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ALBA PIGA

**TRANSLATION, RETRANSLATION
AND THE ITALIAN RENDERINGS
OF TOLKIEN'S *THE LORD
OF THE RINGS***



ENGLISHES

TESTI E CONTESTI DELLE LINGUE INGLESI

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ENGLISHES

TESTI E CONTESTI DELLE LINGUE INGLESI

Tra le lingue occidentali, l'inglese è quello che si è maggiormente evoluto, se non trasformato, fino a divenire la lingua della globalizzazione. Oggi, quindi, non si può più parlare di "English" bensì di "Englishes", ognuno dei quali si inserisce in un ben delineato contesto geografico e storico-politico dal quale ricava e afferma nuove e originali strutture grammaticali e lessicografiche. È il caso dell'anglo-americano, dell'anglo-canadese e dell'anglo-australiano, ormai realtà consolidate e codificate, così come è il caso dell'anglo-caraibico, dell'anglo-indiano e dell'anglo-africano (nelle sue diverse accezioni) che sono tuttora realtà "in progress" e, proprio in virtù di ciò, le più interessanti e innovative.

La Collana intende, pertanto, ospitare studi filologici e linguistici, testi grammaticali e lessicografici che possano coadiuvare l'insegnamento dell'inglese moderno e aiutare la comprensione e l'insegnamento delle letterature che di questi "Englishes" sono espressione.

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*THE LORD OF THE RINGS***



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PART 1

INTRODUCTION

1. Translation studies and the question of literary retranslation

The phenomenon of literary retranslation, i.e. the successive, or following, translation of the same source text into the same target language by different translators, has emerged as a central concern within Translation Studies, challenging traditional assumptions and conventions about translation as a finite, predetermined, singular act of linguistic transfer. Early translation theory often conceptualised the relationship between source and target texts as a one-to-one correspondence. On the contrary, contemporary scholarship recognises translation as a dynamic, and even historically contingent practice that necessarily generates multiple and competing versions of the same work across time and cultural contexts (Berman 1990; Venuti 2004; Deane-Cox 2014). The retranslation of official and recognised literary works, in particular, offers a privileged advantage being the point from which to observe the evolution of translation norms and standards, the shifting boundaries between domestication and foreignisation strategies, and, last but not least, the complex interaction between fidelity and creativity that defines translators' art.

J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* was first published in English between 1954 and 1955. It represents an excellent case study for examining these theoretical issues. Being one of the most widely translated

literary works of the twentieth century, Tolkien's epic fantasy has produced hundreds of retranslations in various linguistic and cultural contexts. Each of these retranslations reflects distinct translation beliefs and ideas, changing readership expectations, and also evolving understanding of the work's literary significance (Hammond and Scull 2005). The book was rendered into more than thirty-eight languages and sold over 150 million copies worldwide. The Italian publishing history of *The Lord of the Rings* proves particularly enlightening in this regard, as it includes three major translation examples covering more than five decades: Vittoria Alliaia's revolutionary but commercially unproductive 1967 version, the widely revised Alliaia/Principe edition published by Rusconi and then reprinted by Bompiani, and Ottavio Fatica's much debated 2019 retranslation, which provoked severe disagreements among fans and legal disputes between translators.

This present study by Alba Piga undertakes a laborious comparative analysis of these three Italian translations, Alliaia's, Alliaia/Principe's and Fatica's, focusing on two of the most challenging aspects of Tolkien's linguistic creativity: the translation of proper names and the rendering of rhymed verses. In doing so, this work contributes to several significant discussions within Translation Studies, including discussions about the translatability of invented languages, the cultural specificity of onomastic systems, the limitations imposed by poetic form, and the ethical accountabilities of retranslators working in the shadow of well-known models and precedents. More generally, this research illustrates how translation choices, particularly in works of fantasy literature characterised by widespread world-building along with linguistic invention, shape reader reception and enjoyment, cultural integration, and the long-term consecration of foreign texts within a target literary context.

2. Theoretical framework

Any debate on retranslation should start with a clear knowledge of what translation itself involves. Moving beyond simple equivalence theories that consider translation as only word-for-word substitution,

contemporary Translation Studies recognises that every act of translation necessarily encompasses interpretation, transformation, and the negotiation of fundamental incommensurability between linguistic systems, cultural frameworks, and literary traditions (Bassnett 2002; Munday 2016).

Lawrence Venuti's powerful distinction between "domesticating" and "foreignising" translation strategies provides a practical framework for analysing the choices when translating (Venuti 1995). Domesticating translation seeks to minimise the strangeness of the foreign text, adapting it to the established aesthetic and linguistic norms of the target culture in order to provide readers with a fluent, and clear reading experience. Foreignising translation, on the contrary, intentionally preserves or even emphasises the source text's linguistic and cultural characteristics, stimulating target-language readers to confront difference and resisting the ethnocentric instincts that Venuti recognises as prevalent in Anglo-American translation practice. While Venuti supports foreignising approaches as a means of cultural resistance and ethical translation practice, the domestication-foreignisation binary should not be understood as a mere dichotomy but rather as a continuum along which translators navigate according to various contextual factors, including the nature of the source text, the expectations of the target audience, and the broader cultural politics of the receiving literary contexts.

When it comes to fantasy literature, and Tolkien's masterpiece in particular, all these theoretical questions become specifically complicated. As a matter of fact, writers of fantasy texts often create their own linguistic systems, cultural, and literary conventions that exist with both the source and target languages' norms and contexts (Manlove 1975; Tolkien 1983). Tolkien was both a philologist and a creative writer, therefore he deliberately constructed *The Lord of the Rings* as a work that challenges easy linguistic categorisations: it includes multiple invented languages (such as Quenya, Sindarin, Khuzdul, among others), draws upon Anglo-Saxon, Norse, and Celtic linguistic and literary traditions, employs archaic registers and formal verse structures, and uses and performs an elaborate onomastic system in which names carry both etymological significance and cultural resonance (Shippey 2001;

Flieger 2002). In order to translate these types of work, translators need to possess not only excellent linguistic competences but also deep familiarity with the philological fundamentals of Tolkien's creative project and the skills to make knowledgeable decisions about which features of the text's linguistic richness can and should be preserved in translation.

3. The retranslation hypothesis

The scholarly interest in retranslation as a distinct phenomenon obtained substantial impetus with Antoine Berman's persuasive paper "La retraduction comme espace de la traduction" (1990), which expressed what has come to be known as the "rettranslation hypothesis". According to Berman, first translations of literary works tend towards domestication, adapting the source text to the target culture's expectations, thus naturalising its foreignness so that to ensure commercial success and reader acceptance and approval. According to his theory, successive retranslations, by contrast, often move gradually towards more and more fidelity to the source text's linguistic and cultural specificity, since translators working in more well-known literary contexts feel empowered and authorised to challenge predominant norms and even resist the pressure to adapt foreign works to domestic aesthetic and artistic canons.

Berman's interpretation stands on several interconnected beliefs about the sociology and temporality of translation. First, it assumes that first translators face more commercial pressure to deliver accessible, fluent translations in order to attract large audiences new to the source culture and literary tradition. The publishers who invest in the first translation of a foreign work inherently seek to minimise financial risks by guaranteeing both readability and marketability, even at the cost of some fidelity to the source text's linguistic and cultural specificity. Second, Berman's hypothesis presumes that, as time goes by, and familiarity with the foreign author and work grows, i.e., through critical research, cultural distribution, and the increase of paratextual knowledge, translation norms that may privilege different values evolve. Third, it suggests that retranslators benefit from their forerunners' groundwork: as a matter of fact, the existence of a recognised

translation creates a reception situation that subsequent translators can build upon, modify, or resist, rather than having to introduce the work from scratch.

Berman's hypothesis has proven influential in determining discussions of retranslation, but empirical research has revealed a more complex and often unpredictable pattern. As Deane-Cox (2014) demonstrates in her study of French retranslations, the relationship between translation chronology and domestication/foreignisation strategies does not follow a linear trajectory. Some retranslations move towards greater fidelity and foreignness, but others draw back towards more domesticating approaches, thus reflecting changes in both translation norms and the source text's cultural status, or even the appearance of new interpretive frameworks that spotlight different aspects of the original. The decision to commission a retranslation may originate from various factors: dissatisfaction and disappointment with previous versions, the perception that earlier translations have become linguistically dated, variations in copyright and publishing provisions and agreements, or even the desire to align a translation with new critical understandings of the source text's meanings and implications (Koskinen and Paloposki 2010; Brownlie 2006).

Critics of the retranslation hypothesis have found several problematic assumptions set in Berman's interpretation. First, the theory tends to make the domestication/foreignisation abstract binary as if it were real, treating it as the primary axis along which every translation strategy should be assessed when translators are travelling across multiple, and even conflicting and challenging priorities such as readability, stylistic elegance, cultural precision, formal fidelity, commercial feasibility. All these factors cannot be reduced to a simple spectrum or continuum between domestication and foreignisation. Second, Berman's framework privileges a particular philosophy of translation: it values foreignisation as intrinsically more ethical or artistically cultured than domestication, so that sometimes it does not reflect the actual goals and constraints and even the limitations of definite translation projects. Finally, it risks implying that retranslation represents progress towards some ideal of perfect fidelity: as a matter of fact, different historical moments may require different translation approaches and styles which

suit best to their specific cultural settings and readership needs, desires and expectations.

Paloposki and Koskinen (2010) proposed a more nuanced framework in order to explain how retranslation focuses on the multiple motivations and contextual factors that shape decisions when translators are producing new versions. The scholars distinguish between “active” retranslation, i.e. deliberately try to amend flaws and weaknesses in earlier versions or to reflect new crucial considerations, and “passive” retranslation, i.e. produced for commercial or legal reasons without explicit critique of precursors. They also emphasise the value of examining retranslation within specific national and linguistic settings, as translation norms, publishing practices, and attitudes toward foreign literature can vary considerably across cultural contexts.

The Italian retranslations of *The Lord of the Rings* embody this intricacy. Alliaata’s 1967 translation was produced when Italians were still not familiar with Tolkien’s work and even fantasy literature had not yet established itself as a recognised genre. Thus, Alliaata faced the challenge of rendering a linguistically composite and culturally specific text for readers unfamiliar with its conventions and practices along with cultural references. The translator worked mostly in isolation, without benefiting of Tolkien’s scholarship, fantasy publishing organisations, or even established genre conventions and norms that could guide her translation choices. Her pioneering efforts represent both the difficulties of introducing radically unfamiliar literary forms to a target language and culture and the original and innovative solutions that first translators must create in the absence of reputable precedents.

The following Alliaata/Principe revision in 1970 started after the work of art had reached large cultural visibility, endeavoured to amend those errors and inconsistencies that had been identified, while, at once, updating the translation to reflect developing Italian literary and translational norms. Quirino Principe brought musicological training along with vast knowledge of Germanic and Anglo-Saxon literary traditions to the revision, thus enabling more refined and sophisticated arrangement with Tolkien’s philological foundations. His corrections and modifications addressed not only or simply surface-level linguistic errors but deeper misunderstandings and mistakes of specific cultural references,

etymological wordplays and puns, and literary allusions. The revision thus represents not simply correction but reinterpretation, reformulation, informed by increasing scholarly understanding of Tolkien's creative procedures and intentions.

Fatica's 2019 retranslation appeared after Peter Jackson's film trilogy and within a revival of academic Tolkien scholarship. It positions itself as a more rigorous rendering from the philological perspective, and a sophisticated one, from the literary point of view. Luckily, it seeks to capture some dimensions of the original that earlier translations apparently overlooked or misrepresented or completely altered. Fatica had access to wide-ranging critical and scholarly resources that were unavailable to former translators, including exhaustive linguistic analyses of Tolkien's invented languages, complete and inclusive studies of his sources and influences, and the author's own posthumously published translation guidance and philological writings. This entire scholarly equipment allowed organised and efficient adjustments and reconsideration of translation strategies, this time informed by deeper understanding of Tolkien's purposes and practices. However, this approach also generated controversy and debate, thus disrupting the familiar linguistic forms through which Italian readers had known Middle-earth for decades. The debate also raised questions about the relative weight that was to be given to philological precision and accuracy versus cultural context and reader expectations reinforcement.

4. Translating names

The translation of proper names represents one of the most theoretically problematic and most challenging aspects of literary translation. Traditional approaches, reflected in the work of scholars such as Algeo (1973) and Nicolaisen (1978), often treated names as semantically empty labels that should be moved or transferred unchanged or untouched from source texts to target ones, based on the fact that proper names function primarily as rigid and fixed designators rather than carriers of a certain descriptive, vivid, and evocative meaning. This perspective, however, does not keep into account the rich semantic,

cultural, and intertextual resonances and echoes that names frequently acquire and possess in literary contexts (Nord 2003; Hermans 1988). Names may arouse specific cultural associations, carry etymological significance, contribute with wordplay or allusion, indicate social class or ethnic identity, or provide characterisation and thematic development (Van Coillie and Verschuere 2006).

Theo Hermans' persuasive work on the translation of names distinguishes between "conventional names" (those that follow typical naming practices and carry minimal semantic content) and "expressive names" (those that are deliberately meaningful, loaded with denotation, often through etymology, sound symbolism, or cultural association). Conventional names can usually be transferred unchanged (even though orthography, pronunciation, and cultural issue may arise). In a different way, expressive names present significant challenges for translators: they must decide whether to preserve the original form, and, in that case, they lose semantic transparency, translate the meaning and sacrifice the original's phonetic and orthographic form, or devise their own creative solutions in the attempt to capture both form and content (Hermans 1988).

In Tolkien's work, the onomastic framework is particularly composite, as the author himself intentionally created multiple naming schemes that reflect the different languages, cultures, and historical periods of Middle-earth (Tolkien 1983; Hammond and Scull 2005). Some names are completely invented, drawn from Tolkien's made-up languages and carrying meanings that are accessible only to those readers who have properly studied his linguistic systems. Other names are derived from Old English, Norse, Welsh, or other historically existing languages, establishing intertextual connections to the Anglo-Saxon and medieval literary traditions that inspired Tolkien's creative project. Some others employ recognisable Modern English words or morphemes, utilised to create transparent meanings that together contribute directly to characterisation or thematic improvement.

More importantly, Tolkien himself provided comprehensive guidance to translators in his "Guide to the Names in *The Lord of the Rings*", which was originally published in Jared Lobdell's *A Tolkien Compass* (1975). A newly transcribed version, "Nomenclature of *The Lord*

of the Rings", was later included in Wayne G. Hammond and Christina Scull's *The Lord of the Rings: A Reader's Companion* (2005). In the "Guide", Tolkien explained the etymology and function of many of the names and also offered specific suggestions, and recommendations about translation strategies. He distinguished between names that should be retained in their original form (in particular, those derived from invented languages like Quenya and Sindarin), those that should be translated because they carry transparent meanings in the Common Speech or its English equivalent (e.g., many hobbit names and place names), and those that require special consideration because of their phonetic, cultural, or intertextual importance (Hammond and Scull 2005). These directives provide both opportunities and constraints for translators: while they offer invaluable philological guidance, they also determine normative expectations against which translation choices and preferences may be measured, and assessed, or even judged.

The Italian translations of Tolkien's names reflect significantly diverse approaches to these challenges. Allia's groundbreaking version often Italianised names in order to make them more familiar to Italian readers but sometimes obscured their etymological foundations or altered their cultural associations. Then, the Allia/Principe revision modified many of these choices later, moving towards greater preservation of original forms in cases where translation seemed to compromise the names' functions or meanings. As will be explained by the junior independent scholar Alba Piga in the following chapters, Fatica's retranslation started a more systematic reevaluation of onomastic strategies and techniques, often diverging meaningfully from established precedents, even in ways that produced controversy and debate among readers already familiar to the forms preserved and maintained by decades of reprinting.

5. Verse translation

The translation of poetry has always represented what many scholars consider the decisive test of the translator's art and talent, as it requires the concurrent preservation of multiple dimensions, i.e. semantic

content, formal structure, phonetic patterns, syntactic models, rhetorical features, and cultural characters, that often occur and even co-exist but in complete interdependence (Lefevere 1975; Holmes 1988). Prose translation allows extensive elasticity in sentence structure, word order, and stylistic register. On the contrary, verse translation operates under an additional constraint, which is that of metrical form: it may impose strict limitations on lexical choices and even on syntactic patterns. Rhyme, meter, alliteration, assonance, and other sound structures create formal constructions that contribute meaningfully to a poem's aesthetic effect and appeal but may prove impossible to reproduce closely and faithfully in the target language, given differences in phonetic systems, morphological structures, and also lexical resources.

Holmes' leading categorising of verse translation strategies (1988) classifies a variety of possible approaches, ranging from "mimetic form" (trying to reproduce the source text's exact formal structure in the target language) to "analogical form" (replacing a target-language verse form that occupies a similar cultural and aesthetic position) to "organic form" (creating a new form guided by the target language's own properties and the poem's semantic content). Each approach implies the utilisation of some trade-offs or compromise. The mimetic form may sacrifice semantic accuracy or natural expression for formal fidelity, as the target language's phonetic and morphological characteristics may resist exact replication of the source meter or rhyme scheme. The analogical form may capture the poem's cultural function and aesthetic register, but it needs to alter its formal effects and the associations those forms produce in the source literary tradition. The organic form may produce more "natural" target-language poetry but cut the connection to the source text's formal identity and the revealing possibilities that could result from specific structural choices.

