the trees. In the first illustration there was very few traces of the elves. The trees appeared threatening and all-consuming and grew wild on their own terms. In the second illustration, however, we have entered the territory of the elves. Here the trees no longer grow wild but are instead arranged and organized by the elves. Here the forest and the trees are subordinate to the elves, and they no longer appear threatening. In the next chapters, I will take a closer look at how this relationship is presented in the verbal text.

4.3.3 Walking into the stream – Tree agency

Before leaving Bilbo and the dwarves at the edge of Mirkwood, Gandalf twice tells them "(…) DON'T LEAVE THE PATH" (p. 129). This warning is not wholly explained by the wizard. Though he mentions the stronghold of the Necromancer, a "black sorcerer" living to the south of the forest, their path does not seem to lead them near "the places overlooked by his dark tower" (p. 129). As they wander around, having eventually left the path, they encounter the wood-elves on three occasions, seeing them as in a vision, feasting and singing, but are never able to reach them.

Bilbo and the dwarf Bombur both fall into a seemingly enchanted sleep during this time, and report to the others when they wake up that they were feasting with the elves. The elven king later accuses Thorin of attacking the elves during these attempts at contact, and they are thus confirmed to be real events. Even so, these initial sights appear more like mirages, or hallucinations. These episodes, as well as the instances of sleep and confusion experienced by Bilbo and the dwarves, serve to amplify the feeling of a deceitful and threatening presence in the woods that is never fully explained to be arachnid, necromantic, or elvish.

The eery quality of Bilbo and the Hobbit's travel through Mirkwood could then perhaps be interpreted as a threat from the wood in itself, though seemingly not something the elves themselves experience. Except for this eeriness, there are only a few instances where the intrinsic capacities of plants (Ryan, 2015) are emphasised in the verbal text. The

trees of Mirkwood are described as leaning together and over Bilbo and the dwarves, seemingly trying to dissuade the group from going further (p. 140). These actions underline the feeling of an antagonistic presence, an aggressiveness on the part of the trees towards the protagonists. A particular section emphasises this:

> Occasionally a slender beam of sun that had the luck to slip in through some opening in the leaves far above, and still more luck in not being caught in the tangled boughs and matted twigs beneath, stabbed down thin and bright before them. But this was seldom, and it soon ceased altogether. (p. 130)

Though the main action in this paragraph is performed by the beam of light struggling to get through, there is action here also on the part of the trees: they are described as hindering the light to reach the ground. These descriptions could, however, also be seen as an instance of pathetic fallacy (Kullmann, 2009), a mirroring of the feelings of Bilbo and the Dwarves expressed in their interpretation of the surroundings: the depression, confusion, and hunger they experience manifesting in a feeling of antagonism from the forest. Curiously though, this antagonism does not seem to be felt by the elves, who feast happily in the midst of the trees. To them, the threatening presence is Bilbo and the dwarves, not the forest.

Later on, as the protagonists reach the river, the trees on the bank are reported to come "(…) right down to the bank, till their feet were in the stream" (p. 158). The action described here seems deliberate: an intended manoeuvre by the trees. This movement is clearly an intrinsic action by the tree, positioning itself in a favourable place. There are, however, few such descriptions in the two chapters. Though the trees are occasionally described as rotting, growing, ruffling in the breeze, and overhanging the water, these accounts are few and far between. These portrayals seem also to be limited to the first of the two chapters centring on Mirkwood and cease when the elves take centre stage, at the Hall of the Elvenking.

Extrinsic capacities, other living beings or environmental elements exerting force upon plants (Ryan, 2015, p. 129), are far more common. Trees are described as an integral part of the life of the Woodelves. Not only is "wood" part of their name, but the initial description of them also states that "the Beeches were their favourite trees" (, p. 154-155).

No further comments are made here however, and the reader is left ignorant as to the nature of the elves' relationship to beeches. It is disclosed that the elves live in tree huts, light fires and wooden torches, wear crowns of leaf, use wooden instruments such as harps, spears, and bows, and fell trees to clear the ground or to sit on; all of which suggest a rather one-sided relationship with the trees, where actions are performed on the tree rather than by it, emphasising their extrinsic capacities. The illustration of *The Elvenking's Gate* (Fig. 4) underlines the impression given by the verbal text. Here, tree growth is managed by the elves, planting or felling at their will. The presence of wooden objects such as the bridge and the doors also underline this impression. The trees are not here because of their intrinsic capacities, but rather to serve the needs of the elves.

4.3.4 Of feet and roof – characterizations of trees in Mirkwood

There are several physical descriptions of the trees in Mirkwood in the verbal text, though none of these are made by the elves. The descriptions by the narrator does however bring out an interesting difference between the old forest, which we see at first, and the forest around the elf settlement. Here, I will briefly discuss these differences and their implications. Upon entering the forest, the trees are described as "too old and strangled with ivy and hung with lichen to bear more than a few blackened leaves". The trees near the path are further described as bearing "tangled boughs and matted twigs" (p. 130).

The illustration of Mirkwood (Figure 3) adds to the verbal characterization here, showing leafless trees of various kinds growing together, covering the forest floor with their roots. While the trees are not given a voice, being described as "grim and silent" (p. 144), they seem aware of their surroundings: as Bilbo and the dwarves walk along, all the trees lean over them, listening to their footsteps (p. 130).

This suggestion of auditory senses is one of only two instances of anthropomorphic qualities in the trees of Mirkwood: the other is the description of roots as feet mentioned previously (p. 158), which grants the trees an ability to move to a more desirable place. This is not merely a metaphor, however. According to scholars Monica Gagliano, Stefano Mancuso, and Daniel Robert (2012), "plant science is increasingly recognising plants as highly sensitive organisms that perceive, assess, interact, and even facilitate each other's life by actively acquiring information from their environment" (p. 325). They further describe

plants as having a “talkative nature”, particularly highlighting their auditory abilities (Gagliano, et. al., 2012, p. 325).

A vastly more common way of describing trees in this story is, however, in comparison to architecture. Trees are reported to create “a sort of arch leading into a gloomy tunnel” (p. 130), and tree branches and leaves are frequently described as roof-like, encapsuling the ground below and making it “everlastingly still and dark and stuffy” (p. 131). Though the forest seems at first wild and threatening, strangling other creatures, and seeming unwelcome to strangers, the change that occurs as they come nearer to the elven settlement is significant: here, the trees are “endless lines of straight grey trunks like the pillars of some huge twilight hall” (p. 136). This hall-like growth is reflected in the illustration of the Elvenking’s Gate (p. 4), where the trees grow in ordered lines, and no tangled branches are present.

When it comes to behavioural characterizations of the trees in Mirkwood, there are few that can be connected to the elves. Here, the previously discussed feeling of hostility from Mirkwood as experienced by Bilbo and the dwarves is one of the only places in which the forest’s character is described. Another instance is in a comment made by the narrator, describing the forest as “grim and silent” (p. 144). This description is made as the elves once again disappear from the view of Bilbo and the dwarves and seems to be not a description of the trees, but rather a contrast to the merry singing of the elves.

4.3.5 "Is there no end to this accursed forest?" – Environment and biotope

The previously discussed difference between the settlement of the elves and the older, wild forest raises questions relating to the biotope. The reader is never told how the forest itself came to be, and the impression given by the text is of a wilderness slowly being maintained and formed by the elves. The older parts of the forest seem untouched, having been allowed to grow after its own will, while the forest around the elves is maintained and felled at their will. The elves do not live in equal relationship with the nature around them, but manipulate it freely, creating their kingdom and disrupting the forest’s growth. Though they hunt in the wood and live in trees, they only keep the forest’s wilderness when it suits them. When they need a clearing for their feast, they fell the trees that happen to be there (Tolkien, 2011, p. 140).

4.3.6 Lamps swinging from branches – trees as silent backdrop

Throughout the chapters that take place in Mirkwood, trees play a silent part. In the world of the elves, trees are acted upon rather than acting on their own accord. Trees are here appreciated as a background, creating the setting of the forest. The following description of a vision of the elves in a dream underline this impression:

> "Why ever did I wake up!" he cried. "I was having such beautiful dreams. I dreamed I was walking in a forest rather like this one, only lit with torches on the trees and lamps swinging from the branches and fires burning on the ground; and there was a great feast going on, going on for ever. A woodland king was there with a crown of leaves, and there was a merry singing, and I could not count or describe the things there were to eat and drink." (Tolkien, 2011, p. 139)

Though this description is of Bilbo's dream of the wood-elves, they are soon confirmed to be true. The king of the elves uses trees as decorative devices, hanging them with torches and lamps, and using leaves for a crown. As we have already learned, the elves live in huts in trees or on the ground and use the open forest to hunt. This serves to underline the impression of the forest as an essential prerequisite for the lives and culture of the elves.

4.3.7 Barrels upon barrels – the instrumental value of trees

Though I have already discussed many of the ways in which the elves use trees for their instrumental value, the wooden object which is mentioned the most in connection with the elves are barrels. The barrels in the cellar of the elven king are an important plot device here, as they are used by Bilbo and the dwarves to escape their captivity. Barrels of wine and other goods are shipped by the men of Esgaroth (also known as Lake-Town) to the king by river. Here, "raft-elves" are described tasked with floating these along the river to the king's caves (p. 172). These barrels are mentioned more frequently than any living tree by the elves, which seems to underline the emphasis on an instrumental valuing of trees. There is in fact no mention of living trees on the part of the elves here. In the illustration however, we see that there are living trees present here.

Although elves are described by the narrator as lovers of beeches (p. 154-155), this species of tree is never mentioned by any of the elves. They are, however, described as carrying spears and bows, which are presumably made of wood (p. 157). The elves eat from bowls and play the harp (p. 142), light fires and torches (p. 139, 140, 142, 172) and make trapdoors from oak (p. 162-163). The illustration of the Elvenking's Gate (Fig. 4) also shows a few of the wooden instruments made and used by the elves. Though the picture shows many living trees, the centre of the drawing is the door to the caves of the king, and a wooden bridge over the moat leading towards the gate.

4.3.8 "The beeches were their favourite trees" – intertextual elements

In a discussion of the intertextual elements of the chapters concerning Tolkien's elves, it is important to consider the history surrounding elves in fantastic literature. According to John. Clute and John Grant's *Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (1997), elves are a common creature in Celtic myths, often called *faerie*. Here, they are described as creatures of light and air, often opposed to dwarves, which are creatures of darkness and earth (p. 328). This opposition is also present in *The Hobbit*, where we are given a brief account of the relationship between elves and dwarves:

> So to the cave they dragged Thorin - not too gently, for they did not love dwarves, and thought he was an enemy. In ancient days they had had wars with some of the dwarves, whom they accused of stealing their treasure. It is only fair to say that the dwarves gave a different account, and said that they only took what was their due, for the elf-king had bar- gained with them to shape his raw gold and silver, and had afterwards refused to give them their pay. (Tolkien, 2011, p. 155)

Tolkien draws upon classic faerie stories in his descriptions of the elves. Richard Folkard describes the traditional connection between the faerie and trees:

> Grimm tells us that in Germany the Elves are fond of inhabiting Oak trees, the holes in the trunks of which are deemed by the people to be utilised by the Fairies as

> means of entry and exit(…). German elves are also fond of frequenting Elder-trees. (Folkard, 2014[1884], p. 64-65).

There is, in other words, a traditional connection between the faerie (elves) and trees. The specific relationship between beeches seems however to be one of Tolkien's own inventions. Folkard does mention beeches as a signifier of prosperity (p. 186), and as an important tree in Greek Mythology (p. 249).

4.4 The Men of Esgaroth

The Men of Esgaroth, or Lake-Town, appear late in the story. These people live in a wooden town, built upon the lake beneath the Lonely Mountain. Through the verbal text the reader learns that these people are merchants, providing and redistributing wares for people all over the land. S/he is also informed that they keep a good relationship with their neighbours, the elves, and provide the king with wine and food. The men of Lake-Town have a friendly relationship with dwarves as well, as they used to live next to them when the dwarves lived by the Lonely Mountain.

After the appearance of Smaug the dragon, however, the dwarves were forced to leave the area, and the humans built the town on the lake to be further away from the mountain. Upon the arrival of Bilbo and the dwarves in Lake-Town, the reader learns that they have been long expected and wished for and are thus treated as royalty. Tolkien's illustration of Lake-Town (Figure 5), which shows the wooden city from a distance, connected to the mainland a bridge, will be analysed in the following subchapters, also with the verbal text. As the city is spoken of both as Lake-Town and Esgaroth, these names will be used interchangeably throughout this sub-chapter.