The theoretical controversies about verse or poetry translation have evolved considerably since the mid-twentieth century. Early discussions often posed the question in either/or terms: should verse be translated as verse or as prose? Advocates of prose translation argued that trying to preserve metrical form necessarily distorts semantic content and produces artificial, unnatural language that cannot capture the original's literary quality. Robert Frost's famous statement that "poetry is what

gets lost in translation” reflects this pessimistic view about the possibility of successful and productive verse translation into prose. By contrast, defenders of verse-to-verse translation contended that form and content in poetry are inseparable, and that rendering a poem as prose necessarily transforms its nature and aesthetic effect, producing not a translation but a paraphrase or adapted version.

Modern Translation Studies has moved past this dual framework to recognise the legitimacy and validity of various other approaches depending on the specific context, purpose, and nature of the poetic writing. As a matter of fact, some poems differ from others since they depend heavily on formal aspects for their aesthetic and semantic effects; thus, translating such works of poetry into prose or different forms risks losing essential features of meaning and effect. This is the case of sonnets that utilise the tension between form and content, real and tangible poetry where visual aspects carry meaning, poems that use specific meters to arouse particular cultural or historical associations or connotations. Other poems prioritise semantic density, imagery, or narrative content over formal elements, and may be successfully rendered through various formal approaches. The translation strategy or technique should emerge and materialise from careful analysis of the specific poem’s construction and function rather than from abstract principles and norms applied equally across all types of verse translation.

Lefevere’s work on translation as rewriting (1992) emphasises that all types of translation involve choosing and privileging certain elements over others, and this selection acquires particular importance and relevance when translating poetry, where such constraints imposed by rhyme, meter, and line length oblige translators to make tough decisions, and to determine what to preserve and what to sacrifice. Translators must establish which properties of the source text are fundamental to its literary identity and character along with its aesthetic and appealing effect, so that they will develop strategies that prioritise those features even if doing so often requires negotiations or concessions in other dimensions. For example, a sonnet translator might prioritise the fourteen-line structure even if this needs some departure from exact semantic fidelity; a translator of alliterative verse might preserve the alliterative form while accepting changes and adjustments to

metaphoric language; a translator of free verse might focus on catching the poem's rhythmic pattern and line breaks without trying to reproduce specific phonetic effects.

The concept of "translation loss" in poetry deals with the inevitable, and in some ways predictable, failure to capture all dimensions of the source text in the target version. It has generated wide theoretical debate over the years. Nida's (1969) distinction between "formal equivalence" (attempting to preserve the source text's linguistic features) and "dynamic equivalence" (prioritising equivalent effect on target readers) has proven influential and significant in thinking about poetry translation, though criticism notes that the concept of "equivalent effect" itself proves difficult to determine and evaluate. How can we establish whether a target-language poem produces the same effects, or equivalent effects, to the source when readers have different cultural knowledge, literary expectations, aesthetic sensibilities, and emotional responses?

If we look at more recent theoretical work within Translation Studies, it can be noticed that it has emphasised that translation often, if not always, operates within specific cultural and institutional contexts that shape both the translation process, method and development and the reception of translated texts. Bassnett and Lefevere's work on translation and cultural politics (1990) stresses how decisions about translating poetry reflect and even reproduce cultural power relations, established hierarchies, and ideological and socio-political conventions about literary value and significance. The choice to translate certain poets (and not others), or to employ certain formal strategies or techniques rather than alternatives and other possibilities, to position translated poems within particular literary traditions or against them: all these decisions contribute to define literary canons and standards, establish aesthetic and artistic norms, and negotiate relationships between source and target literary systems.

In Tolkien's work, the challenges of verse translation become particularly important because of the author's thoughtful use of diverse poetic forms having specific narrative and cultural functions within the story's fictional world (Flieger 1983; Rateliff 2007). The verses in *The Lord of the Rings* range from simple folk songs and drinking songs to elaborate formal poems in various traditional metres, from riddles and

spells to epic narratives and elegiac laments. Many of these verses draw upon Anglo-Saxon and medieval poetic traditions, i.e. alliterative verse, Eddaic metres, ballad forms, that carry cultural and historical associations connected to Tolkien's creative project of building an English mythology. Additionally, some verses are presented as translations from Elvish languages and keep an intentionally archaic or formal register; others are characterised as compositions in the Common Speech or Hobbit vernacular and retain a more colloquial language and simpler metrical patterns.

The translation of these verses requires not only technical skills in rendering rhyme and metre but also deeper understanding of the poems' functions and meaning within the narrative and their relationships to the implicit and explicit cultural and linguistic registers in the source text. For instance, a drinking song sung by hobbits requires different treatment from an Elvish lament or a ceremonial verse in the language of Gondor. The translator must transfer these register distinctions while managing at once the formal constraints of verse structure and patterns, together with the intrinsic semantic demands of narrative integration.

6. The cultural politics of retranslation

As anticipated, retranslation necessarily raises questions of authority, legitimacy, and cultural ownership. When a literary work has reached undisputed and recognised status in a target culture through a well-known translation that has formed various generations of readers' understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of the text, any effort to replace or improve or add something to that translation becomes loaded with political and emotional implications (Brownlie 2006; Colombat 2004). As a matter of fact, readers develop deep attachments to familiar and renowned translations, which may become inseparable and intimate from their experience of the work itself; character names, memorable phrases, outstanding expressions, and stylistic features of the established translation become so much entrenched in the cultural imagination and thus resistant and hard to change.

Thus, the choice to commission or provide a retranslation represents more than a merely literary or commercial decision; it constitutes an intervention into a work's established and recognised reception history and may be perceived or seen as an implicit critique or review of previous translators' competence or assessment. As Collombat (2004) observes, retranslators often position themselves against their predecessors, declaring to amend errors, restore lost meanings, or align the translation with higher translation principles or more current and recent linguistic norms. This positioning may be explicit, conveyed in paratextual tools such as translators' prefaces or publisher's marketing copy, or it may be implicit, by making it evident in the regular departure from established and traditional translation choices.

The debate around Fatica's 2019 retranslation of *The Lord of the Rings* typifies these dynamics. The new translation diverged meaningfully from the names, terms, and phrasings that Italian readers had read for decades through the Bompiani editions which were based on the Alliata/Principe's translation. Familiar character names were altered (for instance, "Grampasso" became "Passolungo" for "Strider"), established translations of key terms were adjusted, and the overall linguistic register moved in ways that many fans found inappropriate or even "badly chosen". The brutal backlash, including legal action by the original translator, reflects not simply disagreement about specific translation choices but fundamental questions about who owns the authority to redefine a cherished cultural text and under what circumstances and conditions retranslation can be justified.

All these issues gain particular force in the case of fantasy literature that hold dedicated fan communities who have established deep investments in specific linguistic and imaginative formulations, creations, and inventions. Differently from more mainstream literary works, fantasy texts often produce paratextual communities, i.e. fan fiction, role-playing games, discussion fora, in which the details of names, places, and made-up terminology become the subject of continuous attention and debate (Jenkins 2006). Changes to these elements through retranslation may thus disturb not only individual reading experiences but entire communities of intensive reading, interpretive practice, and creative engagement.

7. Tolkien as translator and translation theorist

Investigations of Tolkien's work in translation must acknowledge the author's own clever and experienced understanding of translation theories and practices. Tolkien was himself an accomplished and sophisticated translator, producing important renderings of *Beowulf*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, along with other medieval texts (Tolkien 2014). More importantly, his creative work includes translation as a fundamental structural and thematic principle and it often points to the problems of rendering language aspects and cultural concepts across the various linguistic systems of Middle-earth (Shippey 2001; Flieger 2002).

Tolkien's "On Translating *Beowulf*" (1940) enunciates a translation philosophy that emphasises both fidelity to the source text's linguistic and cultural peculiarity and the creative challenge of finding equivalents, and aesthetic and artistic effects in the target language. He criticised translations that sacrificed the source text's formal features or cultural alterity chasing fluency and accessibility, proposing instead approaches that honour the work's historical and linguistic identity and uniqueness. This foreignising orientation, decades before Venuti's theoretical formulation, reflects Tolkien's deep respect for – and acceptance of – linguistic and cultural differences in translation practices.

Tolkien guided translators of his own work. The "Guide" and related documents demonstrate a detailed understanding of the specific challenges posed by his elaborate fictional world-building. He recognised that blind adherence and preservation to the source text might obscure meanings that were clear and transparent to English readers familiar with the cultural and linguistic references he employed. On the contrary, excessive and even unnecessary domestication might flatten the precisely constructed linguistic diversity and cultural specificity in the text. Tolkien's recommendations endeavoured to guide translators between these extremes, providing them with the philological knowledge need to make informed and well-versed decisions while, at once, acknowledging the legitimacy and acceptability of different translation strategies for different categories of names and terms.

Tolkien's involvement in translation guidance creates both opportunities and prospects on one side, and constraints and limitations on the

other, for translators and translation scholars. On one hand, Tolkien's instructions offer invaluable insights into his creative intents and the functions of various linguistic elements within the narrative construction. On the other hand, they create a normative framework against which translations may be evaluated, potentially limiting translators' creative freedom and independence and privileging certain translation strategies and techniques over others. The question of how much weight is to be given to authorial guidance remains a source of current debate in Tolkien translation studies.

8. The Italian context: fantasy literature and translation norms

The Italian translations of *The Lord of the Rings* must be investigated within the specific context of Italian literary culture and its growing relationship to fantasy literature. When Alliaia took on her pioneering and revolutionary translation in the mid-1960s, fantasy as a recognised literary genre hardly existed in Italian publishing (Spera 2011). The categories, norms and conventions that would in the future define fantasy literature, such as quest narratives, secondary world-building, magic ecosystems, heroic archetypes, had not yet crystallised as an articulate set of prospects and opportunities that translators and publishers could adopt as common knowledge and readers as expectations. In fact, the peculiar Anglo-American literary tradition from which Tolkien's work emerged, comprising its roots in medieval romance, Victorian medievalism, and early twentieth-century fantasy, was still unfamiliar to Italian readers.

The Italian literary scene of the 1960s was controlled by different interests and traditions. The postwar period had seen the flourishing of neorealism in literature and film, with its accent on contemporary social realities, working-class involvement, and political engagement. The avant-garde movements of the 1960s followed new forms and challenged traditional narrative norms and conventions, but in directions which were quite different from the mythopoeic world-building of fantasy literature. Popular genre fiction lived in detective novels, romance, and adventure stories, but these followed familiar formulae

of European literary traditions rather than the Anglo-American structures of epic fantasy.

Within this cultural context, the decision to translate *The Lord of the Rings* represented a bet for the publisher Astrolabio-Ubaldini. The work's length, the linguistic difficulty, and the still unknown genre conventions presented big commercial risks. The novel focused on an elaborate and imagined secondary world, employed an archaic and elevated language, included an extensive paratextual 'equipment' (appendices, maps, several invented languages). All these features differed significantly from usual Italian genre fiction norms. Besides, the cultural references that would have resonated with British readers familiar with Anglo-Saxon literature, Norse mythology, and medieval romance traditions did not hold any or little meaning for Italian audiences and thus required extensive cultural translation beyond mere linguistic rendering.

This cultural context helps describe some of the translation choices in Alliata's version. The translator often adapted Tolkien's linguistic inventions and cultural references to more familiar Italian frameworks. Names were Italianised not only for euphony but to make them easier to pronounce and more memorable for Italian readers who were new to Anglo-Saxon or Norse phonetics and sounds. Archaic or unfamiliar terms were simplified or replaced with more approachable equivalents that generally sacrificed some of the source text's linguistic richness and intensity but increased clarity and readability. Cultural references were sometimes modified or explained to facilitate comprehension by readers who lacked the contextual knowledge that British readers might possess. All these domesticating strategies reflect translator preferences but also the practical demands of introducing a culturally specific and linguistically complex work to an audience lacking the contextual knowledge and familiarity necessary to appreciate its literary and philological dimensions.

Unfortunately, Alliata's translation was a commercial failure: it resulted in the work's withdrawal from the market and the subsequent difficulty of obtaining copies. This underlines the challenges facing fantasy literature in Italy during this period. The translation itself obtained mixed reviews, some critics appreciated Alliata's efforts, while noting

some inconsistencies and errors. The larger problem was represented by the absence of a considerable readership prepared to engage with Tolkien's particular form of literary fantasy. The book's length and complexity, together with the inexperience with those genre conventions, made it difficult to sell to a market more concerned with conventional forms of popular fiction or literary works.

With the Alliaa/Principe revision in the 1970s and the following Bompiani reprintings, fantasy had already started to establish itself more decisively in the context of Italian literary culture. It was certainly aided by the success of *The Lord of the Rings* itself, but also by the spreading international visibility of the fantasy genre (Spera 2011). The publication of *The Hobbit* in Italian (1973), the advent of "sword and sorcery" paperbacks, and the ongoing translation of other English-language fantasy works created a more receptive and open environment for Tolkien's epic. The appearance of Dungeons & Dragons and other role-playing games introduced younger Italian readers to fantasy conventions and vocabulary. Many Italian Tolkien societies and fan communities created networks of dedicated readers who discussed and promoted the new fantasy world and works.

Since readers developed greater familiarity with fantasy conventions and expectations, this changing framework allowed a partial shift towards more foreignising translation strategies and techniques. The all-embracing revisions undertaken by Quirino Principe pursued to correct translation errors, improve stylistic coherence, and align the text with Tolkien's linguistic artistry while still preserving accessibility for ordinary readers. Being a musicologist and translator with deep knowledge of German and Anglo-Saxon literature, Principe brought greater philological complexity to the revision than Alliaa who was a young translator working with limited reference materials and scholarly equipment. His corrections addressed linguistic errors together with cultural and literary misunderstandings that, in the first version, had distorted or, sometimes, confused, dimensions of Tolkien's creative imagination.

The Bompiani edition was reprinted nonstop from 1977 through 2019: this longevity testifies to its success in reaching an effective balance between fidelity and readability. Fatica's 2019 retranslation appeared in an intensely transformed cultural landscape. By then

Fantasy had become one of the most important commercial genres in Italian publishing, with dedicated fantasy imprints, conventions, and critical apparatus. Tolkien was recognised as a major twentieth-century author worthy of serious academic study and investigation. The Associazione Italiana Studi Tolkieniani was founded in 2014 to promote research and cultural events. Moreover, Peter Jackson's internationally successful film trilogy (2001-2003) familiarised millions of Italians with the narrative and visual world of Middle-earth, creating a cultural capacity that earlier translators could never have imagined.

This context allowed Fatica to attempt a more radically foreignising translation. He refused many of the domesticating negotiations and compromises of earlier versions, confident that, by then, contemporary readers possessed the cultural competence and genre familiarity necessary to appreciate, engage with and enjoy a more linguistically complex rendering. His translation frequently preserves elements of Tolkien's archaic register, retains more of the Anglo-Saxon and Norse linguistic structures, and challenges the temptation to simplify, clarify, or justify cultural references. The controversial changes to established character names and terms reflect not subjective and arbitrary innovation but methodical reconsideration of translation strategies in light of contemporary Tolkien scholarship and even advanced understanding of the author's philological intentions, as Alba Piga will explain in her work later on.

9. Methodology and scope of the present study

This study by Alba Piga undertakes a systematic comparative analysis of the three major Italian translations of *The Lord of the Rings*. She focuses in detail on the translation of proper names and rhymed verses that represent two of the most challenging and culturally substantial aspects of Tolkien's linguistic masterpiece. By examining a wisely selected corpus of names and poems across the three translations, her research illustrates the different translation philosophies and theories, practical strategies, and cultural contexts that shaped each version's approach to these fundamental elements of Tolkien's creative project.

Her analysis proceeds from the basis in modern Translation Studies theory, drawing particularly upon the domestication/foreignisation framework, retranslation theory, and specialised scholarship on name translation and verse translation. This theoretical background enables the research to move beyond purely descriptive comparison towards precise interpretive and revealing analysis that situates translation choices within broader debates about translation ethics, cultural politics, and the specific challenges and trials of fantasy literature. The study also engages extensively (and intensively, I would say) with Tolkien's own translation guidance and philological scholarship, using authorial intentions not as absolute prescriptions but as one important factor in evaluating translation decisions and choices alongside textual functionality, target-language aesthetics and "attractiveness", and reader reception and enjoyment of the translated work of art.

The corpus of names selected for analysis includes both major characters and toponyms, containing examples that span the various linguistic systems and naming conventions that Tolkien employed. This selection allows the investigation of different translation challenges. There are names derived from Common Speech that carry transparent semantic content, names drawn from invented Elvish languages that preserve cultural otherness, names rooted in historical languages like Old English that create intertextual connections, and names that employ wordplay, sound symbolism, or other literary devices that present special translation difficulties. This study illustrates the evolution of naming strategies across the three translations and the different priorities and constraints that shaped each translator's decisions.

Then, the analysis of rhymed verses similarly encompasses a diverse selection of different metrical forms, linguistic registers, narrative functions, and cultural contexts within the fictional world. This allows examination of how translators have to negotiate the competing and challenging pressure coming from different factors, such as semantic fidelity, formal structure, and cultural appropriateness across different types of verse. The study pays precise attention to the relationship between verse translation strategies and broader translation philosophies, asking how decisions about rhyme, metre, and poetic register reflect or implement the domesticating or foreignising orientations,

which could be applied and appear to be evident in other aspects of each translation.