4.4.1 Lake Town – Picture analysis

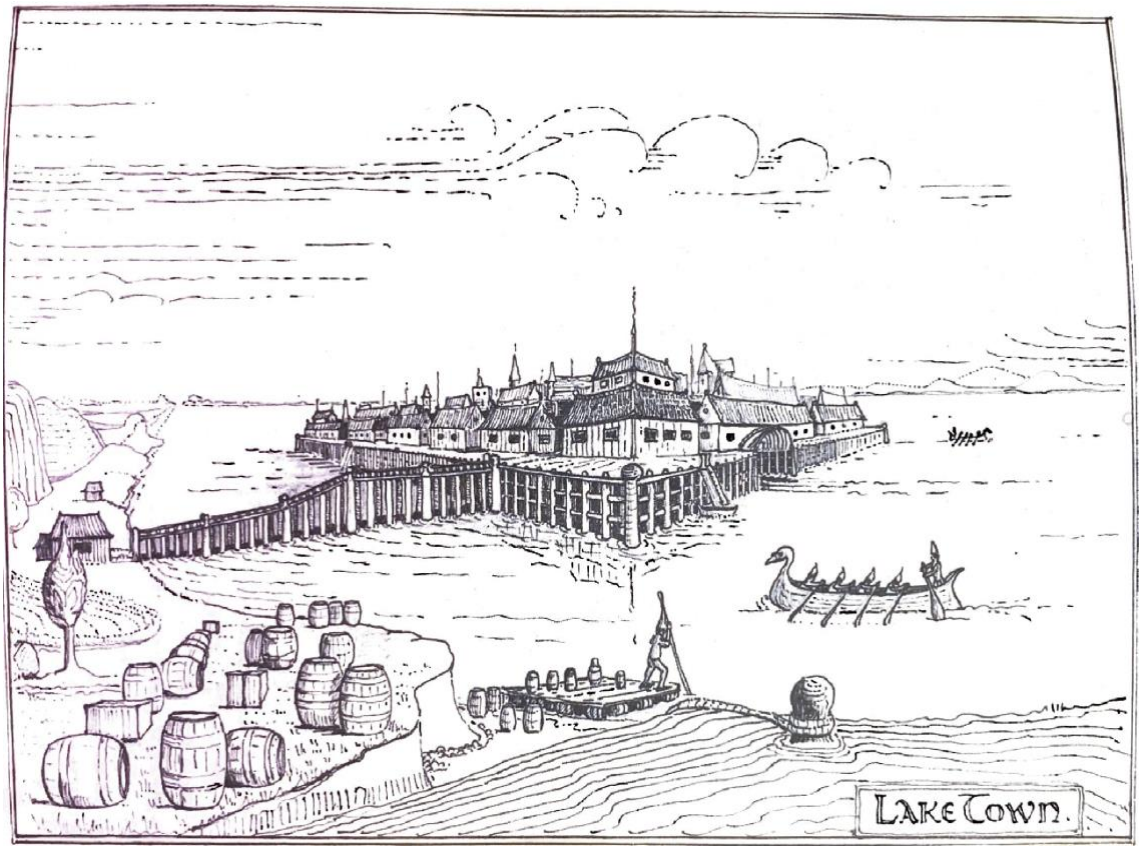

Figure 5 – Lake Town. *Illustration by J. R. R. Tolkien in* The Hobbit (Tolkien, 2011, p. 177)

The illustration of Lake Town (Tolkien, 2011, p. 177) shows a small, wooden city on a lake. The viewer seems to stand on the shore, gaining an overview of the town and its surroundings. In the front we see men going about their daily tasks, rowing boats, and catching the barrels that come down the river. The barrels are indeed given a special place in the illustration, being placed in front, close to the viewer, indicating the arrival of Bilbo and the dwarves. To the left of the city, there is a bridge connecting it to the mainland, as well as a few trees and some grass-covered pastures in the distance.

The illustration of Lake Town (Fig. 5) is composed of thin lines. These lines form the outline of objects, are used in shadows, and also to promote texture and detail. This illustration, like the illustration of The Elvenking's Gate, is very bright. White spaces are predominantly used here, and the black lines are very thin. Repetitive patterns are used to some extent, to illustrate clouds in the sky, slopes in the terrain and waves on the water. The wooden planks and poles that form the city are also drawn with a repetitive line pattern.

The absence of colours in the illustration means that some of the open areas are difficult to distinguish from each other. Therefore, patterns have been used instead to show structure: short, wavy lines illustrate small waves, longer, straighter lines show the clouds, and short vertical lines indicate grass. Different patterns are also used to distinguish objects in the periphery from each other, and to create depth in the illustration.

The man-made structures, such as the houses, have thicker lines and more active shading here, which makes them appear clearer and more eye-catching than the rest of the illustration. Human activity creates a certain dynamic in the image. The people row boats, and work with transporting barrels as in their normal working day. Like the other illustrations, frames and titles are used. Instead of placing the title outside the frame, Tolkien has placed it inside the image on the right. This breaks with the illusion that this is an active and dynamic situation, and again promotes the feeling that this is an artistic recreation of a historical event. The title locks the image in both time and space, so that the viewer is not invited to participate.

Much can be said about the use of perspective here. While the illustrations of The Hall at Bag End (Fig. 2) and The Elvenking's Gate (Fig. 4) use a one-point perspective, which draws attention to a specific vanishing point, a two-point perspective is used here. This creates a more complex interaction between the various objects in the image, as the image has two vanishing points. It also makes the city, which is centred in the picture, appear more real and three-dimensional. Although attention is naturally drawn to the city, the observer also quickly notices other larger elements, located up close. This especially applies to the barrels, which are located at the bottom left of the image and are perceived as very close. As we learn in the verbal text, these barrels are important for the main characters, who arrive in the city hidden in barrels. It is easy to imagine that these are located here precisely to suggest that Bilbo and the dwarves have recently arrived. The location of the barrels can also tell us something about the everyday life of the people of Lake Town. The city, which serves as an important trading post for the surrounding peoples, is naturally dependent on barrels to carry goods.

As Serafini points out, we tend to read images in the same direction as verbal text: from left to right. The placement of the barrels on the lower left side of the picture thus also means that we perceive them earlier than if they were placed on the right (Serafini, 2014, p.

65). The barrels can also be perceived as a motif, a recurring element that has a specific meaning potential and must be interpreted within a specific social and historical context (Serafini, 2014, p. 61). The barrels represent the livelihood of the people of Lake Town, who depend on trade and good relations with the nearby peoples to exist. The barrels are thus of great value to the people here and are thus "elevated" through the important placement in the illustration.

The fact that wooden products, such as the barrels, boats and houses in the city have such important locations in the picture, also tells us something about the people's relationship to the trees around them. There are only a few trees in this picture, and they are located at the very edge of the image, in what may be termed "unimportant" places. In other words, the value of trees lies in what they can be used for, rather than in their existence as living organisms. The city, which seems to be made entirely of wood products, is also located topmost of the objects in the picture. As previously mentioned, Serafini (2014) describes this position as a representation of an ideal (p. 65). This location helps to emphasize the people's relationship to the trees, through an elevation of trees as a commodity.

The relationship between the viewer and the illustration, or the compositional structures of the image, is often emphasized through the use of eye contact between characters in the image and the audience (Serafini, 2014, p. 64). In this picture, there are, as mentioned, people. These people do not look towards the viewer, and do not make contact in any way, either through gaze or body language. The observer stands at a distance from them and are not invited to participate in the activities. The people in the image are instead preoccupied with using their wooden objects: boats, rafts, and barrels. We do not see them interacting with living trees in the picture, and their view of trees as useful only for materials is thus further emphasized.

It is also worth mentioning the representative structures of this illustration (Serafini, 2014, p. 62). Serafini divides these into two types: the narrative structures of the image and the conceptual structures. Here it is first and foremost the narrative structures I want to highlight, as these describe actions that are carried out in the picture. In this picture, as mentioned, human interaction with wooden items is depicted in their use of boats and other objects, but also by way of evidence of their manipulation of the surroundings. The whole

city is built of trees that have been cut down and worked to create houses for the people. There are few visible living trees in the picture. It is possible that there have been many trees in the area in the past, but that these have been cut down for materials. Another possibility is that there are larger forests in the area that are used for logging and woodworking.

Before I move on to the analysis of the verbal text, I want to say something about the modality of the image. The image is not abstract, but concrete, and appears as a re-creation of reality as it appeared to Bilbo and the dwarves. At the same time, it is far from a photorealistic recreation, partly due to its very simplistic style and the use of negative space. The image also does not use colours, and the use of title and frames makes the image appear as a sketch and lowers its modality further.

The illustration gives an impression of the people of Lake Town as very dependent on trees in their everyday lives, here primarily through their active use of wood materials in the construction of houses, means of transport and other objects. In the next subchapter, I will take a closer look at how the relationship between trees and humans is represented in the verbal text.

4.4.2 "The Woods Shall Wave…" - Tree agency in the lands of men

Trees seem to play a part in the poetic tradition of the people in Lake Town, as they sing of the return of the dwarven king: "The woods shall wave on mountains" (Tolkien, 2011, p. 182). Here, it seems, they believe even the wood surrounding the lake will rejoice at the king returning, and the death of the dragon Smaug. This is an interesting idea, which perhaps tells of their distress of living in the shadow of a fire-breathing creature. It could also be a description of the way Smaug has burnt the sides of the mountains free from trees and other plants, leading to its description as the *desolation of Smaug.* The idea of trees waving is not an uncommon description of tree movement, though it seems not to entail much other than a general hopefulness on the part of the men. Except from this one instance, however, trees are here mainly valued for one specific extrinsic capacity: that of building material. When the dragon is killed, the people are relieved to find their woods and pastures undamaged (p. 229), and immediately start building a new town:

> With the women and the children, the old and the unfit, the Master remained behind; and with him were some men of crafts and many skilled elves; and they busied themselves felling trees, and collecting the Timber sent down from the forest. Then they set about raising many huts on the shore against the oncoming winter; and also under the Master's direction they began the planning of a new town, designed more fair and large even than before, but not in the same place. (p. 233).

To the people of the town, the relief they experience in finding the trees left standing is mainly due to the way they can be used to build a new town. The trees are not valued for their existence in themselves, but rather for their usability. The illustration of Lake-Town (Fig. 5) seems to underline much of what has already been told. We see little of the intrinsic capacities of trees being expressed here, and there are only two living trees represented in the illustration. The city, boats and barrels are made from wooden materials, and take up a large part of the picture. This illustration seems to underline the impression given by the verbal text, that the trees are here mainly valued for their extrinsic capacities.

4.4.3 The Name of The Bow – Tree Characterization in Esgaroth

There is little characterization of trees in the chapters that take place in Esgaroth. The only tree that is mentioned by name is the yew tree, which is the material which Bard's bow is made from (p. 228). It can be assumed then, that the trees here are phytomorphic in appearance, plant-like rather than human-like (Guanio-Uluru, 2021, p. 9). The tree visible in the illustration (Fig. 5) underline this conclusion: It is drawn in a simplistic style, showing a long trunk with a bushy top. No individual leaves are visible here, and their genus is hard to distinguish.

4.4.4 Built, not grown - Environment and Biotope

The people of Esgaroth live, as I have already discussed, in a wooden city built on a lake. The surrounding countryside is described as having woods and pastures:

> But they had really much to be thankful for, had they thought of it, though it could hardly be expected that they should just then: three quarters of the people of the

> town had at least escaped alive; their woods and fields and pastures and cattle and most of their boats remained undamaged; and the dragon was dead. (Tolkien, 2011, p. 229).

They do, as the quote above states, consider these fields *their own,* which underlines the sense of a man-made environment and an anthropocentric attitude. Whether these woods are planted is unclear, though we know from their frequent use of timber that they must cut down substantial amounts of trees for building materials, which suggests they might also plant trees. There is no reference to wild tree growth here, neither in the verbal or visual text, though there are implications of forests nearby. The two trees in the illustration do not seem to be a part of a larger forest however, and it is not clear why they are left standing, except from perhaps aesthetic reasons. The wooden buildings in the town do, however, underline the verbal text's descriptions of the building materials, and leaves no contradictions.

4.4.5 Passive and Reliable Materials

Trees are essential to the people of Lake-Town, though seldomly mentioned, and valued mainly for their instrumental usefulness. Although seldomly mentioned, it is clear that there is a forest not far from Lake-Town. The people express joy when finding it unharmed by the dragon and cut it down for timber when they need to build a new town. It seems, to them, that trees are necessary and useful natural elements, which play no large part in their life until they are needed. There are few traces of trees in their speech, which serves to underline the lack of consideration for trees in their day to day lives. Trees are thought of when needed, and otherwise forgotten. Though there are two trees in the illustration (fig. 5), there is no sign of the woods where the people of Esgaroth collect their timber. The lack of woods in the illustration underlines the absence of trees from the mind of the onlooker. As the town is still standing, the trees are not yet needed, after all.

4.4.6 Instrumental Value – An Abundance Of Wood

As the sections above state, there can be little doubt of the way trees are valued by the people of Esgaroth. There are few mentions of trees in the speech of the people. There are,

however, frequent mentions of wooden objects: a bridge (p. 176), barrels (p. 180), a fire, which is presumably made from wood (Tolkien, 2011, p. 181), houses (p. 181), fiddles (p. 183), boats (p. 183), wooden beam-ends on roofs (p. 227) and Bard's yew bow (p. 228).

The people of Lake-Town express their fear for their trees in one instance, stating that: "Soon he would set all the shoreland woods ablaze and wither every field and pasture." (p. 227-228). When this does not happen, the people are happy that they are still able to use the wood to build a new town. The fear was not for the damaging of the trees in themselves, but for the lack of building materials. The instrumental valuing of trees is also visible in the illustration (Fig. 5), where an overwhelming majority of the objects pictured are made from wood. Here, we see barrels, boats, houses, poles, and a bridge, all objects which are mentioned in the verbal text. There is no evidence to contradict the instrumental valuing of trees.

4.4.7 Folklore as Intertexts – The Warring Trees

The way the men of Esgaroth emphasise the instrumental valuing of trees is perhaps a reflection of the way human beings value trees for their usefulness. They build from trees, and fear only the loss of the building blocks of their society. Only one mention is made of a specific genus of trees: the yew bow Bard uses to kill the dragon Smaug. According to Folkard, the yew tree has been a symbol of mourning in many cultures, and is frequently planted in churchyards (Folkard, 2014[1884], p. 590). The yew tree has historically been used to assemble bows, associating it with warfare (p. 591). Though the yew tree does not lead to mourning, but rather the opposite, in this story, the connection to warfare is clear.

As the analysis shows, there are many references to trees in both the verbal text and the illustrations. The trees are especially prominent in the illustrations, where they are highlighted and play a major role. In the verbal text, however, they fall into the background, and are mentioned first and foremost in connection with their instrumental value. In the next chapter, I will discuss my findings in relation to the thesis statement and make my conclusions.