10. Contribution and significance

This research provides significant contribution to Translation Studies and Tolkien scholarship. First, by delivering a detailed comparative analysis of three major Italian translations spanning more than five decades, it offers valuable empirical and pragmatic data for testing and refining theories of retranslation. The Italian *Lord of the Rings* case offers a precious context for examining retranslation dynamics. In fact, the translations emerged from different cultural moments and even publishing contexts, thus enabling observation of how shifting fantasy genre conventions, evolving Tolkien scholarship, and everchanging translation norms influenced successive translators' approaches.

Second, this study improves scholarly understanding of the specific challenges presented by fantasy literature in translation, in particular by works that perform extensive linguistic invention and elaborate world-building. Translation Studies has always devoted considerable attention to the translation of recognised literary works and to specialised problems like poetry translation and name translation: conversely, the translation of fantasy and science fiction has received less continuous theoretical consideration. Therefore, by engaging seriously with the characteristic features of Tolkien's linguistic creativity and originality and their implications for translation practice, Alba's research contributes to the development of more sophisticated and cultured frameworks for understanding how invented languages, fictional onomastic systems, and an elaborate paratextual apparatus affect translation potentials and constraints.

Third, the research illustrates important questions about authorial authority, agency and influence, and translator autonomy. Tolkien's extensive guidance to translators surely creates an uncommon situation in which authorial intentions and objectives are documented in unusual detail, raising questions about the appropriate relationship between translator creativity and imagination and authorial prescription. By

examining how the three Italian translators engaged with (or departed from) Tolkien's recommendations, the study offers proper insights into the negotiation and compromises between authorial authority and translator agency or autonomy and self-sufficiency that have obviously broader implications for translation practice and theory.

Finally, this study contributes to Italian literary history by recording the difficult reception and cultural integration of one of the twentieth century's most influential and powerful literary works. The Italian translation history of *The Lord of the Rings* signals visible developments in Italian publishing, the progress of Italian fantasy culture, and, last but not least, the changing attitudes towards foreign literature and translation practices. By analysing this history through the lens of specific translation decisions and choices, this research offers a nuanced and multifaceted account of how foreign works become domesticated within target literary systems and how successive retranslations negotiate and compromise between foreign culture integration and preservation of alterity and, at once, traditions, norms and conventions.

II. Structure of the present volume

Following this introduction, which has set up the theoretical framework and contextual background necessary for understanding the translation and retranslation of *The Lord of the Rings*, the present volume proceeds through four chapters and a conclusion by the junior independent scholar Alba Piga.

Chapter 1 provides important background on J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*, and its publishing history in both English and Italian. This chapter establishes the basis for the subsequent analysis by introducing readers to Tolkien's life, his scholarly and creative work, the genesis and structure of *The Lord of the Rings*, its critical reception and cultural impact, and the complicated publishing history that produced three distinct Italian translations. Particular attention is given to the circumstances surrounding each translation's production, including the commercial, legal, and cultural factors that shaped the translation landscape.

Chapter 2 develops the theoretical framework more fully, engaging in depth with key concepts from Translation Studies that inform the subsequent analysis. Building upon the overview provided in this introduction, Chapter 2 examines theories of translation equivalence, domestication and foreignisation strategies, retranslation dynamics, and the specific challenges posed by literary translation. This chapter also discusses Tolkien's own translation theory and practice and analyses the guidance he provided to translators of his work.

Chapter 3 focuses on the translation of proper names, examining both theoretical approaches to name translation and the specific strategies employed by Allata, Allata/Principe, and Fatica in rendering Tolkien's elaborate onomastic system. The chapter analyses a carefully selected corpus of character names and place names, tracing how each translator approached the challenges presented by names drawn from different linguistic sources and serving different narrative and cultural functions. Close analysis of specific translation decisions illustrated the broader translation philosophies that guided each version and the evolution of naming strategies across the three translations.

Chapter 4 addresses the translation of rhymed verses, examining both the general problems of verse translation and the specific challenges presented by Tolkien's diverse poetic forms. The chapter analyses the Ring Verse, which presents different metrical structures, linguistic registers, and narrative functions, showing how each translator negotiated the competing demands of semantic fidelity, formal structure, and cultural appropriateness. The focus is on the relationship between verse translation strategies and overall translation orientation, asking how decisions about poetic form and register reflect or implement the domesticating or foreignising tendencies evident in each translation's approach to names and prose narrative.

The conclusion summarises the findings of the name and verse analyses, reflecting on the broader implications for translation theory and practice. It considers what the Italian translation history of *The Lord of the Rings* reveals about retranslation dynamics, the cultural politics of translation, the specific challenges of fantasy literature, and the difficult relationships among translators, authors, publishers, and reading communities. The conclusion also identifies directions for future research,

including the need for reception studies that examine how different translations have shaped Italian readers' understanding and appreciation of Tolkien's work and comparative studies that examine translation strategies across multiple target languages.

The arguments in favour of retranslation remain compelling. Languages change, translation norms evolve, critical understanding deepens, and works that seemed adequately translated in one historical period may appear inadequate when measured against new standards.

This study of the Italian *Lord of the Rings* translations in the pages that follow exemplify a mature approach, offering careful analysis of specific translation decisions and choices situated within their theoretical, cultural, and historical contexts. By examining how three talented translators responded to common challenges across more than five decades, Alba Piga's research enriches our understanding of both Tolkien's linguistic artistic ability and creativity and the complex practice of literary translation itself.

Michela Giordano

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PART 2

INTRODUCTION

The Lord of the Rings is undoubtedly one of the most important media events of the last sixty years; it has sold more than one hundred and fifty million copies worldwide, been translated into thirty-eight languages and is universally acknowledged as one of the most successful literary works of the twentieth century. First published in the United Kingdom between 1954 and 1955, it inspired videogames, radio programs, theatrical pieces and a renowned movie saga directed by Peter Jackson which was based on the novel's three main volumes (*The Fellowship of the Ring*, *The Two Towers* and *The Return of the King*). It holds three Academy Awards records: the second movie won all eleven Oscars for which it was nominated, and it became the movie with the most Academy Award wins, tying with *Ben-Hur* and *Titanic*. The three movies received a total of thirty nominations and won seventeen Awards, becoming the movie series with the most Oscar wins.

Together with *The Hobbit* and *The Silmarillion*, *The Lord of the Rings* is J.R.R. Tolkien's most famous work. A brilliant writer, philologist, academic, linguist, and Old English scholar, Tolkien's massive bibliography includes essays, novels, short stories, tales, letters, and poems. Many of his works were published posthumously by his son, Christopher. Their success increased the audience's interest towards fantasy books and had a massive impact on pop culture. All over the world, many institutions and associations promote Tolkien's works and

remember his importance: in Italy, for instance, the Società Tolkieniana Italiana and the Associazione Italiana Studi Tolkieniani (founded in 1994 and 2014, respectively) promote the study and the distribution of Tolkien's works. Since 2003, fans all over the world celebrate Tolkien Reading Day, on March 25, planning events where they read and discuss his works.

The writing process of *The Lord of the Rings* started with the invention of Quenya, an artificial language. Thereafter, Tolkien imagined the history, the culture and the evolution of a folk that could speak it, and he created Elves. The same process led to the creation and the development of all races that live in the imaginary world created by the author. His whole work was driven by his love for philology, languages, and Anglo-Saxon literature, as well as his desire to create an English mythology that could fill the gaps left by the historical one.

The Lord of the Rings can be considered a high fantasy epic novel; its peculiar characteristics are related not only to the fantasy genre to which it belongs, but also to Tolkien's specific writing features: artificial languages, neologisms, multiple linguistic registers, and references to the Anglo-Saxon culture. This all needs to be taken into consideration before translating into a different language. The two most problematic aspects, however, are names and rhymed verses, and this is the reason why this work focuses on them. They both represent a particularly hard challenge for translators, as they play a crucial role in the story, and they carry multiple meanings and functions. These components must be carefully analysed in order to be correctly brought into the target text. The magnitude of this task must not be underestimated: there are hundreds of names and dozens of poems, songs, hymns, and riddles. The challenge has been somehow made easier by Tolkien himself, who wrote his "Guide to the Names in *The Lord of the Rings*" as a way to help translators by providing the etymology and explaining the function of the names he chose for characters and places. He also provided suggestions about which elements needed to be preserved in the source text, and which could be omitted, clarifying which names should be translated and which ones could retain their original form.

Italian editions of *The Lord of the Rings* faced a very complicated publishing history. The first book was translated into Italian by a young

Vittoria (Vicky) Alliata. It sold so few copies that it was withdrawn from the market, and it is now almost impossible to find. The first publisher, Astrolabio-Ubaldini, sold the rights to Rusconi, which published the three books after a huge revision made by Quirino Principe. The rights were then sold to publisher Bompiani, that reprinted the series multiple times until 2019, when a new translation by Ottavio Fatica was published. This decision attracted huge attention from fans and caused fierce controversy; the first translator even filed a lawsuit against Fatica and Bompiani.

All these elements, together with the information and the instructions provided by the author, have been taken into consideration in this research, which analyses a selection of names and rhymed verses and makes a comparison among three different Italian translations of *The Lord of the Rings*. The first chapter provides background information on the author, the novel's structure, the publishing history of the original text and its genre and plot; then it analyses the complicated publishing history of the Italian translations, which plays a pivotal role on the understanding of the difficulties posed by the collection of the material that was necessary to make the comparison. The second chapter focuses on the theoretical aspects of translation and retranslation, which has been quite frequent in Italy. The third and fourth chapters provide a theoretical background about the translation of names and rhymed verses and then analyse them. The linguistic analysis starts from the source text and explores the main issues of the Italian translations, while trying to explain the choices made by the three different translators, even when they did not provide any explanation.

CHAPTER I

TOLKIEN AND THE RINGS

1.1. The author

John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, an English writer, philologist, and academic, was born on 3 January 1892 in Bloemfontein, South Africa. Three years later, in 1895, he returned to England with his mother and younger brother, settling on the outskirts of Birmingham; his father, who remained in South Africa, died in 1896. Tolkien's mother's conversion from Anglicanism to Catholicism contributed to the rupture of relations with the rest of the family, on both the maternal and paternal sides, which were firmly rooted in the Anglican tradition. This estrangement, together with the consequent denial of any form of support – including financial assistance – led to a further deterioration of the family's already precarious living conditions following his father's death. His mother, severely weakened by these circumstances, died prematurely in 1904.

The rural landscapes of his childhood, along with the farmers who inhabited them, are frequently evoked in the descriptions found in his literary works and played a crucial role in the inspiration of the Shire and its inhabitants, the Hobbits, who feature prominently in both *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. From his mother, Tolkien inherited extensive botanical knowledge, a passion for ancient fairy tales, and an interest in foreign languages – elements that proved fundamental to his

professional activity. Following her death, his education was entrusted to the Oratorian priest Father Francis Xavier Morgan. Tolkien continued his studies in Birmingham, where he demonstrated an extraordinary aptitude for languages, eventually mastering Latin, Greek, Finnish, Icelandic, and Gothic. It was during this period that he began to devise the foundations of an invented language, commonly referred to as the 'language of the fairies'.

In 1911, thanks to a scholarship, Tolkien began attending Exeter College, Oxford, where he obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1915. In the same year, he enlisted in the army, which had been engaged in the First World War since 1914. The salary he received as an officer enabled him to overcome his financial difficulties and to marry Edith Bratt in 1916. The two had met in 1908, but Father Francis, who disapproved of the relationship with a woman who was older and of Protestant faith, had forbidden Tolkien from maintaining any contact with her until he reached the age of twenty-one.

In 1916, Tolkien took part in the Battle of the Somme, an experience that profoundly affected his life and personality, particularly due to the death of one of his closest friends. Nevertheless, despite this and other horrors endured during the war, Tolkien never ceased working on his invented languages. After contracting trench fever, he was discharged later that same year and returned to England, where he spent the remainder of the war commanding an outpost. In 1919, having received his final discharge from the army, he resumed his studies at Oxford and was awarded the degree of Master of Arts.

After these difficult years, Tolkien led a relatively quiet life, devoting himself to his family, his academic career, the development of his linguistic and philological interests, and the writing of a vast number of letters. In 1921 he became Professor of English at the University of Leeds, and in 1925 he was appointed Professor of Anglo-Saxon Philology at Pembroke College, Oxford. During this period, he formed a close friendship with Clive Staples Lewis, author of *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Together, they participated in the meetings of the literary circle known as the Inklings, within which some of Tolkien's most renowned works, including *The Lord of the Rings*, were first presented.

In 1937, the publishing house Allen & Unwin released *The Hobbit*, Tolkien's first narrative work. Encouraged by its success, he continued his literary production while maintaining his academic career. Between 1954 and 1955, Allen & Unwin also published the three volumes of *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*, *The Two Towers*, and *The Return of the King*.

Having definitively retired from academic life in 1959, Tolkien resumed work on *The Silmarillion*, his principal mythological corpus, which he had begun in 1917 but never completed. The work was published posthumously in 1977 by his son Christopher, whom Tolkien had appointed as the editor of his literary legacy. Edith Tolkien died in November 1971, and the writer followed her shortly thereafter, on 2 September 1973. On their graves in the cemetery of Wolvercote, on the outskirts of Oxford, are inscribed the names Beren and Lúthien, the two lovers who are the protagonists of the eponymous tale included in *The Silmarillion* (Garth 2003: 93).

1.2. Structure of the novel and publishing history

The composition of *The Lord of the Rings* began shortly after the completion of *The Hobbit*, but prior to its publication in 1937; Tolkien, however, interrupted this work in order to complete and organise the collection of myths and legends of the Elder Days, which was “primarily linguistic in inspiration” and “was begun in order to provide the necessary background of ‘history’ for Elvish tongues”. Discouraged by the limited interest shown in this collection and encouraged instead by readers who requested “more information concerning hobbits and their adventures,” the Professor resumed work on the sequel, but shifted the focus of the narrative to the “the older world”, thus making it “an account, as it were, of its end and passing away before its beginning and middle had been told”.

References to this older world were already present in *The Hobbit*, and the “discovery of the significance of these glimpses and of their relation to the ancient histories revealed the Third Age and its culmination in the War of the Ring.” Tolkien himself stated that the

composition of *The Lord of the Rings* “went on at intervals during the years 1936 to 1949,” and noted that the second edition corrected errors and inconsistencies while also offering further clarification on certain points raised by more attentive readers. He also acknowledged that he may have overlooked some due to the disorder of his notes. He recognised that, in order to answer certain questions, the books alone were insufficient, and that additional appendices or a supplementary volume would be required to contain much of the material not included in the original edition (especially that relating to linguistic matters) (Tolkien 2005: xviii et seq).

Erroneously defined as a trilogy, *The Lord of the Rings* is in fact a single novel consisting of six books and appendices, conceived as the first part of a projected duology whose second part was to be *The Silmarillion*. Tolkien's first British publisher, Allen & Unwin, however, declined to publish the latter, preferring instead to focus on *The Lord of the Rings* and to divide it into three volumes for economic reasons. *The Fellowship of the Ring*, *The Two Towers*, and *The Return of the King* were first published in the United Kingdom on 29 July 1954, 11 November 1954, and 20 October 1955, respectively. The American editions were released a few months later by Houghton Mifflin. The main texts, as well as the appendices, were revised, corrected, and expanded several times by Tolkien both out of personal interest – in order to satisfy readers' requests for further detail – and to remedy certain inaccuracies introduced by proofreaders.

The distinctive features of his style (orthography, grammar, phonetic devices, the use of archaic words, names, invented languages, and writing systems) posed considerable difficulties, and proofreaders frequently intervened to modify them. When Allen & Unwin ordered a reprint, the printers had to recreate the printing plates from scratch, having discarded those of the first printings; as a result, the edition was published with numerous errors, which Tolkien noticed only in 1965, while working on the first revision of the novel. This revision became necessary because in the same year the publisher Ace Books, exploiting a loophole in copyright law, had released in the United States a new version of the novel, riddled with errors and unauthorised by either Allen & Unwin or Tolkien, to whom no royalties had been paid. Following

a public campaign in support of the author, Ace Books withdrew the published copies and paid him the royalties.

By that time, Tolkien had already begun revising the novel in order to reissue it in the United States while holding full copyright. He sent further revisions and corrections, which, however, did not appear in the British reprints. A further revised text, known as 'Second Edition', was published in the United Kingdom in 1966 and contained all corrections as indicated by the author, who continued to work on revisions and to introduce changes (especially to names) that were incorporated into subsequent reprints of the second edition. After Tolkien's death in 1973, additional revisions were carried out by his son Christopher and included in later reprints by the publisher; this did not, however, prevent some errors from persisting (Reynolds 2006).

Tolkien's passion for philology, language, and Anglo-Saxon literature, combined with his aspiration to create an original mythology capable of compensating for the (perceived) absence of a native one, led to the birth of the world in which *The Lord of the Rings* is set. The creation of the artificial language Quenya prompted him to conceptualise a people who might speak it, with their own history and cultural evolution: thus, the Elves came into being. The same creative process subsequently led to the creation and development of the histories and identities of all the other races (Tolkien 1947: 38-89; Carpenter, Tolkien 1981: letter 131).

1.3. Genre and plot

Although Tolkien did not favour rigid labels for literary texts – least of all for his own – and preferred to regard it as a heroic romance (Carpenter, Tolkien 1981: letter 329), *The Lord of the Rings* is generally classified as an epic high-fantasy novel.

The term 'high fantasy' was coined by Lloyd Alexander in his 1971 essay *High Fantasy and Heroic Romance* and was later expanded upon by Kenneth J. Zahorski and Robert H. Boyer in their attempt to develop a classification system for naming and analysing genre fiction (Chance 2001: 141 et seq; Stableford 2005: 130 – 131). Tolkien is

widely regarded as the father of high fantasy and as the most influential author within the fantasy genre of the twentieth century (Clute, Grant 1997: 950–951). As for the adjective ‘epic’, Brian Stableford (Stableford 2005: 130–131) defines it as

A long narrative poem, usually based in mythology and featuring legendary heroes. Epics were the first works of fantasy literature; even such early examples as [...] Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* [...] are unmistakably literary constructions, albeit mingled with pseudohistorical material. Many epic poems are key taproot texts of modern fantasy, but there is a particular link between the epic tradition and commodified fantasy, in that J. R. R. Tolkien's lifelong dalliance in Middle-earth was conceived as an attempt to synthesize the epic that Old [...] England never had; insofar as *The Lord of the Rings* is spun off from *The Silmarillion*, the primary model of commodified fantasy retains and exemplifies many of the pretensions as well as the narrative formula of the epic. This makes the notion of “epic fantasy” more than a mere advertising slogan, although its frequent use as such has reduced its critical utility somewhat. Epic fantasies are multivolume works—usually insistent immersive fantasies, although some retain portal fantasy frames—that routinely extend far beyond their initial trilogies; they gradually build up detailed historical and geographical images of secondary worlds, within which elaborate hero myths are constructed.

It is also important to analyse the other adjective in the definition, ‘high’: high-fantasy novels are set in an imaginary world (also called ‘secondary’⁽¹⁾) and feature characteristic elements such as kingdoms, magical creatures, a struggle between good and evil, and, frequently, characters engaged in a quest. The hero is not a mighty warrior but rather an inexperienced young man, disregarded by both the forces of Good and those of Evil (except, perhaps, by the Wise). He is unaware of what lies beyond his native village and suddenly becomes aware of the conflict between Good and Evil and finds himself involved in it upon realising that he alone can defeat the enemy. A particularly

(1) This term was coined by Tolkien himself in the essay *On Fairy-Stories* (1947) and refers to a world governed by laws different from those of the real world, yet internally coherent and consistent with one another.

significant element removes the protagonist from his everyday life: this event leads him into a quest in which he is aided by a mentor (often a wizard). The hero is never entirely alone: he may belong to a group or have companions at his side. The narrative presents different peoples, distinguished both by their powers (sometimes magical) and by their appearance. They inhabit a secondary world inspired by medieval settings, described with great precision both spatially and temporally (even if the chronological references do not correspond to those of the real world) and constructed so as to appear realistic despite the presence of magical elements and peoples, also divided between Good and Evil. The antagonistic peoples, often dominated by an omnipotent dictator or leader endowed with great magical abilities, are frequently physically strong but intellectually limited. Wars and large-scale battles fought by great armies, with the presence of magical elements that determine their outcomes, constitute another typical feature. Both Good and Evil possess magical powers (which Evil often uses to hinder the protagonist) that require great knowledge and immense mental strength to be put into practice. Magic must, of course, be used with caution in order to be effective, and it can have severe consequences if misused. Another characteristic element is that magic itself often represents the key to definitively defeating Evil, which cannot be overcome through the use of weapons alone (Perry 2003: V–VI; Stableford 2005: 198).

All these elements are present in *The Lord of the Rings*: there are Orcs, Dwarves, and Elves; the mentor who possesses magical powers for the side of Good is the wizard Gandalf, while another, Saruman, uses them to oppose him; the protagonist who is drawn out of his everyday life is Frodo; the element of particular importance is the Ring, and the goal of the quest is to destroy it; the friends who accompany Frodo are Samwise Gamgee, Meriadoc Brandybuck, and Peregrin Took; examples of large-scale battles are numerous.

The plot of *The Lord of the Rings* is directly connected to *The Hobbit*, since the narrative resumes where the latter had ended. The events take place during the Third Age in Middle-earth, a continent that is part of the imaginary world called Arda. The narrative device used to link the two stories is that of the *pseudobiblion*, that is, a fictitious or imaginary book, never actually written, which exists only as a title or in

brief excerpts, yet is treated as though it truly existed (Sprague de Camp 1947: 7). The text from which Tolkien draws as a hypothetical literary source is the *Red Book of Westmarch* and is said to have been written by the hobbit Bilbo Baggins. In the opening chapters, Bilbo recounts the events that later constitute *The Hobbit* and then continues the account by including the narrative of the War of the Ring, the deeds of Frodo, and other events. Bilbo later bequeaths the book to Frodo so that he may complete it and organise it systematically; once finished, the book is eventually passed on to Sam.

In Tolkien's universe, Arda, the Dark Lord Sauron forged the One Ring to dominate the other nineteen Rings of Power, bearers of great magical abilities, and subjugate Middle-earth. During the final battle of the Second Age, Isildur cut the Ring from Sauron's hand, causing him to lose his powers and physical form; however, he did not die. Isildur kept the Ring – which had a will of its own – and was later killed by Orcs, falling into the Anduin River. The Ring remained at the bottom of the river for more than two millennia and was later found by a hobbit, Déagol. He was then killed by his cousin Sméagol, who wanted the Ring for himself. Sméagol was corrupted by it and later transformed into a creature called Gollum, who lived in the caves of the Misty Mountains, near Mirkwood, where Sauron was regaining his power.

After Sméagol lost the Ring, the hobbit Bilbo Baggins took it with him. Gollum wandered for years through Rhovanion in search of it, but was captured by Sauron, to whom he revealed the existence of Bilbo and of the Shire. As he wanted to leave for Erebor, Bilbo later passed the Ring to Frodo under Gandalf's guidance. As Sauron regained strength, Frodo set out with eight companions to destroy the Ring in Mount Doom. During the journey, the Ring exerted its influence over the entire Fellowship, and only some were able to resist it. The Fellowship was eventually broken, and he and Sam continued on the road to Mordor alone, with only Gollum reluctantly guiding them – and, eventually, betraying them. At Mount Doom, Frodo failed to destroy the Ring, succumbing to its power. However, Gollum's final struggle led him to fall into the chasm and destroy the Ring, resulting in Sauron's definitive defeat.

1.4. The Italian editions and the controversies

The first volume of *The Lord of the Rings*, *The Fellowship of the Ring*, was first published in Italy in 1967 by Astrolabio-Ubaldini, in a translation by Vittoria Alliata di Villafranca, who was at the time approximately sixteen years old. At that time, neither *The Silmarillion* (published in 1977) nor *The History of Middle-earth* (published in twelve volumes between 1983 and 1996) had yet been released; therefore, Alliata only had access to the main text and lacked additional materials that would have undoubtedly allowed for a deeper understanding of Tolkien's universe. However, she later claimed to have received, at the time, a manual from Tolkien himself where he gave her instructions for her translation, which she closely followed throughout her work.

Upon its release, the novel was a resounding commercial failure, and the publisher abandoned the project, despite the subsequent volumes having already been translated. Rusconi Libri, on the suggestion of Elémire Zolla (who also wrote an introduction), acquired the rights and published the complete trilogy in 1970: Alliata's translation was kept, but it was substantially revised by Quirino Principe. Since 2000, the rights to publish Tolkien's works in Italy have been held by Bompiani. The work underwent repeated further revisions and was republished in 2003 in collaboration with STI⁽²⁾, which contributed by correcting errors and inaccuracies. A translation of Tolkien's own preface to the second English edition was also included.⁽³⁾ For approximately fifty years, therefore, the only translation available on the Italian market was Alliata's. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that this version cannot be considered entirely consistent, as it underwent multiple revisions and republications, with numerous – and often significant – modifications, made by both Principe⁽⁴⁾ and STI.

(2) Società Tolkieniana Italiana – Italian Tolkien Society.

(3) In all editions of the novel published by Bompiani from October 2003 onward, however, approximately twenty lines that appear at the end of Chapter I of Book Two of *The Fellowship of the Ring* ("Many Meetings") in the original text were missing; these were reinstated only from January 2014. A different series from the 'main' ones, the *Oro* series, offered the unabridged text from the very first publication in 2007.

(4) «I carried out a general revision, corrected the errors, modified the overall tone, and reconstructed the Appendices. It was painstaking work. That said, I bow before the role that Alliata played in that undertaking.» – Quirino Principe, interview with *La Repubblica* published on 27 July 2015. Translation mine.

The three volumes were republished between 30 October 2019 and 22 July 2020 in a new translation by Ottavio Fatica. This provoked extremely strong reactions among readers and gave rise to extensive debates on forums and social media: on the one hand, there were (and still are) those who supported the new translation – approving Bompiani's decision to completely revise a text that not only inevitably reflected its age but also, according to many, contained numerous errors – and, on the other hand, those who criticised it harshly, particularly with regard to the decision to radically change many names. The debate, however, did not remain confined to fan discussions: an intense controversy arose between Alliota and Fatica, and even Bompiani's editorial director, Beatrice Masini, felt compelled to intervene to explain the publisher's position.

The controversy originated following an interview given by Fatica to Loredana Lipperini for *Robinson*, the cultural weekly supplement of the newspaper *La Repubblica*, and published on 29 April 2018. In the interview, the translator not only offered some previews of how he had approached the forthcoming translation, especially with regard to the most problematic aspects (such as proper names) and the most famous passages (such as the Ring Verse) but also commented on the previous translation by Alliota.

The previous translation has been heavily criticised: rightly so?

«To begin with, hats off to a very young girl who accepted such an undertaking: I would not have been able to do it at her age. And her translation does have a virtue: it is written in good Italian, whereas today, in most cases, people write in 'translator's Italian', modelled closely on English. That said, it has all the flaws of an improvised venture. But the major mistake came later, when, on Zolla's initiative, the book was finally taken seriously, and Quirino Principe revised the translation for the first time. At that point, one should have realised that it was not possible to correct five hundred errors per page over fifteen hundred pages. There is not a single paragraph free from gaps and mistakes. Verbs are missing, adverbs are missing, entire sentences are missing; at times the translation is done by ear. Alliota often removes parenthetical phrases, which do have meaning and give nuance to the character. Instead, she adds explanation upon explanation. It becomes

a paraphrase, and a very poor one. Moreover, she has a curious stylistic habit: she doubles adjectives. ‘Calm and tranquil,’ ‘quick and fast,’ ‘wretched and thin,’ ‘cruel and evil’ where the original was simply ‘fierce.’ It seems like a stylistic feature of Tolkien, but in fact it is hers. Of course, a young reader looking for adventure will read it and become engaged anyway. If you give a young reader a two-hundred-page version of *War and Peace*, you will still overwhelm them – the myth-making power remains intact; but if I had been an editor, I would at least have raised the problem.»⁽⁵⁾

In January 2019, Alliata, interviewed by Oronzo Cilli for *Il Giornale*, stated that she had filed a lawsuit against Ottavio Fatica, once again emphasising

«[...] the Professor’s active involvement in my work and the enthusiastic approval of the final text not only by Tolkien himself, [...] but also by his son Michael and by his friend [...] Camillo Talbot D’Alessandro [...] It would be appropriate for the publisher Giunti [...] to explain the reasons why it allows the work of one of its own translators – personally approved by the Author, who was moreover a fine linguist – to be publicly vilified.»⁽⁶⁾

Another important point addressed in the interview concerns the alleged approval of the new translation by Tolkien’s heirs.⁽⁷⁾

Federico Guglielmi (Wu Ming 4), a founding member of the AIST⁽⁸⁾, announced on his website that he had accomplished the task he had set himself, after “the approval from the Tolkien Estate,” namely, to “reopen the issue of translations and re-translations.”

(5) Translation mine.

(6) Translation mine.

(7) Alliata repeatedly claimed to have had several contacts with Tolkien, who allegedly provided her with guidance on the Italian translation. According to her account, for example, the Professor did not agree with leaving the names in English and would have approved with her the translation of ‘Sackville-Baggins’ as ‘Borsi-Sacconi’. However, no concrete or publicly available evidence exists of the author’s approval or of any correspondence between Tolkien and Alliata. It is, however, certain that Tolkien was reassured by someone known to him (and whose judgment he trusted) that Alliata’s Italian translation was well executed (Scull, *Hammond* 2017: 1083) but this does not mean that he had in fact read it.

(8) Associazione Italiana Studi Tolkieniani – Italian Society of Tolkien Studies.

«The Tolkien Estate, that manages the interests of Tolkien's heirs, categorically denies this claim. They were unaware of this initiative and are very surprised and disappointed that a publisher, after having sold not only millions of copies but also the film rights to a work, would call into question what Fatica himself on his own website defines as an epic undertaking. Moreover, in the interview Fatica states that he does not wish to comply with Tolkien's own guidelines, leaving almost everything in English. As for the pursuit of novelty at all costs, according to which the work must be updated because its philosophy (and especially its idea of freedom) differs from that of the present day, Christopher Tolkien himself deplored such distortions in 2012 in *Le Monde*: '[...] Tolkien has become a monster, devoured by his own popularity and absorbed into the absurdity of our time. The chasm between the beauty and seriousness of the work, and what it has become, has overwhelmed me.'⁽⁹⁾

Alliata further maintained that Bompiani had continued to reprint the novel, and therefore her translation, despite having no legal right to do so, since the contract stipulated with her had long since expired and had not been renewed. Bompiani's editorial director, Beatrice Masini, responded to Alliata's interview by explaining the publisher's position and clarifying that the failure to renew the contract had been due to a simple oversight:

«[...] It is in the spirit of careful maintenance of the catalogue that the decision was made to work also on *The Lord of the Rings*, in agreement with the English publisher and with the Tolkien Estate, who approved the project and the choice (made by Bompiani and by no one else) of the new translator. It is therefore the publisher's responsibility to undertake a new translation fifty years after the first. We announced it, rather than acting in silence, precisely because this did not and does not exclude keeping the historical translation in the catalogue. We proposed to Vittoria Alliata not only to renew the translation contract (which had recently expired and, due to an oversight, had not been immediately renewed) but also to revise her work, as is appropriate after so many years, in view of a new edition, and we received no definite response from her legal representatives; a direct exchange never took place because it was never accepted [...]'⁽¹⁰⁾

(9) Translation mine.

(10) Translation mine.

To this letter, Alliata replied

« It remains the case that the only translation approved by Tolkien is mine, and that the Tolkien Estate has stated in writing that it has had no relationship with Bompiani. Therefore, if there had been no intention to distort the work, Bompiani should have involved the only translator authorised by the Author. Instead, while continuing to publish my translation (with a contract that had expired years earlier), it deliberately excluded me, endorsed the seriously defamatory statements of Mr. Fatica, and, following legal warnings, admitted that it was carrying out through the new translator ‘a work of revision’ (unauthorised!) of my text, ‘many of whose choices remain valid and will be retained.’⁽¹¹⁾

At the end of that same year, Alliata published a letter of protest directed both against the publisher Bompiani and against the translator Ottavio Fatica, addressed “to Italian Tolkien scholars and enthusiasts” and circulated via the Facebook page *Tolkien Italia*, from which some excerpts concerning the most important points are reported below:

«In April 2018, Tolkien-enthusiast friends informed me of a bold attack on my translation of *The Lord of the Rings* [...] With courtesy but firmness, through my lawyers, I asked the publisher to publicly dissociate itself from the defamatory statements of those who accused me of a ‘youthful improvised venture,’ with no less than ‘500 errors per page over 1,500 pages.’ Having ascertained that my version [...] continued to be printed and marketed by Bompiani–Giunti in total disregard of copyright law and of the most basic rules of fairness, since the rights had expired many years earlier, I formally demanded that the publisher immediately withdraw it from bookstores. The reply from those who have so far collected millions from my translation without spending even a single euro revealed that a revision of my text was under way, of which I would be ‘informed in detail, should I wish (sic!), once the revision work was completed, in September.’ Not only did they in no way dissociate themselves from the serious offenses made against me, but they even made payment of what was legally owed (both for the unlawful use of my work and for its manipulation

(11) Translation mine.

by third parties already carried out in the eBook version) conditional upon two oppressive clauses: the obligation to revise my text 'under supervision' and the obligation to sign a ten-year contract renewal that would include and regularise the past, for an annual sum of 880 euros. And the serious defamation? And the betrayal of Tolkien's wishes, who claimed an archaic style of writing and rejected any 'updating to modern times'? Don't worry! The far-sighted publisher would allow me to present my own translation, in the version revised by Tolkien's 'modernisers,' with an introductory text that [...] would thus erase, free of charge and without apology, the crime of defamation. Not only that, but by trapping me in a sort of lethal embrace with the neo-modernist platoon, it would in some way make me complicit in the new translation, [...] 'which has provoked an ocean of snarling disapproval' and 'a storm of unprecedented hostility' (*Corriere della Sera*). Such could only be the readers' reaction to the experiment of a 'widespread lowering of Tolkien's epic tone, whereas Alliaia's aimed at an elevation' (sic *CdS*). Readers who proved far more perceptive and attentive than the revisionist intellectuals had thought: in fact, even if they might not know [...] the Dantean stylistic features used by a sixteen-year-old in order to respect the author's epic, ethical, and poetic demands, they grasped their narrative and evocative power and did not mistake them for '750,000 errors' [...] To the final legal warning from my lawyers they replied with an ineffable verdict, according to which 'in addition to refusing to revise her translation, your client chooses to sink it – now and definitively – by withdrawing it from commerce'; then, in the face of the sales flop of the new 'product' and of readers' comments suggesting instead to buy, 'collect, and give as gifts, before it disappears, the old edition,' they play one last, miserable card. That of so-called comparative advertising, which cannot be used even to disparage a competing laundry detergent, but which here we see employed in a misleading and subliminal way to profit from both 'detergent boxes' by exploiting media uproar. Thus desperate 'reviews' appear in caves, notebooks, and market stalls [...] All of this in contempt of every rule, as well as of good taste. A reaction ultimately similar to that of Rusconi in 1996, which refused [...] my request to revise the text, which still contained the same misprints as the Astrolabio edition, much to the peace of those acrobats who strive to maintain, against all evidence, that someone in 1971 had even rewritten my translation. Rusconi also rejected my proposal for an introduction better suited to illustrating the author's intentions and figure, as well as my own commentary

explaining stylistic and nomenclature choices. [...] What does all this mean? That Tolkien, apart from Astrolabio, did not find an Italian publisher capable of appreciating his universal role and of enhancing his figure and style [...] In this situation, it is evident that my translation, precisely because it was desired by the Author and by those who truly love him, cannot remain on shelves grouped together with those who handle it like a box of detergent. And since the latest grand comparative oracle has decreed in this regard that [...] the ‘instructions (of the Author) for translators are not binding,’ but that what matters – so decree the true experts – are only ‘semiotic isotopies,’ the ‘naïve’ will agree with me that the translation approved by Tolkien must be removed once and for all from such a publisher, who, without even realising it, is the first and true enemy of its own Author. An Author loved by millions of readers who find in him the beauty and the importance of fighting to preserve one’s roots [...]»⁽¹²⁾

According to what Alliata states in this letter, in other statements, and in other interviews, she only later discovered – following Fatica’s various public interventions – that her translation of *The Lord of the Rings* was still being sold by Bompiani without her receiving payment of royalties (since her contract with the publishing house had expired and had not been renewed) and that the publication of a new translation of the novel was planned. She therefore defines the sale of her translation of *The Lord of the Rings* as “unauthorised”. She further claims to have filed complaints against both Bompiani and Fatica (since the formal cease-and-desist notices had produced no results) in order to protect herself. However, these had no effect, as Bompiani continued to publish her version. In addition to issuing formal warnings to the press, Alliata also states that she warned the publisher not to intervene in her text, since she had been informed that the new translator was carrying out a revision without her authorisation. She denies having refused the agreements proposed by the publisher, instead asserting that her legal representatives met with those of the publishing house and that she herself remained for a long time awaiting a proposal from them, which essentially consisted of a ten-year contract renewal, with the publication of a revision of *The Lord of the Rings* “under supervision” and with

(12) Translation mine.

an introduction written by herself, in which she would have been able to explain the reasons for her translation choices – an offer that Allia-ta did not accept.