5. Findings & Concluding Remarks

In this section, I will summarize my findings from the analysis, and discuss them in relation to my problem statement: *What relationships do the different peoples in Tolkien's The Hobbit have with trees, and how are these relationships communicated in the novel's text and illustrations?*

When I started working on this master's thesis, I imagined that the elves would stand out especially in their relationship to trees. In Tolkien's later works, *The Lord of the Rings* (1986, 1989, 2009) and *Silmarillion* (2006), the elves have a special relationship with trees, and the trees, especially through the Ents, are often emphasized for their intrinsic qualities. Tolkien was also known in his private life for speaking on behalf of the trees. In a letter to the Houghton Mifflin Co (Carpenter & Tolkien, 2014) Tolkien stated: "I am (obviously) much in love with plants and above all trees, and always have been; and I find human maltreatment of them as hard to bear as some find ill-treatment of animals" (p. 233). It is particularly interesting, therefore, to see that this view is not emphasized in *The Hobbit*.

I want to start here by looking at the picture analyses. The first illustration I analysed showed Bilbo in his home in Bag-End (Fig. 2). In this illustration, I found that it was largely objects made of trees that filled the picture. Still, there were two living trees that took the central position at the top of the picture. The illustration of Mirkwood (Fig. 3) showed a forest filled with living trees. Here there were no signs of human (or elvish) influence, and the trees were allowed to unfold freely. In the illustration of The Elvenking's Gate (Fig. 4) there were also many living trees, but these were to a greater extent shaped by the elves, either planted or cut down to suit the elves' wishes. Here too, there were signs of wooden objects, such as the bridge that is centered in the picture. The last illustration, Lake Town (Fig. 5), shifts the focus back to the instrumental use of trees, only showing a few living trees.

If we look at the illustrations separately, it appears that humans and hobbits have a rather instrumental view of trees, an anthropocentric attitude where the trees are first and foremost valuable as decoration or materials. The elves seem to live to a greater extent with the trees. They live in a forest and are thus dependent on the trees around them to facilitate their lifestyle. At the same time, they also cut down the forest, or plant it in any way they want. There is also a noticeable difference between the two illustrations that show the forest: when the elves are not present, the forest seems dangerous and threatening. When

the elves are present, however, the trees are ordered and contained. The elves are placed above the trees, as rulers over the area, and with the ability to manipulate their surroundings. The resemblance of the trees to architecture also underlines this impression. Although there do not seem to be great differences between the peoples and their relationship to trees in the illustrations, it is interesting to note that the trees are so often foregrounded in the illustrations. Knowing that Tolkien's private life was marked by his commitment to trees, this may be an attempt to emphasize the value of the trees. His emphasis on trees in the illustrations is thus perhaps an attempt to promote the role of the trees since their role in the verbal text is first and foremost instrumental. In that case, the trees appear more as decorative elements for the book. They have no active role, other than to describe the surroundings and facilitate the atmosphere.

The verbal text does not emphasize trees to the same extent as the illustrations. There are very few instances of tree agency, neither in connection with the elves, the hobbits nor the humans. Instead, the focus is primarily on their instrumental value. This is especially emphasized in the sections dealing with the hobbits and humans. However, one place stands out here, namely Bilbo and the dwarves experience the older part of Mirkwood. Here, the trees are portrayed as threatening, and as active in preventing them from moving on. The trees seem to have no power over the elves, however, who actively manipulate the forest. In other words, for all three peoples, the extrinsic capacities of trees, or their usefulness, is emphasized.

In the analysis of the characterization of trees in the verbal text, I found that there were very few descriptions of the trees in Hobbiton and Lake-Town. In both places, the main emphasis of descriptions is on objects made of trees, which suggests anthropocentric values. The trees in Mirkwood are described to a greater extent, but this is done primarily by Bilbo and the dwarves, who experience the forest as threatening and unfamiliar. The trees around the elves' settlement are often described in comparison to architecture. While the hobbits and humans prefer not to describe the trees, but rather use them as timber and material for woodworking, the elves do not have to chop them down to appreciate them. In other words, there is a difference here, between the elves and the other peoples. Overall, the trees in *The Hobbit* are described as phytomorphic, and look like trees we find in real life. Although the

trees are perceived as active by Bilbo and the dwarves, this seems to be primarily an expression of their fear of never finding their way back to the trail.

In the analysis of environment and biotope, I found that all peoples actively manipulated their surroundings. In Hobbiton and Lake-Town, reference is made to the forest, here primarily as a material resource. The people of Lake-Town are particularly worried that the dragon Smaug will destroy the forest, so that they will not have access to the materials they need. The hobbits also seem to plant trees and other plants in gardens primarily for aesthetic reasons. The elves are the only people living in a forest, but they also manipulate the forest to promote their preferred aesthetics.

The trees often serve as a background for the action in the story. The elves hang lamps and torches in the trees, and Bilbo describes the trees as part of his home. Here he presents the trees as static, as objects that comprise his home. In other words, the trees are present in the background throughout the story. It is in many ways interesting then, that the trees are in the foreground, and often have a central place in the illustrations.

Although instrumental use of trees is a separate item in the Phyto-Analysis Map, it was frequently discussed throughout the analysis. The reason for this is that such use of trees is so prominent in the story, and present in all peoples. Although the elves may treat the trees around them somewhat differently than the other peoples, they also use tools and weapons made of wood material. This is one of the most obvious examples of anthropocentric attitudes, which are also pervasive for all three peoples. Here trees are cut down, processed, and used because humans, hobbits and elves need it.

The last point in my analysis dealt with intertextual elements in *The Hobbit*. Here I have mainly related to the trees mentioned in the book, and what mythological symbolism these may possess. In the chapter on elves, I also discussed how the relationship between elves and trees has been traditionally portrayed. Apart from discussing this, there were not very many finds here that can be linked to how the different peoples relate to trees.

I started the analysis chapter by discussing mediation. Here I discussed how Bilbo, as an implied narrator, helps to shape how the trees are presented in the text. The same, of course, applies to the author, who writes the story from a human point of view. I also discussed how the orientation and placement of the images in the book helps to distance the reader from the situation, and makes the book appear as a historical document.

In conclusion, trees are valued for their extrinsic capacities by hobbits, elves, and men, and are not seen to act on their own. The character of the trees are throughout the novel, phytomorphic, or plant-like, and are often seen in man-made environments. The main exception here is the old part of Mirkwood, where trees are a threatening presence, seeming to actively hinder Bilbo and the dwarves on their journey. This part of the story stands out in the book and emphasises the anthropocentric values of the characters: the people's inclination to shape their surroundings to suit their own ends. For the world to be safe, the wood needs to be ordered and shaped by people. The contrast between the two locations of Mirkwood, that of the trees and that of the elves, highlights this.