From January 2020 onward, copies of *The Lord of the Rings* in Allia-ta's translation were progressively withdrawn from the market and could no longer be purchased in bookstores. The numerous editions that had been published had always been objects of collectors' interest among fans, and their withdrawal from circulation only exacerbated the situation. At present, even the editions of the old translation that were considered inexpensive are virtually unobtainable and can be found only through private sellers, and speculation on these copies has led to a sharp increase in the prices of the various editions of *The Lord of the Rings*, often making them difficult to obtain.

CHAPTER II

TRANSLATING AND RETRANSLATING

2.1. Translating fantasy

The fantasy genre displays a number of distinctive characteristics: its setting in a secondary world governed by its own rules and conventions; the presence of magic, upon which characters rely in order to fulfil their roles; the existence of supernatural beings such as witches, wizards, or elves, as well as talking plants or animals; the opposition between Good and Evil and the final confrontation between the two factions, typically culminating in an epic battle. Fantasy can be considered as a combination of two other genres (i.e., fairy tale and epic) and may be regarded as the modern evolution of the fairy tale (Ressa 2012; Pedaccini Floris, Cotroneo Trombetta 2012: 228). Therefore, although not all fantasy novels are aimed at children, the genre is usually classified as children's literature (Heller in Abend-David 2014: 173-174) and translators often apply the strategies commonly adopted for this specific textual genre. This dual nature makes fantasy a particularly demanding challenge for translators, since its distinctive features must be preserved in the transfer from the source language and culture to the target language and culture, while also considering the natural differences between the two types of readerships (i.e., children and adults) (Birsanu 2020: 2).

Creative use of language, in particular, represents a crucial element to be considered in the translation process. In fantasy novels,

it is very common for characters to speak an existing language in a marked way (for instance, by adopting a highly elevated or, conversely, a very low register), or even to use an entirely invented language. Proper names of characters and places also constitute a significant challenge, as authors frequently use loaded names (i.e., motivated proper names endowed with an intrinsic meaning and containing references or allusions to intra- or extratextual elements) (Hermans in Wintle 2015: 11–13). These features clearly contribute to characterisation and character development and therefore need to be conveyed in the target text. Another element often found in children's literature and in many fantasy texts (and *The Lord of the Rings* is no exception) is the use of poetic language and rhymes.

It is therefore essential to consider the imaginary world constructed in fantasy texts, which entails the extensive presence of such elements and culture-specific references, whose translation inevitably involves a certain loss of meaning due to the differences between the source language and culture and the target language and culture (Patison 2016). Translators must consequently have a strong aptitude for imagination and linguistic creativity and render these elements accurately, by finding – or creating – an equivalent in the target language and culture (Heller in Abend-David 2014: 174). The two main approaches to literary translation (and consequently to fantasy translation) are foreignisation – which entails the preservation of temporal and spatial references – and domestication – which is achieved through the substitution of culturally equivalent elements from the target culture, both at the temporal and spatial level (Diadori 2012: 52). Osimo proposes an intermediate approach, universalisation, which tends to neutralise the spatio-temporal references of the source text (Osimo 2011: 329). The two main strategies proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet, by contrast, are direct translation – realised through borrowing, calque, and literal translation – and oblique translation – realised through transposition, modulation, equivalence, and adaptation (Diadori 2012: 55).

2.2. Retranslation

Retranslation is defined both as the act of translating into a given language a text that has already been translated into that same language, and as the outcome of this process (i.e., the retranslated text) (Tahir Gürçağlar in Baker, Saldanha 2020: 484). It is generally regarded as a positive phenomenon, as it allows access to a wider range of interpretations of the source text.⁽¹⁾ Research in this field has traditionally focused on literary texts, since they are most frequently retranslated.

According to Venuti, translation, like other cultural practices, involves the creation of linguistic, literary, religious, and political values; what makes it unique is that these values are created through a written interpretation of a text produced in a different language. Therefore, the source text values are inevitably reduced and reshaped in order to conform to those typically appreciated by the receiving culture (Venuti 2003: 25). Even when the translator maintains strict semantic equivalence with the source text and incorporates aspects of the source context, translation can nonetheless be defined as an inscription of the source text that embodies intelligibility and interests that are fundamentally domestic (i.e., specific to the target culture). Retranslations constitute a special case: the values they create can be considered doubly domestic, as they are determined not only by those introduced by the retranslator into the target text, but also by those embedded in previous versions by other translators. Moreover, Berman argues that in the literary field translation is an unfinished act that can aspire to true completion only through retranslation, which allows the closest possible approximation to the source text and in the encounter between the source language and the translator (Tahir Gürçağlar in Baker, Saldanha 2020: 485).

The first translations of a text are generally driven by editorial and cultural considerations. They may at times inhibit the alterity of the text (by introducing cuts or modifications motivated by the need to achieve greater readability) and domesticate the source text in order to present it more effectively to a given target culture. Subsequent translations, by

(1) In some cases, such as in theatrical scripts, retranslation is inevitable and often necessary whenever a performance is revived or presented anew to an audience.

contrast, tend to pay greater attention to the style of the source text and to maintain a cultural distance between the translation and its source, thereby reflecting the uniqueness of the latter.

A distinctive feature of translations is ageing. According to Berman, while the source text remains unchanged and 'young', translations age over time, generating the need for new ones; however, not all age, and not all age in the same way: those that withstand the test of time and prove as resilient as the original text may be regarded as great translations. These two phenomena have traditionally been associated with linguistic change and readers' aesthetic expectations. Ageing, however, cannot be reduced solely to linguistic – i.e., lexical, syntactic, or stylistic – changes, since these (as well as cultural, ideological, and genre-related factors) may themselves age and subsequently shape the way in which translations age. Although often considered one of the key factors in the debate, the existence of a direct correlation between the passage of time and the need for retranslation cannot be taken for granted, as the same source text may be retranslated several times within a short period. Therefore, the decision to retranslate a text cannot be attributed merely to the linguistic ageing of the first translation.

Several scholars have sought to explain why certain texts are translated repeatedly while others are not. Rather than being linked to intrinsic characteristics of the source text (which would make it 'worthy' or 'in need' of retranslation), the motivation may be related to the target context that generates retranslations. Changes in social contexts and discursive strategies, as well as the evolution of translational norms, are often regarded as factors that significantly influence the decision to retranslate particular texts. Retranslations are also frequently regulated by shifts in the ideological context: such factors, together with political ones, have often prompted retranslations, especially of literary texts considered canonical (Tahir Gürçağlar in Baker, Saldanha 2020: 486).

Further causes can include a retranslator's wish to propose their own version of a given source text (Venuti 2003: 25) or their unawareness of the existence of previous translations; a lack of coordination and communication among publishers – which can result in the simultaneous publication of multiple translations, that may therefore be regarded both as first translations and as retranslations; the publication of a revised or

expanded source text (in which case new translations are presented as improvements, since they are based on a version to which earlier translators did not have access); the discovery of errors or misinterpretations in the first translation, allowing the retranslation to claim greater adequacy and fidelity to the source text (or to a portion of it); the replacement of an indirect translation with a direct one; and the expiration of copyright, which places the source text in the public domain and consequently reduces translation and publication costs. It may also aim at proposing a new interpretation of the source text, sometimes addressing a different readership and sometimes creating a new one,⁽²⁾ or to reaffirm the authority of particular social institutions.

Retranslation has a 'supplementary' nature, which enables translators not only to address different readerships and to recategorise, integrate, or reorient the source text, but also to introduce new concepts into the target culture. According to Toury, it arises from the intention to remedy a lack or to fill a gap in the target system by importing something that was previously absent. He further argues that retranslation, like translation, should be regarded as an act of planning, as it always entails an element of change on the part of the receiving culture, however minimal this may be.

More recent research portrays the field of retranslation as characterised by a constant struggle between individuals and institutions for the control and production of new interpretations. Retranslations undertaken with an awareness of one or more previous translations are justified on the grounds that they will differentiate themselves from earlier versions, and this difference – often signalled through paratextual interventions explicitly highlighting the status of retranslation – may be traced back to retranslation strategies that propose competing interpretations based on the assumption that previous versions are no longer acceptable. This assumption is usually grounded in social or ideological principles rather than in clear linguistic or literary shortcomings of earlier translations.

(2) Typical examples of this type of reinterpretation and reorientation of previously translated texts are 'children's' versions of works originally intended for adult audiences, and vice versa. In such cases, retranslations develop a particular intertextual relationship both with one another and with their source texts (Tahir Gürçağlar in Baker, Saldanha 2020: 487).

Retranslations are commonly distinguished into passive and active: the former are separated by spatial or temporal distance and do not influence one another; the latter share the same cultural and temporal position and are regarded as indicative of divergences in translational strategies that call into question the validity of previous translations. Deane-Cox, however, maintains that retranslations challenge earlier interpretations even when they are separated by centuries, and that such contrast may be observed both diachronically and synchronically. Moreover, an active retranslation does not necessarily have to oppose a previous translation.

Brownlie theorises the phenomenon of haunting, whereby the style of earlier translations may re-emerge in a later one, while Koskinen and Paloposki argue that the first translator invariably exerts an influence on the choices of subsequent translators, and that a so-called 'anxiety of influence' is always present in retranslation, meaning that the retranslator must inevitably take some position with respect to the first (Tahir Gürçağlar in Baker, Saldanha 2020: 488). According to a study conducted by Schögler, the phenomenon of haunting is particularly widespread in the social sciences, where early translations are often cited; in this way, the terminological choices of the first translator become canonised and are consequently reused in later translations. These complex intertextual relations among retranslations position them within a shared network. Even a retranslation that initially appears independent and devoid of any deference to or competition with other translations of the same text develops a symbiotic relationship with them, benefiting from the status of the source text (especially in the case of canonical literature). This phenomenon unfolds within a network of past and future translations that help to establish and reinforce such status.

Some retranslators claim to have gained a more thorough understanding of the source text, the source culture, or the author, or point out the presence of various shortcomings in previous translations; others emphasise that their interpretations fulfil a function in the target text that earlier versions did not perform. Their aim is clearly to defend and legitimise their translations and to distinguish them from previous ones. Retranslations therefore foreground translator intentionality more strongly, as they are designed to establish a substantial difference from

earlier versions; the retranslators intention is to interpret the source text through different values in order to generate a different reception in the target culture. They are thus likely to be aware of the linguistic and cultural norms that shaped previous interpretations and to decide whether to maintain, revise, or eliminate them (Venuti 2003: 29).

Brisset highlights the importance of studying retranslations not only from a diachronic but also from a synchronic perspective, suggesting that such an approach can shed light on the factors that distinguish the work of different translating subjects and highlight the cognitive and creative dimensions of translation. Similarly, Venuti emphasises the importance of the individual retranslator's role, arguing that retranslations foreground intentionality insofar as they are conceived to make a significant difference. While some retranslations may arise from a translator's simple appreciation of a text, others aim to displace prevailing translational norms within a given culture.

The field of retranslation is in constant evolution, with new approaches and case studies contributing to the development of current perspectives and methodologies. In particular, audiovisual retranslation is a rapidly expanding area, and the number of bibliographic studies is also increasing. Although these are sometimes hindered by issues of definition and classification, retranslation bibliographies facilitate access to texts by overcoming methodological problems related to the identification of retranslations in sources that do not provide adequate search options, thereby effectively promoting research in the field. Nevertheless, the cultural and historical variability of translation and retranslation will continue to make the identification of relevant texts difficult, even when direct textual analysis is carried out. According to Paloposki and Koskinen, the boundaries between translation and retranslation remain blurred, giving rise to problematic consequences. Some retranslations, for instance, are in fact mere copies of previous translations and are therefore defined as pirated or plagiarised.

CHAPTER III

TRANSLATING NAMES

3.1. Translating names

In a general context, proper names are classified as ‘conventional’: they designate a single referent, are not subject to morphological rules, lack synonyms, semantic content, or connotative value, and are typically unmotivated. In a literary context, however, proper names of characters and places are classified as ‘loaded’, as they assume a significant function and are often created with deliberate care by the author, who characterises them with specific connotations and intra- or extratextual references (Manini 1996: 161–162; Hermans in Wintle 2015: 11–13).

Scholarly perspectives diverge on the translatability of proper names. On the one hand, some argue that names should be translated when they perform a marked function or convey particular meanings; on the other hand, some suggest that this practice risks alienating the reader from the source context or erasing the semantic and connotative layers of the original (Epstein 2012: 72), which should be preserved. Furthermore, translators should retain a form which is consistent with the source language and verify the existence of established translations (Newmark 1981: 70–71). The process of translating proper names is inherently complex. It requires the translator to deconstruct the name’s formal and semantic components and to reconstruct the creative process undertaken by the author at the time of creating the names. In

cases where a name embodies multiple layers of meaning that cannot be simultaneously conveyed, the translator must prioritise which aspects to preserve, always with the goal of achieving an equivalent semantic effect in the target text (Manini 1996: 167).

Translation strategies are also conditioned by a range of contextual factors, such as the genre, the target audience (Manini 1996: 173), the linguistic and structural characteristics of both source and target languages, as well as the cultural and educational backgrounds of the target audience (Epstein 2012: 72). As fantasy literature addresses both younger and adult audiences, the latter factor must be given particular consideration. Authors of fantasy novels, perhaps even more so than those writing exclusively for adults, pay special attention to the selection of anthroponyms and toponyms, frequently drawing inspiration from mythology, historical sources, literary traditions, and common or abstract nouns. The resulting names therefore tend to reflect essential characteristics of the character or place (Manini 1996: 164-165).

Although readers may not be always aware of the function of names, they serve as a powerful tool for conveying information and shaping perceptions of characters and places, guiding the reader's judgment. Consequently, both authors and translators must understand which aspects of a name – its meanings, sounds, and associations – the audience can comprehend, particularly in relation to the cognitive and interpretative capacities of younger readers (Epstein 2012: 68-72).

B.J. Epstein proposes seven strategies for translating proper names (Epstein 2012: 72 et seq):

- **retention** of the name and its associations. It is used especially when adaptation is unnecessary because the source and target cultures/languages are very similar;
- **replacement** of the name with another name, a description, or a more general term. It is particularly suitable for highly allusive names;
- **deletion** of the name and/or its associations;
- **addition** of a new name and/or new associations and/or some other text where there was none before;
- **adaptation** of the name by changing the spelling, grammar, usage, or some other part of it in order to fit the target language/culture.

It is suitable when sound is a key characteristic of the name but is difficult to reproduce for the target audience, or when a well-known version of the name already exists in the target language;

- **explanation** through additional elements (words, phrases, footnotes, introductions). It is particularly useful for preserving specific references that might otherwise be lost;
- **literal translation** by breaking the name into its base components and recreating them in the target language. It is especially suitable for descriptive names but often results in a loss of connotations.

It is essential that the translator carefully consider the degree of foreignness they wish the text to convey. Some prefer a more domesticating strategy, aiming to bring the source text closer to the culture and language of the target audience, while others prioritise remaining faithful to the source text (Epstein 2012: 77).