Though trees play an important part in the book, the values expressed by the people are overwhelmingly instrumental and anthropocentric. The book cannot, therefore, be classified as ecofantasy (Goga, 2019, p. 78). My analysis does, however, reveal trees to be an essential prerequisite for the lives of all three peoples.

Since my analysis has focused only on one of the elf-peoples, the Woodelves, it is difficult to make a direct comparison between elves in *The Hobbit* and elves in Tolkien's other works. The elves that are appear in *The Lord of the Rings* belong to the other elf people: High Elves. It was nevertheless very surprising that the elves in *The Hobbit* differed so little from the other peoples, something the method allowed me to uncover. Nevertheless, since *The Hobbit* has had such great popularity and influence on the fantasy genre, it is interesting to see what relationships to trees is promoted.

The Phyto-Analysis Map (Guanio-Uluru, 2021) has proved to be a valuable tool in the analysis of people's relationships with trees in *The Hobbit.* Here, supplied by tools for the analysis of illustrations, it helps to uncover the representation of trees both in the visual and verbal text. In combination with a quantitative method, where all the quotations related to trees were collected and categorized, it opened up for a thorough analysis of the relationship between peoples and trees.

Regarding the scope of this thesis, I have limited my analytical focus to three of the peoples represented in the books, and to four of the illustrations, which was selected for analysis. The peoples were also analysed in their homes only. The findings of the representations of trees in the book is therefore not necessarily representative for the views expressed in the book as a whole, and I cannot draw conclusions about the book in its

entirety, or about the representation of trees in children's literature in general. As *The Hobbit* is an important part of the canon of children's fantasy literature however, it may have influenced later books, and is an interesting object for study.

Another way to analyse the representations of trees in *The Hobbit* would be with regard to Garrard's (2012) tropes, especially such themes as dwelling, pastoral, and wilderness. The way the hobbits relate to their environment seems influenced by the pastoral trope, just as Mirkwood represents the untamed wilderness. This could lead to interesting revelations in terms of how the peoples view their environments and their place in it. This would require a different study however, and so I chose not to prioritize it here.

The unveiling of the valuing of trees in children's books is important, as it can help us understand both our own views on the plants around us, and the values we communicate to children. An awareness of "hidden" plants in literature also changes our focus and makes us realise the importance of plants in our lives. A further investigation of the representations of trees in children's text is thus needed to understand the complexity of our relationship to trees, and the values we express.

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7. Appendix

Peoples ↓ / Petals →	Mediation	Agentic	Character	Environment	Backdrop	Instrumental Value	Intertexts
The Hobbits in the Shire	Trees shown in pictures and text. Book made of paper.	"Anything from climbing trees to visiting elves…" (p. 7) "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. He looked out of the window. The stars were out in a dark sky above the trees. He thought of the jewels of the dwarves shining in dark caverns. Suddenly in the wood beyond The Water a flame leapt up--probably somebody lighting a wood-fire-and he thought of plundering dragons settling on his quiet Hill and kindling it all to flames. He shuddered; and very quickly he was plain Mr. Baggins of Bag-End, Under-Hill, again" p. 16. Swords in these parts are mostly blunt, and axes are used for trees,	"Roads go ever on and on / Over rock and under tree / (…) / Look at last on meadows green / And trees and hills they long have known." (p 273-274) "As all things come to an end, even this story, a day came at last when they were in sight of the country where Bilbo had been born and bred, where the shapes of the land and of the trees were as well known to him as his hands and toes." (p. 273).	"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. He looked out of the window. The stars were out in a dark sky above the trees. He thought of the jewels of the dwarves shining in dark caverns. Suddenly in the wood beyond The Water a flame leapt up--probably somebody lighting a wood-fire-and he thought of plundering dragons settling on his quiet Hill and kindling it all to flames. He shuddered; and very quickly he was plain Mr. Baggins of Bag-End, Under-Hill, again" p. 16. "Roads go ever on and on / Over rock and under tree / (…) / Look at last on meadows green / And trees and hills they long have known." (p 273-274) "As all things come to an end, even this story, a day	"Anything from climbing trees to visiting elves…" (p. 7) "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. He looked out of the window. The stars were out in a dark sky above the trees. He thought of the jewels of the dwarves shining in dark caverns. Suddenly in the wood beyond The Water a flame leapt up--probably somebody lighting a wood-fire-and he thought of plundering dragons settling on his quiet Hill and kindling it all to flames. He shuddered; and very quickly he was plain Mr. Baggins of Bag-End, Under-Hill, again" p. 16.	"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. He looked out of the window. The stars were out in a dark sky above the trees. He thought of the jewels of the dwarves shining in dark caverns. Suddenly in the wood beyond The Water a flame leapt up--probably somebody lighting a wood-fire-and he thought of plundering dragons settling on his quiet Hill and kindling it all to flames. He shuddered; and very quickly he was plain Mr. Baggins of Bag-End, Under-Hill, again" p. 16. Swords in these parts are mostly blunt, and axes are used for trees, and shields as cradles or dish-covers; and dragons are comfortably faroff (and therefore legendary). (p. 21). "At the best of times heights made Bilbo giddy. He used to turn queer if he looked over the edge of quite a little cliff; and he had never liked	"They (the fireworks) used to go up like great lilies and snapdragons and laburnums of fire and hang in the twilight all evening!" "If you had dusted the mantelpiece you would have found this just under the clock," said Gandalf, handing Bilbo a note (written, of course, on his own note-paper). (p. 28)

		and shields as cradles or dish-covers; and dragons are comfortably faroff (and therefore legendary). (p. 21). “At the best of times heights made Bilbo giddy. He used to turn queer if he looked over the edge of quite a little cliff; and he had never liked ladders, let alone trees (never having had to escape from wolves before).” (p. 100). “a perfectly round door like a porthole”, “…with panelled walls”, “polished chairs”, “lots and lots of pegs for hats and coats” (p.3) “…smoking an enormous long wooden pipe that reached nearly down to his woolly toes”. (p. 5) “And a very fine morning for a pipe of tobacco out of doors,” (p.6) “…Beer-barrels in the cellar.” (p. 16) “He (Bullroarer) charged the ranks of the goblins of Mount Gram in the Battle of the Green Fields, and knocked their king Gol-firnbul's head clean off with a wooden club..” (p. 18)		came at last when they were in sight of the country where Bilbo had been born and bred, where the shapes of the land and of the trees were as well known to him as his hands and toes.” (p. 273). “To the end of his days Bilbo could never remember how he found himself outside, without a hat, walking-stick or any money, or anything that he usually took when he went out; leaving his second breakfast half-finished and quite unwashed-up, pushing his keys into Gandalf's hands, and running as fast as his furry feet could carry him down the lane, past the great Mill, across The Water, and then on for a whole mile or more. (p. 28-29)	“At the best of times heights made Bilbo giddy. He used to turn queer if he looked over the edge of quite a little cliff; and he had never liked ladders, let alone trees (never having had to escape from wolves before).” (p. 100). “Roads go ever on and on / Over rock and under tree / (…) / Look at last on meadows green / And trees and hills they long have known.” (p 273-274) “As all things come to an end, even this story, a day came at last when they were in sight of the country where Bilbo had been born and bred, where the shapes of the land and of the trees were as well known to him as his hands and toes.” (p. 273). “But at any rate hobbits can move quietly in **woods**, absolutely quietly. (p. 32-33). "If you had dusted the mantelpiece you would have found this just under the clock," said Gandalf, handing	ladders, let alone trees (never having had to escape from wolves before).” (p. 100). “a perfectly round door like a porthole”, “…with panelled walls”, “polished chairs”, “lots and lots of pegs for hats and coats” (p.3) “…smoking an enormous long wooden pipe that reached nearly down to his woolly toes”. (p. 5) “And a very fine morning for a pipe of tobacco out of doors,” (p.6) “…Beer-barrels in the cellar.” (p. 16) “He (Bullroarer) charged the ranks of the goblins of Mount Gram in the Battle of the Green Fields, and knocked their king Gol-firnbul's head clean off with a wooden club..” (p. 18) "If you had dusted the mantelpiece you would have found this just under the clock," said Gandalf, handing Bilbo a note (written, of course, on his own note-paper). (p. 28) “To the end of his days Bilbo could never remember how he found himself outside, without a hat, walking-stick or any money, or anything that	