3.2. Names in *The Lord of the Rings*

The author's explanations regarding the process of name creation and the meanings embedded in them, along with suggestions on how these names might be rendered in the target language, constitutes an invaluable resource for translators. In the case of *The Lord of the Rings*, J.R.R. Tolkien personally intervened to provide precise information about the references and elements contained in the names he created, giving explicit instructions on how to transpose them into the target language.

He explains that the English of the source text functions as the Common Speech⁽¹⁾ spoken by the peoples of Middle-earth; the language into which the work is translated should therefore serve as an equivalent of English, thus representing the Common Speech within the target culture. For some names, Tolkien recommends preserving the original form; however, in most cases, he advocates for translation – provided

(1) 'Common Speech' is one of the names (together with 'Common Language' and 'Common Tongue') used to designate the language known as Westron. Originally spoken by the Dúnedain, during the Third Age it became the common language of the various races inhabiting Middle-earth. In the Italian translations it is rendered as 'Lingua Corrente' or 'Lingua Comune'.

it preserves the original meaning as much as possible. The author also acknowledges that, although some names do not constitute (or should not constitute) a difficulty – especially for Germanic languages – others may prove more problematic. He therefore almost always recommends not preserving them in their original form, so as not to compromise the naming scheme, and, where necessary, to identify an alternative form that nonetheless respects their meaning and the references they convey. Tolkien lists and analyses several names, explaining their origin and intra- and extratextual references, and indicating the elements that should be preserved in their transposition into the target text (Lobdell 1975: 153 et seq.). At the beginning of the “Guide”, he further specifies that the names not included in the list should be retained in their original form.

In the Italian translation published from 2019 onwards, Fatica makes no mention of the issues related to the rendering of names, nor does he offer any explanation for his translational choices – unlike Principe, who had addressed such issues in his “Nota del curatore”, an editor’s note:

The principal difficulty encountered in translating *The Lord of the Rings* concerns the proper names of persons and places. The novel has a geographical centre, the Shire, inhabited by the Hobbits, who in the English text bear names ranging from a common, everyday, bourgeois tone (Baggins, Sackville-Baggins, Boffin) to more fairy-tale-like or even comic-fairy-tale tones (Brandybuck, Bracegirdle). Characters who live outside the Shire, or who come from beyond it, generally bear sonorous and legendary names, evocative of Norse saga or chivalric romance (Gandalf, Aragorn, Glorfindel, Galadriel, etc.). It should be noted, however, that in all, or almost all, of these names there is an allusion, more or less evident or concealed. If such allusions were to retain their full significance in the Italian translation, all the names would have to be translated by calquing the meanings to which they allude in the source language. The translator, on the other hand, sought to avoid jarring dissonances. Thus, although *Baggins* recalls *bag* and *Sackville* similarly recalls *sack*, clear allusions to the prosperity and abundance in which the Baggins live and in which the Sackville-Baggins aspire to live, as well as to myths of hidden treasure and to the cheerful conviviality that characterises Hobbiton, the translator preserved the original

forms, thereby avoiding an ‘out-of-key’ rendering such as *Sacconi*, or *Borsi-Sacconi*, or similar solutions. In other cases, certain spellings were adapted (Eng. *Took*, It. *Tuc*; Eng. *Brandybuck*, It. *Brandibuck*) in order to accentuate the fairy-tale tone of some names. In a few rare cases, a genuine Italian translation was adopted, calqued on the original or selected as an interpretation thereof (e.g. Eng. *Rivendell*, It. *Gran Burrone*; Eng. *Bywater*, It. *Lungacque*), both to avoid, where possible, an accumulation of exotic names – especially toponyms – difficult for the Italian reader to remember, and to enhance, where the ear suggested it, a familiar, ‘homely’ tone (e.g. *Lungacque*), set in contrast with the legendary tone of other places or characters encountered during the ‘adventure’, as well as to foreground the visual values implicit in certain toponyms (e.g. *Gran Burrone*). In all other cases, the original form was retained. The result – a spectrum of linguistic forms ranging from a plausible ‘everyday’ English to Italian, to exotic, archaic, or chivalric names, and to hybrid forms – does not, in our view, betray the relationships among the names in the original, which, it should be recalled, depicts an imaginary world in an imaginary time.⁽²⁾

This note introduced Principe’s revised editions of Alliaia’s translation, published from 1970 onwards: the abovementioned observations, therefore, refer to this version of the text. The remark that «[...] the translator preserved the original forms, thereby avoiding an ‘out-of-key’ rendering such as *Sacconi*, or *Borsi-Sacconi* [...]» is particularly significant, since these were precisely the translation choices that Alliaia had proposed in the very first translation of the novel, on the basis of Tolkien’s own indications.

The following sections will examine a selection of names according to the guidelines provided by Tolkien in his “Guide to the Names in *The Lord of the Rings*” (Lobdell 1975: 153 et seq; Hammond, Scull 2005: 750 et seq). Unless otherwise noted, the analysis references Tolkien’s “Guide to the Names in *The Lord of the Rings*” and will compare the various Italian translations, including that of Alliaia in the Astrolabio-Ubaldini edition. It is worth noting that this edition was printed in a very limited number of copies and withdrawn from the market shortly thereafter, rendering the volume particularly rare and, consequently, difficult to obtain

(2) Translation mine.

for comparison with later translations.⁽³⁾ Given the vast number of names present in the novel, this analysis will be restricted to those appearing in *The Fellowship of the Ring*. The focus will be on the names of greatest translational relevance, with particular attention paid to cases in which the differences between editions are most pronounced.⁽⁴⁾ The analysis will be based on the following editions:

- **Original (O):** *The Lord of the Rings*, London, George Allen & Unwin, 1966 (2005 edition, London, HarperCollins Publishers);
- **Alliata (A):** *La Compagnia dell'Anello. Parte prima della trilogia: Il Signore degli Anelli*, traduzione di Vicky Alliata di Villafranca, Roma, Astrolabio-Ubaldini, 1967;
- **Alliata/Principe (A/P):** *Il Signore degli Anelli*, traduzione di Vicky Alliata di Villafranca, edizione a cura di Quirino Principe, Milano, Rusconi Libri, 1970; *Il Signore degli Anelli*, traduzione di Vicky Alliata di Villafranca riveduta e aggiornata in collaborazione con la Società Tolkieniana Italiana, edizione a cura di Quirino Principe, Milano – Firenze, Bompiani, 2017;
- **Fatica (F):** *Il Signore degli Anelli*, traduzione di Ottavio Fatica, rivista con la collaborazione di Giampaolo Canzonieri – Associazione Italiana Studi Tolkieniani, Milano – Firenze, Bompiani, 2020.

(3) According to collectors, this very first edition was printed in roughly four hundred copies. Access to some pages was made possible thanks to Lock, author of the *Lemonskin* blog (<https://www.lemonskin.net/io/>), whose support is gratefully acknowledged.

(4) For instance, the name 'Strider' – which entered the collective imagination as 'Grampasso' and was later translated by Fatica as 'Passolungo' (one of the changes that most irritated fans) – has not been analysed. Likewise, neither the surname 'Boffin' (translated only by Alliata as 'Boffa' and subsequently always retained in its original form), nor the name of the farmer 'Maggor' (Italianised by Alliata as 'Maggiotti' in 1967 and thereafter consistently preserved in its original form in later editions), nor 'Thorin Oakenshield' (rendered by Alliata as 'Thorinio Ochenscudo' and subsequently always maintained in the original form), nor the 'Easterlings' (translated in the Alliata edition as 'Orienteni', in the Alliata/Principe edition as 'Esterling', and in the Fatica edition as 'Easterling') have been examined. Similarly, it was decided not to analyse certain toponyms such as 'Minas Tirith' (left unchanged in all editions and only occasionally rendered as 'Minas Tiris' in the Alliata edition, before being restored to the original form), 'Hobbiton' (consistently translated as 'Hobbiville' until the 2019 edition, in which it was reverted to the original form), 'Tuckborough' (adapted by Alliata and Principe as 'Tucboro' and later rendered by Fatica as 'Borgo Tuck'), or 'Westernesse' (always translated as 'Ovesturia' until 2019, when Fatica rendered it as 'Occidenza').

3.3. Anthroponyms and ethnonyms

O	A	A/P	F
Baggins Sackville-Baggins	Sacconi Borsi-Sacconi	Baggins Sackville-Baggins	Baggins Sackville-Baggins

The surname Baggins appears frequently in the novel: it belongs to the protagonist Frodo and his uncle Bilbo, while the Sackville-Bagginses form a secondary branch of the family, often mentioned in the story. According to Tolkien, the association of ‘sack’ and ‘bag’ was intended to produce a subtle comic effect, as they are near synonyms. Furthermore, Sackville is a genuine English surname endowed with aristocratic connotations, whereas Baggins is etymologically and semantically connected to Bag End, the name of Bilbo’s home. Tolkien therefore maintained that the translation of Baggins should contain an element denoting or recalling ‘bag’, while Sackville-Baggins ought to be rendered as a compound reproducing equivalents of both ‘bag’ and ‘sack’. Only Alliaa followed the author’s guidelines, translating literally. Principe and Fatica, by contrast, opted for retention.

O	A	A/P	F
Barliman Butterbur	Omorzo Cactaceo	Omorzo Cactaceo	Omorzo Farfaraccio

Barliman Butterbur is the innkeeper of The Prancing Pony inn. According to Tolkien, although Butterbur is not an attested surname in England, Butter and its various compounds (such as, for example, Butterfield) are nevertheless widespread and originally functioned as toponyms. In the novel, these forms were modified to conform to the botanically inspired naming patterns typically found in Bree, a village located in the northern region of Middle-earth, east of the Shire. Barliman is an orthographically modified compound of ‘barley’ and ‘man’ that conveys a semantic association with an innkeeper and a brewer, while butterbur is a fleshy plant with a heavy flower head on a thick

stalk and very large leaves. As per the author's instructions, the name should be translated while the surname should be replaced with the corresponding plant name in the target language while preserving, if possible, an equivalent of 'butter'. Not all languages, however, allow for such a correspondence; therefore, Tolkien suggests using the name of another plant containing 'butter', or alternatively the name of another fleshy, thick-leaved plant.

In Italian, Barliman has consistently been translated literally with a compound of 'omo' (an alternative form of 'uomo', 'man') and 'orzo' ('barley'), in line with the author's guidance. The surname Butterbur, by contrast, has been rendered differently. Alliata and Principe replaced it with an adjective based on the name of another fleshy plant – the cactus – perhaps also intending to allude to the innkeeper's short and stout physical appearance. Fatica, on the other hand, preferred a literal translation that remains strictly within the botanical register, as 'farfaraccio' is the Italian equivalent of 'butterbur'.

O	A	A/P	F
Bracegirdle	Serracinta	Serracinta	Pancieri

The Bracegirdles are a Hobbit family of the Shire. The surname is attested in England and derives from Middle English *brec*, meaning 'breeches', from Old French *braie(s)* and from Old English *gyrdel*, 'for a maker of belts to keep up breeches' (Hanks, Coates, McClure 2016: 308). In the narrative, the name alludes to the Hobbits' tendency to grow stout and, consequently, to exert considerable strain on the waistbands of their trousers. Its translation should therefore, in some way, preserve this notion in the target language, without necessarily resorting to an existing surname.

Alliata and Principe once again adopt a strategy of literal translation, rendering 'brace' as 'serra' (a shortened form of 'serrare', meaning 'to clasp') and 'girdle' as 'cinta'. Fatica, by contrast, uses replacement, remaining within the same semantic field but not forming a compound and adapting 'panciera' ('girdle'), into the surname Pancieri. While

Fatica does preserve the functional aspect, Alliata's choice is more faithful to the original compound.

O	A	A/P	F
Brockhouse	Tassi	Tassi	Tanatasso

The Brockhouses are a large Hobbit family from Bree. Some members of the family resided in the Shire and attended Bilbo's farewell celebration on his one hundred and eleventh birthday. *Brocc* denoted the badger in Old English. It remained in use until the end of the nineteenth century both in spoken and literary usage and was consequently recorded in dictionaries. It occurs in numerous toponyms, from which genuine surnames are derived (such as, for example, Brockbanks). In *The Lord of The Rings*, the name was devised as a typical Hobbit surname, since the badger constructs neat and complex burrows, in much the same way as Hobbits.

The second element of the compound reinforces the reference to burrows, yet – until 2019 – it was curiously omitted in Italian translations, which only preserved the animal reference from the first part of the compound and translated it literally.⁽⁵⁾ Fatica's translation, in this case, proves more accurate and faithful to the original, as it restores the allusion to both badgers and their burrows.

O	A	A/P	F
Chubb	Paffuti	Paffuti	Paciocco

The Chubbs are a Hobbit family from the Shire, related to Bilbo, and many of them attended his farewell celebration. As many of them married into the Took and Baggins families and they frequently use

(5) The surname is rendered both in the singular (Tasso) and in the plural (Tassi), sometimes in accordance with the grammatical rules of English rather than those of Italian, and sometimes not. The same is also observed with the surname Chubb.

names derived from exotic flowers and gemstones, it may be inferred that they belonged to an upper social stratum. Chubb is an authentic English surname, selected by Tolkien for its immediate association with the adjective 'chubby', meaning 'round and fat in bodily shape', which in turn derives from 'chub' – a freshwater fish.

In Italian, 'chubby' corresponds to 'paffuto', 'grassoccio', 'pienotto'. Accordingly, Alliaia opted for a literal translation in the plural form, later retained by Principe. Fatica's choice, on the other hand, may be regarded as an even more literal rendering, as it not only employs a lexical item conveying the same semantic value and positive connotation (albeit with a more regionally marked usage), but also reproduces the morphological truncation present in the source text. In English, in fact, 'chubby' loses its final vowel, whereas in Italian 'paciocco' is a truncated form for 'pacioccone'.

O	A	A/P	F
Dúnedain – Númenoreans	Dunedani – Numenoreani	Dunedani – Dúnedain – Dúnadan – Númenoreani	Dúnedain – Númenóreani

The Númenóreans (or Men of Númenor) were the first inhabitants of the kingdom of Númenor on the island of Elenna,⁽⁶⁾ known in the Common Speech as 'Westernesse'. The original name (in Quenya) was Tolkien's invention: «*Númenor*, shortened form of *Númenórë*, is my own invention, compounded from *numē-n*, 'going down' (√ndū, nu), sunset, west, and *nōrë* 'land, country' = *Westernesse*» (Carpenter, Tolkien 1981: letter 227). The Dúnedain are the descendants of the Númenóreans who settled in the Westlands of Middle-earth during the Second and Third Ages. In the Elvish language Sindarin, the name is a compound of *dún* ('west') and *edain* ('men'); in the Common Speech it therefore means 'Men of the West' and functions as the equivalent of 'Númenóreans'. Despite this subtle distinction, Tolkien uses the two terms interchangeably to refer to the people originating from the West.

(6) In some occurrences, 'Númenor' is also used to refer to the whole island.

In the earliest Italian translations, Alliata and Principe preserve the original forms, using ‘Númenoreani’ or ‘Numenoreani’ indiscriminately to translate both ‘Númenóreans’ and ‘Dúnedain’. The term ‘Dúnedain’ is likewise retained in its original form and used alongside the adapted plural ‘Dunedani’ and the singular ‘Dúnadan’. Fatica, while adopting the same conservative strategy, maintains greater consistency with the source text by using ‘Dúnedain’ exclusively in those instances in which the same term appears in the source text, and by translating ‘Númenóreans’ as ‘Númenóreani’, thus avoiding terminological overlap between forms that, although considered equivalent by the author, remain formally and functionally distinct within the text.

O	A	A/P	F
Elves, Fair Folk	Gnomi, Gente Pulchra	Gnomi, Elfi Luminosi	Elfi, Popolo Leggiadro

The Elves are one of the races inhabiting Arda, the planet in which the events narrated in *The Lord of The Rings* take place. They are referred to as the Fair Folk, from the Welsh *Tylwyth Teg* (‘Beautiful Kindred’ or ‘Fairies’). In the early stages of composing his Legendarium the author used the term ‘gnomes’, but eventually judged it misleading because of the confusion generated by the widespread European conception of gnomes as misshapen, dwarf- or goblin-like creatures dwelling in underground burrows (Tolkien, Tolkien 1983: 43; Tolkien, Tolkien 1990: 144–160; Tolkien, Tolkien 1996: 23–24, 76–77). His Gnomes, by contrast, were described as exceptionally beautiful, taller than Men, immune to both ageing and disease – essentially immortal. They were thus markedly different from the traditional conception of the gnome, which is why the designation was subsequently replaced with ‘Elves’. In a 1973 letter to Elena Jeronimidis Conte concerning the Italian translation of *The Hobbit*, Tolkien maintained that the term ‘gnomus’ had been employed in the sixteenth century by Paracelsus, who, according to one theory, derived the word from the Greek *γηνομος* (‘inhabitant of the earth’), thereby using it to denote primordial terrestrial beings. According to another, less plausible theory, the term would instead

derive from γνώμη ('faculty of knowing, intellect'), which constitutes the etymological basis adopted by Tolkien (Tolkien, Tolkien 1983: 43). This led him to change the name to 'Elves'.

This likely explains Alliata's initial translation as 'Gnomi', subsequently corrected by Principe as 'Elfi'. Alliata's rendering of 'Fair' with the Latin adjective 'Pulchra' may be understood as an attempt to elevate the register by means of archaism while preserving the original connotation of 'fair'. Principe's translation of 'Fair Folk' as 'Luminosi', however, departs from Tolkien's indications. It may be hypothesised that this choice is related to a passage from *The Hobbit*.⁽⁷⁾ The Elves, in fact, divided into three major groups after their awakening at Cuiviénen: the Minyar, the Tatyar, and the Nelyar. They were invited by Oromë to dwell with the Valar in Valinor; those who chose to undertake the journey were called the Eldar, and those who reached their destination are also referred to as the Calaquendi ('Light Elves'), in contrast to the Moriquendi ('Dark Elves'), so designated because they never beheld the light of the Two Trees (Duriez 2002: 97–106). Fatica's choice is closer to Alliata's and to Tolkien's own instructions, as it preserves the emphasis on beauty while also conveying a sense of supernatural features.

O	A	A/P	F
Fairbairn	Venusti	Belpiccolo	Bellinfante

The Fairbairns are a Hobbit family, descendants of Samwise through his daughter Elanor, and the keepers of the Red Book of Westmarch. 'Fairbairn' is a northern variant of Fairchild, an authentic English surname: 'bairn' means 'child', while 'fair', when applied to complexion, denotes 'light' or 'pale', when applied to hair signifies 'blond', and in its archaic, chiefly literary usage means 'beautiful'. Tolkien argues that the choice of this name was intended to emphasise that Elanor's Elvish beauty – whose main distinguishing feature is her blond hair – was long

(7) «There the Light-elves and the Deep-elves and the Sea-elves went and lived for ages» (Tolkien 1937–2011 ebook edition: 2455).

inherited by her descendants. According to the author, the surname ought to be translated, although it is not necessary for the association with blond hair – deliberately introduced for English readers – to be reproduced in the target language.

Alliata therefore opted for replacement, once again choosing a term of Latin derivation that successfully conveys the concept of beauty Tolkien intended, though eliminating any reference to children or lineage. These two central notions are recovered by both Principe and Fatica, who adopt a near-literal translation, although Fatica's choice results more formal and specific.

O	A	A/P	F
Fallohides	Paloidi	Paloidi	Cutèrrei

The Fallohides are the least numerous of the three Hobbit races described in the Prologue. Their hair and skin are lighter than the other Hobbits' and they are taller and leaner. They have a more amicable relationship with the Elves than the other Hobbits, display a greater aptitude for languages and song than for craftsmanship, and favour hunting over agriculture. After descending from the northern lands and crossing the mountains north of Rivendell, they reached Eriador and intermingled with the other Hobbit kindreds, over whom they frequently prevailed due to their more daring and adventurous temperament. Tolkien classified the name as archaic and suggested that it ought, if possible, to be translated, since it was devised to represent a meaningful term in the Common Speech (a compound of 'fallow' and 'hide' that signifies 'pale skin'). Tolkien defined it as archaic because 'fallow' ('pale, yellowish') had fallen out of general usage except in collocation with 'deer' (as in 'fallow deer') while 'hide' was restricted to reference to animal skin rather than human skin. Nevertheless, he maintained that reproducing the archaism in the target language was not required.

Alliata and Principe translated the first element literally, abbreviating 'pallido' ('pale') to adapt it to the compound, while the second part is simply a graphic adaptation of '-hides' that does not translate

its meaning. Fatica's choice, by contrast, is more complex to interpret, particularly since the translator himself provided no explicit justification. It may be hypothesised that it represents a literal rendering, a compound of 'cute' (translating 'hide' in a more formal way than 'pelle') and 'terreo' (translating 'fallow'), an interpretation reinforced by the marked accent on the first 'e'.

O	A	A/P	F
Goatleaf	Caprifoglio/ Lanicardo	Caprifogli/ Lanicardo	Caprifoglio

The Goatleaves are a family from Bree whose name, like all those typical of the area, belongs to the botanical semantic field; it is an archaic designation for 'honeysuckle' or 'woodbine' (Italian: 'caprifoglio'), and Tolkien himself points to a comparison with the Medieval Latin *caprifolium*.

As can be observed from the comparative table, all translators adopted a literal rendering, with varying degrees of orthographic modification and adaptation. It is worth noting, however, that in some occurrences the surname is translated as 'Lanicardo', which is in fact the Italian equivalent for 'thistlewool' – an error of translation or editorial revision. Another noteworthy aspect is that the given name of one family member, Harry, is italianised as 'Enrico' in the Alliata edition and in the 2017 Alliata/Principe edition, whereas in the 1970 edition it is instead retained as Harry, as in the Fatica edition.

O	A	A/P	F
Hamfast Gamgee, the Gaffer	Amio Gamigi, il Gaffiere	Hamfast Gamgee, il Gaffiere	Hamfast Gamgee, il Veglio
Samwise Gamgee	Samvise/ Samio Gamigi	Samvise Gamgee	Samplicio Gamgee

Hamfast Gamgee – frequently called by the diminutive 'Ham' and nicknamed 'the Gaffer' – is one of the Hobbits of the Shire. He is

considered an authority as he is particularly knowledgeable on the cultivation of root vegetables, especially potatoes. For generations, members of his family had served the Baggins family as gardeners. The name 'Hamfast' derives from Old English and means 'stay at home' (Hammond, Scull 2005: 55). It has the same meaning in the Hobbit language – 'stay-at-home' or 'home-fast', i.e., 'one who remains at home'. Only Alliata adapted it, though she focused exclusively on the diminutive 'Ham'. Both Principe and Fatica, by contrast, opted for retention.

In colloquial English, the nickname 'Gaffer' denotes a superior who is older than his subordinates; it has a positive value and contains archaic references linked to the rural world. Since this name is not among those Tolkien listed in the "Guide", the recommended practice was to preserve it in its original form. Alliata and Principe only partially followed this advice, adapting it into Italian and effectively creating a meaningless neologism, thereby erasing the connotations present in the original. Fatica, instead, opts for replacement, nominalising an Italian adjective that preserves the original reference to an elderly figure worthy of respect.

Samwise, Hamfast's son, is Frodo's closest and most trusted companion. He played a decisive role in the carrying and destruction of the Ring as, due to his humble nature, he never yielded to the visions and temptations induced by it. He is the only character, together with Bilbo, to have voluntarily relinquished the Ring, and the only one ever to have done so promptly and without difficulty. Having been a Ring-bearer, after the death of his wife Rose, he is granted permission to reunite with Frodo in the Undying Lands. Despite the fact that his name also suggests a very simple personality and linguistic register, Sam had received a solid education in reading and writing from Bilbo, greatly admired the Elves, possessed a marked gift for poetry, and was convinced that the world contained wonders far greater than those known to the Hobbits; for this reason, he stands in clear contrast to the other members of his kind. The name 'Samwise' means 'simple-minded' or 'half-minded'. In Westron, the name is *Banazîr Galbasi* (or *Galpsi*): *Banazîr* contains elements that indeed convey the meanings 'halfwise' or 'simple', and in English it was rendered by Tolkien as 'Samwise', a modernised form of Old English *Samwîs*, which bears a very similar meaning (Tolkien

2005: appendix F). The surname *Galbasi*, by contrast, is a compound of the elements *galab-*, meaning ‘game’, and *-bas*, which corresponds roughly to the suffixes ‘-wich’ or ‘-wick’. Here again, the name does not appear in the “Guide”, which implies that the original form ought to have been maintained. Alliaata opted for adaptation, replacing ‘w’ with ‘v’ in the full name and rendering the diminutive as ‘Samio’. In her revision, Principe retains ‘Samvise’ for the full name but preserves the diminutive ‘Sam’ in its original form. Neither of these solutions, however, conveys in Italian the notion of ‘simple’ or ‘simple-minded’ embedded in the source name. Fatica, by contrast, opts for retention for the diminutive and translates the full name as ‘Samplicio’ which successfully conveys the notion of simplicity through both graphic and phonetic resemblance to ‘semplice’ (‘simple’). However appropriate this choice might have been, it sparked much controversy among fans, as it changed the name of one of the most important characters.

The origin of the surname ‘Gamgee’ – although attested in England, albeit rarely – was unknown to Tolkien, who nonetheless believed it not to be of English origin. ‘Gamgee’ is also an archaic term for cotton-wool. Tolkien advised, however, that the name be regarded as meaningless and preserved in the target language, with only minor graphic adaptations if necessary to match it. In all Italian editions, this guidance has been respected, as the surname has consistently been retained in its original form.

O	A	A/P	F
Heathertoos	Diterica	Diterica / Piedibrughiera	Piedibrugo

The Heathertoos are another family from Bree and, therefore, their name also belongs to the botanical semantic field. According to the information provided by Tolkien, the name does not exist in the English language, although the prefix ‘heather-’ is attested in some surnames. Within the narrative, its origin may be linked to the jokes traditionally made by the Big Folk (Men) about the Little Folk (Hobbits), referring to the fact that the latter, walking barefoot, would accumulate

grass, leaves, and twigs between their toes. The author therefore suggests that the name should be translated.

Alliata once again opts for a literal rendering, creating a compound that combines ‘dit-’ (‘dita’, Italian for ‘toes’) and ‘-erica’ (the literal Italian equivalent of ‘heather’). In Principe’s revision, the name is retained unchanged in some occurrences, but in others it is modified to ‘Piedi-brughiera’. This is a probable attempt to broaden the semantic scope so as to more closely replicate the original meaning: ‘toes’, in fact, does not refer to fingers in general but specifically to those of the feet. ‘Brughiera’, on the other hand, may have been selected in order to evoke a wider range of natural elements, not limited solely to heather but encompassing the entire open land covered with heath vegetation. Fatica retains the first component of this latter compound but makes an even more precise choice for the second element by using ‘brugo’, one of the common names of *Calluna vulgaris*, previously known as *Erica vulgaris*.⁽⁸⁾ Considering that heather may be translated both as ‘erica’ and ‘brugo’, all three solutions prove appropriate and consistent with the author’s recommendations.

O	A	A/P	F
Meriadoc “Merry” Brandybuck	Meriadoc “Felice” Brandibucco	Meriadoc “Merry” Brandibuck	Meriadoc “Merry” Brandaino

Meriadoc Brandybuck, commonly known as Merry, is one of Frodo’s cousins and a member of the Fellowship of the Ring. The name ‘Meriadoc’ is attested both as that of a sixth-century Welsh saint venerated in Cornwall and Brittany, and as the hero of a thirteenth-century French Arthurian romance, ‘Meriadeuc’ – also known as *Le Chevalier aux deux epees* (Hammond, Scull 2005: 42). In Appendix F of the

(8) According to the Oxford English Dictionary: «The Scottish name, now in general use, for the native species of the Linnean genus *Erica*, [...] especially *Erica* (now *Calluna*) *vulgaris*, common heather, and *Erica cinerea*, fine-leaved heath or lesser bell-heather». ‘Erica’ and ‘brugo’ therefore belong to the same botanical family, namely the *Ericaceae*; however, whereas the former belongs to the genus *Erica* (of which several species exist), the latter belongs to the genus *Calluna*, which comprises a single species. Although they are similar and are often erroneously regarded as the same plant, the two in fact exhibit clearly defined differences.

novel, it is explained that his nickname in Westron is *Kali* (a shortened form of the now semantically opaque name *Kalimac*), which means 'happy'. Regarding Brandybuck, Tolkien notes that it does in fact exist in English, albeit rarely. In the novel, however, he employed it deliberately to evoke associations with other names, such as that of the Brandywine River or the Oldbuck family.

Alliata adopts retention for the full name, while she opts for literal translation for the nickname. As for the surname, she employs adaptation, replacing the final '-y' with '-i' and rendering 'buck' as 'bucco'. In his revision, Principe favors retention, introducing only a minimal adaptation by altering 'Brandy-' to 'Brandi-'. Fatica, on the other hand, preserves both the given name and the nickname but translates the surname as 'Brandaino'. When Tolkien's own guidelines are considered, it becomes evident that all three translators retained the reference embedded in 'Brandy', but only Fatica faithfully conveyed the semantic content of 'buck' (from Old English *bucc* or *bucca*), a term denoting the male of animals such as the fallow deer, the roe deer, or the goat. Fatica's choice is also the most consistent, as it was maintained across all compounds in which it occurs.

O	A	A/P	F
Orcs	Orchetti	Orchetti; poi Orchi	Orchi

Orcs are humanoid creatures particularly renowned for their enslavement to the Dark Lords of Middle-earth; even when this bond ceased to exist, they almost never interacted with other peoples that were not violent in nature. They are known in Middle-earth by several names: 'orcs' is the designation used in the Common Speech at the time when the novel takes place. In *The Hobbit* and in certain occurrences in *The Lord of the Rings*, the term 'goblin' is also used as a synonym of 'orc'; as noted in a passage concerning languages and runic letters in *The Hobbit*, 'goblin' is in fact a translation of 'orc' (Hammond, Scull 2005: 24). It may therefore be hypothesised that this term belonged to Westron and Tolkien chose to retain it in its untranslated form, presumably appreciating its phonetic qualities. According to the author, moreover, 'goblin' was

not an appropriate designation for the creatures he had envisaged, and he considered ‘orc’ to be more suitable; he therefore recommended its translation into the target language. Within the fictional world of the narrative, the term probably derives from ‘orch’, the Sindarin name for ‘orc’; its original meaning would appear to be ‘bogey’ or ‘bogeyman’ – i.e., a malevolent and frightening creature. In English, the word derives from Old English, where it primarily denoted a type of metal vessel (from the Latin *urceus*). In an eleventh-century glossary, however, it was confused with another lemma designating evil giants (from the Latin *orcus*). This overlap and intermingling of lexemes led philologists – including Tolkien himself – to hypothesise an Old English origin for ‘orc’, primarily on phonetic grounds,⁽⁹⁾ and to associate it with creatures and malevolent spirits of the underworld (Carpenter, Tolkien 1981: letter 144).

‘Orc’ thus constitutes an archaic form of ‘ogre’, which may explain why Alliaata assumed that a distinction should exist and justified the use of the former rather than the latter, marking it with a diminutive suffix. This solution, however, proves entirely inappropriate: Orcs are consistently described as malevolent and violent creatures, and the diminutive form radically distorts their nature. ‘Orchetti’ survived Principe’s first revision and was retained for a considerable period, before being correctly rendered through a literal translation as ‘Orchi’, a form also adopted by Fatica.

O	A	A/P	F
Proudfoot	Tronfipiede	Tronfipiede	Pededegno

The Proudfoot family is a hobbit lineage from the Shire, particularly renowned for their feet, exceptionally large and hairy even for Hobbits.⁽¹⁰⁾ Since the surname is an attested English family name, Tolkien’s

(9) The term *Orcnéas* occurs in lines 112–113 of *Beowulf*. This is cited as an example of an occurrence of ‘orc’ in an Old English text by Tolkien himself (Hammond, Scull 2005: 761–762). Its meaning, however, is not entirely clear, and it is generally believed to refer to corpses (*néas*, in fact) originating from the underworld.

(10) Although they maintain that their surname, when used in the plural, should be ‘Proud-feet’ (thus conforming, in English, to the irregular plural formation of ‘foot’), Bilbo prefers to use ‘Proudfoots’, which is consequently retained throughout the narrative.

indication was that it should be translated. The surname denotes one who walks with a haughty step (Reaney, Wilson 2006: 2539), while Tolkien maintains that in this instance it more properly refers to the unusually large and hairy feet characteristic of this family (Hammond, Scull 2005: 67).

The Italian versions consistently preserve the reference to 'foot' while offering different solutions for 'proud'. Alliata avoids the most immediate and familiar meaning ('fiero', 'orgoglioso') and instead chooses a term that conveys the nuance of arrogance and haughtiness. The meaning is not the one suggested by the author but instead aligns more closely with the interpretation later provided by Reaney in his dictionary. Fatica, by contrast, appears to draw upon other semantic shades of 'proud', even extending them broadly, including 'of exalted status or rank', 'projecting, standing out', or 'a proud, noble, or gallant person', thereby coining a compound that also displays alliteration with the 'd'.

O	A	A/P	F
Rangers	Raminghi	Raminghi	Forestali

Rangers are Dúnedain of the North who had formerly inhabited the Kingdom of Arnor. They wandered throughout Eriador, secretly protecting it, although this made them dangerous and untrustworthy in the eyes of the peoples of the Shire and Bree. They possessed a grim appearance, wore grey or dark green garments, and fastened their cloaks with a six-pointed star-shaped brooch. The name is often employed in the sense of 'wanderer' (Hammond, Scull 2005: 31), and according to the Oxford English Dictionary its primary definition is 'a person who or thing which ranges', originally referring to a forester or gamekeeper. It later acquired the semantic value of 'keeper of a royal park'. In modern usage, it typically denotes 'a warden of a national or state park or forest'. A secondary meaning corresponds to 'rover' or 'wanderer' – sometimes carrying a negative connotation, which is also present in *The Lord of the Rings*. Another relevant sense

is 'a member of an organised body of armed men who range over a tract of country for its protection'. All these meanings aptly describe the role of the Rangers in the novel and must therefore be taken into consideration in translation.