		"If you had dusted the mantelpiece you would have found this just under the clock," said Gandalf, handing Bilbo a note (written, of course, on his own note-paper). (p. 28) “I wish I was at home in my nice hole by the fire, with the kettle just beginning to sing!” (p. 30). “Bilbo’s cousins the Sackville-Bagginses were, in fact, busy measuring his rooms to see if their own furniture would fit. (p. 274). “…; and in the end to save time Bilbo had to buy back quite a lot of his own furniture.” (p. 274) P. 275: References to fire and hearth ““Thank goodness!” said Bilbo laughing, and handed him the tobacco-jar.” (p. 276)			Bilbo a note (written, of course, on his own note-paper). (p. 28) “To the end of his days Bilbo could never remember how he found himself outside, without a hat, walking-stick or any money, or anything that he usually took when he went out; leaving his second breakfast half-finished and quite unwashed-up, pushing his keys into Gandalf's hands, and running as fast as his furry feet could carry him down the lane, past the great Mill, across The Water, and then on for a whole mile or more. (p. 28-29)	he usually took when he went out; leaving his second breakfast half-finished and quite unwashed-up, pushing his keys into Gandalf's hands, and running as fast as his furry feet could carry him down the lane, past the great Mill, across The Water, and then on for a whole mile or more. (p. 28-29) “I wish I was at home in my nice hole by the fire, with the kettle just beginning to sing!” (p. 30). “Bilbo’s cousins the Sackville-Bagginses were, in fact, busy measuring his rooms to see if their own furniture would fit. (p. 274). “…; and in the end to save time Bilbo had to buy back quite a lot of his own furniture.” (p. 274) P. 275: References to fire and hearth ““Thank goodness!” said Bilbo laughing, and handed him the tobacco-jar.” (p. 276)	

The Elves of Mirkwood	Trees shown in pictures and text. Book made of paper.	Soon the light at the gate was like a little bright hole far behind, and the quiet was so deep that their feet seemed to thump along while all the trees leaned over them and listened. (130) Occasionally a slender beam of sun that had the luck to slip in through some opening in the leaves far above, and still more luck in not being caught in the tangled boughs and matted twigs beneath, stabbed down thin and bright before them. But this was seldom, and it soon ceased altogether. (130) “The water flowed dark and swift and strong beneath; and at the far end were gates before the mouth of a huge cave that ran into the side of a steep slope covered with trees. There the great beeches came right down to the bank, till their feet were in the stream”. (p. 158).	The entrance to the path was like a sort of arch leading into a gloomy tunnel made by two great trees that leant together, too old and strangled with ivy and hung with lichen to bear more than a few blackened leaves. (P. 130) Soon the light at the gate was like a little bright hole far behind, and the quiet was so deep that their feet seemed to thump along while all the trees leaned over them and listened. (130) There was no movement of air down under the forest-roof, and it was everlastingly still and dark and stuffy.(131) Even so, as days followed days, and still the forest seemed just the same, they began to get anxious (132) Nothing wholesome could they see growing in the woods, only funguses and herbs with pale leaves and unpleasant smell. (136) Two days later they found their path going downwards and before long they were in a valley filled almost entirely with a mighty growth of oaks. "Is there no end to this accursed forest?" said Thorin. "Somebody must	The entrance to the path was like a sort of arch leading into a gloomy tunnel made by two great trees that leant together, too old and strangled with ivy and hung with lichen to bear more than a few blackened leaves. (P. 130) Occasionally a slender beam of sun that had the luck to slip in through some opening in the leaves far above, and still more luck in not being caught in the tangled boughs and matted twigs beneath, stabbed down thin and bright before them. But this was seldom, and it soon ceased altogether. (130) About four days from the enchanted stream they came to a part where most of the trees were beeches. They were at first inclined to be cheered by the change, for here there was no undergrowth and the shadow was not so deep. There was a greenish light about them, and in places they could see some distance to either side of the path. Yet the light only showed them endless lines of straight grey trunks like the pillars of some huge twilight hall. There was a breath of air and a noise of wind, but it	“In fact, the subjects of the king mostly lived and hunted in the open woods, and had houses or huts on the ground and in the branches.”(p. 154)	There had been a bridge of wood across, but it had rotted and fallen leaving only the broken posts near the bank. (132) "Why ever did I wake up!" he cried. "I was having such beautiful dreams. I dreamed I was walking in a forest rather like this one, only lit with torches on the trees and lamps swinging from the branches and fires burning on the ground; and there was a great feast going on, going on for ever. A woodland king was there with a crown of leaves, and there was a merry singing, and I could not count or describe the things there were to eat and drink." (139) There were many people there, elvish-looking folk, all dressed in green and brown and sitting on sawn rings of the felled trees in a great circle. There was a fire in their midst and there were torches fastened to some of the trees round about; but most splendid sight of all: they were eating and drinking and laughing merrily. (140) The feast that they now saw was greater and more magnificent than before; and at the head of a long line of feasters sat a woodland king with a crown of leaves upon his golden hair, very much as Bombur had described the	“The Beeches were their favourite trees”. (p. 154-155).

			climb a tree and see if he can get his head above the roof and have a look round. The only way is to choose the tallest tree that overhangs the path." (137) About four days from the enchanted stream they came to a part where most of the trees were beeches. They were at first inclined to be cheered by the change, for here there was no undergrowth and the shadow was not so deep. There was a greenish light about them, and in places they could see some distance to either side of the path. Yet the light only showed them endless lines of straight grey trunks like the pillars of some huge twilight hall. There was a breath of air and a noise of wind, but it had a sad sound. A few leaves came rustling down to remind them that outside autumn was coming on. Their feet ruffled among the dead leaves of countless other autumns that drifted over the banks of the path from the deep red carpets of the forest. (136) The forest was grim and silent (…) (144) "If anyone had come in that way, he would have found himself in a dark rough tunnel leading deep into the heart of the hill;	had a sad sound. A few leaves came rustling down to remind them that outside autumn was coming on. Their feet ruffled among the dead leaves of countless other autumns that drifted over the banks of the path from the deep red carpets of the forest. (136) After a good deal of creeping and crawling they peered round the trunks and looked into a clearing where some trees had been felled and the ground levelled. (140) There were many people there, elvish-looking folk, all dressed in green and brown and sitting on sawn rings of the felled trees in a great circle. There was a fire in their midst and there were torches fastened to some of the trees round about; but most splendid sight of all: they were eating and drinking and laughing merrily. (140)		figure in his dream. The elvish folk were passing bowls from hand to hand and across the fires, and some were harping and many were singing. (142) "Out leaped Wood-elves with their bows and spears and called the dwarves to halt." (p. 157). References to torch-light (p. 157, 158). ""Now come with me," he said, "and taste the new wine that has just come in. I shall be hard at work tonight clearing the cellars of the empty wood, so let us have a drink first to help the labour." (p. 164) "Before long, as Bilbo knew, some elves were under orders to come down and help the butler get the empty barrels through the door and into the stream. These were in fact already standing in rows in the middle of the floor waiting to be pushed off. Some of them were wine-barrels, and these were not much use, as they could not easily be opened at the end without a deal of noise, nor could they easily be secured again. But among them were several others, which had been used for bringing other stuffs, butter, apples, and all sorts of things, to the king's palace". (p. 166).	

			but at one point where it passed under the caves the roof had been cut away and covered with great oaken trapdoors". (p. 162-163).			"Out they (the barrels) went under the overhanging branches of the trees on either bank." (p. 170) "There stood barrels, and barrels, and barrels; for the Wood-elves, and especially their king, were very fond of wine, though no vines grew in those parts". (p. 163). "There were people on the look-out on the banks. They quickly poled and pushed all the barrels together into the shallows, and when they had counted them they roped them together and left them till the morning". (p. 171). "He slipped from his barrel and waded ashore, and then sneaked along to some huts that he could see near the water's edge". (p. 171). "Also he had caught a glimpse of a fire through the trees, and that appealed to him with his dripping and ragged clothes clinging to him cold and clammy". (p. 172). "They were making up a raft of barrels, and the raft-elves would soon be steering it off down the stream to Lake-town". (p. 172). "And off they went at last, slowly at first, until they had passed the point of rock where other elves stood to fend them off with poles, and	

						then quicker and quicker as they caught the main stream and went sailing away down, down towards the Lake". (p. 173).	
The Men of Esgaroth	Trees shown in pictures and text. Book made of paper.	"The woods shall wave on mountains" (from the song on p. 182). "With a shriek that deafened men, felled trees and split stone, Smaug shot spouting into the air, turned over and crashed down from on high in ruin. Full on the town he fell. His last throes splintered it to sparks and gledes. The lake roared in. A vast steam leaped up, white in the sudden dark under the moon. There was a hiss, a gushing whirl, and then silence. And that was the end of Smaug and Esgaroth, but not of Bard." (p. 228-229). "With the women and the children, the old and the unfit, the Master remained behind; and with him were some men of crafts and many skilled elves; and they busied themselves felling trees, and collecting the Timber sent down from the	Little/no characterization. Only two trees shown in picture, otherwise only wooden objects.	"But they (the people of Lake-Town) had really much to be thankful for, had they thought of it, though it could hardly be expected that they should just then: three quarters of the people of the town had at least escaped alive; their woods and fields and pastures and cattle and most of their boats remained undamaged; and the dragon was dead." (p. 229).	"But they (the people of Lake-Town) had really much to be thankful for, had they thought of it, though it could hardly be expected that they should just then: three quarters of the people of the town had at least escaped alive; their woods and fields and pastures and cattle and most of their boats remained undamaged; and the dragon was dead." (p. 229). "This (the market-place) was a wide circle of quiet water surrounded by the tall piles on which were built the greater houses, and by long wooden quays with many steps and ladders going down to the surface of the lake." (p. 181).	"A great bridge made of wood ran out where on huge piles made of forest trees was built a busy wooden town, not a town of elves but of Men, who still dared to dwell here under the shadow of the distant dragon-mountain." (p. 176). "As soon as the raft of barrels came in sight boats rowed out from the piles of the town, and voices hailed the raft-steerers". (p. 178). "That being so it is not surprising that the guards were drinking and laughing by a fire in their hut, and did not hear the noise of the unpacking of the dwarves or the footsteps of the four scouts". (p. 180), "This (the market-place) was a wide circle of quiet water surrounded by the tall piles on which were built the greater houses, and by long wooden quays with many steps and ladders going down to the surface of the lake." (p. 181).	"Now he (Bard) shot with a great yew bow, till all his arrows but one were spent." (p. 228).

		forest. Then they set about raising many huts on the shore against the oncoming winter; and also under the Masters direction they began the planning of a new town, designed more fair and large even than before, but not in the same place." (p. 233).				"So they sang, or very like that, only there was a great deal more of it, and there was much shouting as well as the music of the harps and fiddles mixed up with it." (p. 182-183). "A large house was given up to Thorin and his company; boats and rowers were put at their service; and crowds sat outside and sang songs all day, or cheered if any dwarf showed so much as his nose." (p. 183). "Cut the bridges! To arms! To arms!" (p. 226) "Then warning trumpets were suddenly sounded, and echoed along the rocky shores." (p. 226) "A hail of dark arrows leaped up and snapped and rattled on his scales and jewels, and their shafts fell back kindled by his breath burning and hissing into the lake." (p. 226) "At the twanging of the bows and shrilling of the trumpets the dragon's wrath blazed to its height, till he was blind and mad with it." (p. 226-227) "He circled for a while high in the air above them lighting all the lake; the trees by the shores shone like copper and like blood with leaping shadows of dense black at their feet. Then down he	

						swooped straight through the arrow-storm, reckless in rage, taking no heed to turn his scaly sides towards his foes, seeking only to set their town ablaze. Fire leaped from thatched roofs and wooden beam-ends as he hurtled down and past and round again, though all had been drenched with water before he came." (p. 227). "Women and children were being huddled into laden boats in the market-pool." (p. 227). "The Master himself was turning to his great gilded boat, hoping to row away in the confusion and save himself." (p. 227). "Soon he (Smaug) would set all the shoreland woods ablaze and wither every field and pasture." (p. 227-228). "Now he (Bard) shot with a great yew bow, till all his arrows but one were spent." (p. 228). ""Arrow!" said the bowman. "Black arrow! I have saved you to the last. You have never failed me and always I have recovered you. I had you from my father and he from of old. If ever you came from the forges of the true king under the Mountain, go now and speed well!"" (p. 228).	