Alliata opts for replacement, choosing a term that not only belongs to a higher stylistic register than the original but is also more specific (and not more generic, as is typically the case when this strategy is employed): 'ramingo' refers to a person who wanders without a fixed destination or permanent dwelling and narrows the semantic range to a single nuance of 'ranger', crucially omitting the negative associations. Fatica's choice, by contrast, refers to 'something or someone connected to forests', thereby corresponding to one of the senses of 'ranger', also considering that many of the wild territories they patrol are wooded. From an etymological perspective, 'foresta' has a connection with the Latin adverbs *foris* and *foras*, meaning 'outside'. In this sense, 'foresta' would denote a 'place outside the inhabited area' or 'beyond the common law'. 'Forestiero' can likewise be traced back to the same etymology. This allows Fatica to convey also the negative connotations associated with 'ranger', whose typical appearance – a fighter dressed in colours designed to blend with the vegetation – further reinforces this interpretation. Fatica's change to a name that had by then become firmly established in the collective imagination was among the most widely criticised choices of the new Italian edition; nevertheless, it is necessary to take into account the various meanings of the name, also considering its function within the narrative and the type of character (or characters) it designates. It must also be noted that Fatica's choice, while arguably more faithful to the original and philologically more accurate, inevitably evokes for Italian readers an immediate association with the Corpo Forestale dello Stato (the State Forestry Corps). This connection was likely the primary cause of the heated controversy.

O	A	A/P	F
Stoors	Sturoi	Sturoi	Nerbuti

The Stoors are one of the three Hobbit races described in the Prologue. They were physically more robust and braver than the other Hobbits, with larger hands and feet, and were the only ones to grow beards and moustaches. After crossing the Misty Mountains, they reached the West, settling first in Eriador, then in Dunland, and finally in Bree. They lived primarily in lowland areas and near rivers, thereby developing skills unique among the Hobbits, such as swimming, fishing, and boat handling. Tolkien explains that the name derives from the Old English *stor* or *stoor*, meaning 'large, strong', and is a distinctly Hobbitish designation, not attested in the Common Speech; accordingly, he advises that it should not be translated, but either retained in the target language with an adapted form, or replaced with an archaic or dialectal equivalent bearing the same meaning and connotation.

The first of these suggestions was followed by Alliata, who opted for an adapted form. Fatica, by contrast, adhered more closely to the second recommendation, using an archaic form of 'nerboruto'.

O	A	A/P	F
Thistlewool	Lanicardo	Lanicardo	Scardaccione

The Thistlewools are a family of the Men of Bree and, like all names typical of the area, their surname also contains references to the botanical semantic field. It might be another designation for 'thistle-down' (Hammond, Scull 2005: 153) – i.e., the mass of thin, soft, white threads that are joined to thistle seeds and help them to be blown through the air. The lemma is not attested in the Oxford English Dictionary; however, consultation of the entry 'wool' reveals a secondary sense referring to a downy substance or fibre found on certain trees and plants. The most immediate hypothesis, however, is that the name is a compound

of ‘thistle’ and ‘wool’, particularly considering Tolkien’s recommendation to translate by sense.

This is clearly the interpretation adopted by Alliata, who accordingly opted for a literal rendering by creating a compound combining ‘lana’ (‘wool’) and ‘cardo’ (‘thistle’), maintaining the typical Italian order of constituents and introducing a slight modification to the first element (‘lani’ instead of ‘lana’); this solution was later retained by Principe. Both ‘thistle’ and, consequently, ‘cardo’ are in fact common designations for various plants characterised by spiny leaves and bracts, often bearing regionally differentiated appellations. This is likely the reason why Fatica opted for a replacement that neither translates the exact compound nor makes any reference to any of the senses of ‘wool’: ‘scardaccione’ derives from ‘cardo’ and denotes various spiny plants, commonly found in Europe and Asia, especially as a weed in uncultivated land and along roadsides.

The term is therefore more specific than the one proposed by Alliata; nevertheless, considering the author’s guidelines, the latter appears more appropriate, as it reproduces the semantic value of the compound rather than that of only one of its components.

O	A	A/P	F
Trolls	Vagabondi	Vagabondi; poi Troll	Troll

Trolls are monstrous beings characterised by immense strength, ferocity, and limited intelligence, incapable of tolerating sunlight without turning to stone. They possess deformed, thick, hairless skin, powerful arms, and short, stubby feet, and exist in several distinct races. Their exact origins remain unknown, but Treebeard hypothesised that they were created by Morgoth at the end of the First Age in mockery of the Ents, of whom they lacked intelligence. They were primarily employed as shock troops or beasts of burden. Although many perished in the War of Wrath, some later served Sauron – Morgoth’s most powerful surviving servant – during the Second and Third Ages. In the Third Age, Sauron created the Olog-hai, a more advanced and

dangerous breed, capable of enduring sunlight. In Appendix F, Tolkien explains that 'Troll' was used to translate into Westron the Sindarin term *Torog* (Hammond, Scull 2005: 76). The word, deriving from Old Norse and Swedish, entered Scandinavian usage in the mid-nineteenth century. In Scandinavian mythology, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, trolls were a race of supernatural beings formerly conceived as giants, whereas in modern Denmark and Sweden they are regarded as dwarfs or imps, supposed to inhabit caves or subterranean dwellings. The term itself therefore does not inherently carry strongly negative connotations, which are instead attributed to these characters by Tolkien through narrative characterisation and descriptive framing. The Enciclopedia Treccani, by contrast, defines the troll in Scandinavian folk belief as a demonic inhabitant of woods, mountains, and solitary places. In fairy tales, trolls fulfil the role occupied by the ogre in other European folk traditions. Whether gigantic or diminutive, they are also portrayed as prodigious craftsmen and guardians of treasure.

Although today the term is widespread in Italian and the figure of the troll is well known to the general public (also owing to the success of other fantasy sagas, most notably *Harry Potter*), the situation was markedly different when Tolkien's works were first published in Italy, at which time this creature was largely unfamiliar to most readers. Alliaia therefore had to identify a solution capable of transferring this figure and its characteristics into the Italian linguistic and cultural context; she opted for a replacement that ultimately proved excessively generic and neutralised any negative connotation. A more suitable choice – still familiar to the Italian readership and not overly specific, while potentially preserving a negative semantic component – might have been 'giganti'⁽¹¹⁾. 'Vagabondi' remained in use at least until 2003,⁽¹²⁾ after

(11) In one occurrence, 'Troll' was inexplicably translated as 'cannoni' ('cannons'), which suggests an oversight during translation or revision that was never corrected and even reached print in 1967. In Elena Jeronimidis Conte's 1973 translation of *The Hobbit*, by contrast, the term was rendered as 'Uomini Neri' ('Black Men'), a choice that reinforces the hypothesis that, at the time, translators attempted to rely on imaginary figures familiar to the Italian readership, in this case also preserving a negative connotation.

(12) A discussion dating back to October 2003 can be found on a forum dedicated to Tolkien and *The Lord of the Rings* (<https://isda.forumfree.it/?t=592505>). Users debate the term 'Vagabondo' and try to better understand what kind of creature it refers to, also drawing

which the form was restored to the original ‘Troll’, later retained by Fatica.

3.4. Toponyms

O	A	A/P	F
Bagshot Row	Via Saccoforini	Via Saccoforino	Vico Scarcasacco

Bagshot Row is a lane that runs along Hobbiton Hill. It contains numerous smials (that is, Hobbit-holes) which were built beneath Bag End, the residence of the Baggins family.⁽¹³⁾ Among those who lived in these smials were the Gamgees. Tolkien explains that the name derives from the spoil thrown over the hillside during the excavation of Bag End. He advised preserving the approximate sense, while retaining a reference to ‘bag’.

Alliata combines the idea of the sack with possible reference to either the hobbit-holes or the excavations themselves; Principe retains this solution with a slight adaptation – a plural form. Despite the description of Bagshot Row clarifies that the road is a dead end, Alliata and Principe opt for ‘via’: in this instance, Fatica’s literal translation is more precise, as ‘vico’ more accurately describes a cul-de-sac. ‘Scarca’ is likely an abbreviation of ‘scaricare’, a poetic form of ‘scaricare’ (‘to unload’), alluding to the earth displaced during construction.

comparisons with *The Hobbit* and the original text. It can therefore be inferred that the term was still in use in the Italian text at that time.

(13) The house is so called because it is located at the end of a path leading up to the Hill, at a particularly elevated point in Hobbiton (Hammond, Scull 2005: 51). As explained by the author, the name should evoke ‘the end of a bag or a pudding bag’ and thus, more broadly, a cul-de-sac or dead end, referring to the specific location of the house (‘a house or place at the end of a cul-de-sac’). It was in fact the original name of Tolkien’s aunt’s farm in Worcestershire, which was likewise situated at the end of a dead-end lane.

O	A	A/P	F
Buck Hill Buckland Bucklebury	Colle Bucco Terra di Bucco Bucchignano	Colle Buck Terra di Buck Buckburgo	Coldaino Landaino Borgodaino

Buck Hill is a hill in which numerous hobbit-holes have been excavated; it overlooks Bucklebury, the largest settlement in Buckland. Although 'Buckland' is a genuine English toponym – deriving from 'book-land', that is, land granted or inherited through a charter or official deed – here it is intended to contain the element 'buck', that derives from Old English *bucc* or *bucca* and denotes the male of animals such as the deer, roe, or goat; Tolkien suggests rendering it in the target language with an equivalent term. The suffix '-bury' derives from Old English *burh*, *byrig*, indicating a walled or fortified settlement, often with a defensive function; it survives in numerous English placenames and is related to the more modern 'borough'. The syllable '-le' in 'Buckle-' may be interpreted either as an alteration of 'Buckenburg', incorporating the archaic plural genitive suffix '-en(a)', or as a contraction of 'Buckland'.

Alliata, as with the surname Brandybuck, adapted '-buck' graphically as '-bucco' or 'bucchi' while translating the other elements literally or adapting them culturally: 'Bucchignano', in fact, immediately evokes for the Italian reader familiar-sounding toponyms. Principe, by contrast, retains the original form. For 'Bucklebury', however, he selects a suffix evocative of British toponyms (cf. 'Edinburgh', 'Edimburgo'). Fatica consistently employs the suffix '-daino' to translate 'buck': he abbreviates 'colle' to form 'Coldaino' and 'landa' to create 'Landaino'. The suffix '-bury' is translated literally as 'borgo', maintaining a reference to 'borough'.

O	A	A/P	F
Budgeford	Boldigenio	Boldigenio	Bolguado

Budgeford is a village located in the eastern part of the Shire (the East-farthing), in the region of the Bridgefields. It is the home of the Bolgers, an important Hobbit family well known throughout the Shire. According to Tolkien, ‘budge-’ was an opaque element lacking a clearly defined meaning; since the Bolger family resided in Budgeford and, following Tolkien’s recommendation, the Hobbit surname Bolger was not to be translated, ‘budge-’ may be interpreted as an alteration of ‘bolge’ or ‘bulge’. Both Bolger and Bulger are attested English surnames and, regardless of their precise etymology, their narrative function appears to be that of suggesting that they were originally nicknames referring to corpulence. ‘Ford’, by contrast, simply denotes a river crossing, in reference to the village’s location by the Water River. The overall meaning may therefore be interpreted as ‘ford of the Bolgers’, referring both to the proximity of the watercourse and to the presence of the Bolger family.

Whereas Fatica’s translation is relatively straightforward to analyse (‘Bol-’ reproduces the initial segment of ‘Bolger’, while ‘-guado’ is a literal rendering of ‘-ford’), Alliata’s solution is more problematic. The first component of the compound ‘Boldigenio’ is clearly ‘bol’, a truncation of ‘Bolgeri’ (the adapted form employed by Alliata to translate the surname ‘Bolger’), but the inclusion of ‘genio’ lacks an obvious motivation, as it does not in any way correspond to the notion of a ford. One possible hypothesis is that Alliata deliberately avoided a literal rendering, eliminating the direct reference to the river crossing and instead selecting ‘genio’, deriving from the Latin *ingenium*, perhaps to allude to the ingenuity and intelligence of the Hobbits, or more broadly to their character and disposition.

O	A	A/P	F
Bywater	Lungacque	Lungacque	Acquariva

Bywater is a village located in the western part of the Shire (the Westfarthing); it developed along Bywater Road, near Hobbiton and the Water River, a small tributary of the Brandywine from which it derives its name. Among its inhabitants were the Cotton family and Old Noakes, and the famous Green Dragon Inn was also situated there. It was at Bywater that the War of the Ring came to an end, with the battle that resulted in Saruman's defeat and death. The name literally means 'by the water' – i.e., 'near the water' or 'along the water'. Tolkien recommends that it be translated in a semantically motivated manner.

In this case, Alliata's choice is more literal and more faithful to the source text, whereas Fatica's, although it does not substantially distort the meaning of the original name (the village is indeed located on the riverbanks), nonetheless introduces an additional semantic element that is not present in the source text.

O	A	A/P	F
Carrock	Carrock	Carroccia/Carrock	Rupetra

The Carrock is a rocky river islet rising in the middle of the upper course of the Anduin River, north of the Old Ford. It is a very high rock formation; although it is surrounded by the river, a stone ford is found on its eastern bank, while beneath the cliff on the western side there is a channel of swirling waters. At the base of one of its faces there is a small cave from which a large staircase ascends, allowing easy access to the islet and leading up to its flat summit. It was here that Thorin and his Company were carried by the Eagles at the end of *The Hobbit*. Several small islands were present in the Anduin, commonly known as 'carrocks'; however, Beorn – a skin-changer who could assume the form of a great black bear – designated this one as The Carrock, as it was the closest to his home. The name is a compound of two elements

with identical meanings: ‘car’ (or ‘carr’), deriving from Old English *carr* or from the Welsh *carreck* and meaning ‘rock, stone’, and ‘rock’ itself (Hammond, Scull 2005: 207)⁽¹⁴⁾.

Alliata opts for a mixed strategy combining retention and literal translation: the first element of the compound is retained unchanged, whereas the second is rendered as ‘roccia’. Fatica, by contrast, translates both components literally, using ‘rupe’ to render ‘car’ and an adapted spelling of ‘pietra’ – ‘petra’ – to render ‘rock’. The resulting name is particularly faithful to the source form and well suited to the descriptive function of the islet in the narrative.

O	A	A/P	F
Dunland	Dunlandio	Dunland	Landumbria

Dunland is a region of Middle-earth located near the western slopes of the Misty Mountains. The name referenced the dark complexions and hair of the people living there: ‘Dunland’ and ‘Dunlending’ were the names given by the Rohirrim⁽¹⁵⁾ to this region and to its inhabitants, on account of their dark complexion and hair. ‘Dun-’, therefore, does not derive from the Sindarin word *dûn*, meaning ‘west’, but from English ‘dun’, meaning ‘dark, dusky, dull-hued, or dull greyish-brown’. Tolkien’s recommendation was to retain ‘Dunlendings’ (and by extension, it can be assumed, ‘Dunland’) in its original form.

Alliata, however, adapts it, consequently deleting its semantic references. A more suitable alternative might have been the feminine ‘-landa’ or ‘-landia’, which are more frequent in Italian. Principe, in his later revision, also eliminates the semantic reference by simply preserving the untranslated form. Fatica does not follow Tolkien’s suggestion either and introduces a highly specific association. The second element of his adaptation, in fact, shows an explicit reference to Umbria which

(14) The same process can be observed in ‘Chetwood’, a name of a forest in which both elements of the compound mean ‘wood’. ‘Wood’ is of English origin, whereas ‘chet’ derives from a Celtic root, as can also be observed in the Welsh *coed* (Hammond, Scull 2005: 765).

(15) People of Northmen descent who inhabited the realm of Rohan in central Middle-earth.

may appear overly bound to the target language and culture, making it less appropriate in the narrative context.

O	A	A/P	F
Farthings	Decumani	Decumani	Quartieri

The Farthings – Northfarthing, Southfarthing, Eastfarthing, and Westfarthing – were the four divisions of the Shire. ‘Farthing’ derives from Old English *feordung* or *feordung* (which may have been borrowed from Old Norse *fiordungr*) and from Middle English *farthing*. It designates a quarter of a particular denomination of money or measure. Tolkien’s use of the term, however, is conceptually rooted in ‘thrid-ing’ (‘third part’), an administrative designation historically applied to Yorkshire. The term also carries a mildly ironic undertone, as in Middle English it also denoted a negligible amount – while the Shire covered some 18,000 square miles. Tolkien himself acknowledged the difficulty of conveying this layered meaning in translation, recommending the use of terms that, while not literal, preserved the semantic sense.

Alliata opts for replacement with a term of Latin origin derived from *decimus* (‘tenth’) – also an ordinal number. Its semantic field is multifaceted: the Romans used it to designate either a soldier of the Tenth Legion or a contractor responsible for collecting tax on agricultural products paid to Rome by certain Sicilian cities. The most prominent meaning referred to the east-west line traced by the augur to delimit the celestial *templum* (i.e., the portion of the sky circumscribed for the observation of omens) and subsequently the terrestrial one. This augural rite was of great importance in Roman culture, as it provided the basis for the orientation and subdivision of cities, military camps, and centuriated lands. Through the practice of these rites, the term later came to denote the east-west axis which, intersecting at right angles with the north-south axis (the *cardo*), divided a newly founded city, an allotted territory, or a military camp into four parts. Unlike ‘farthing’, therefore, ‘decumano’ does not refer to a concrete spatial unit but rather to a straight line that divides space, and any association with the notion

of a part or quantity can be identified only in its first two meanings. Nevertheless, it evokes a concept linked to ancient Rome that is relatively familiar and readily intelligible to the Italian reader; in this sense, it may be regarded as functionally equivalent to ‘farthing’. Fatica likewise opts for replacement. ‘Quartiero’ is an archaic form of ‘quartiere’, which derives from ‘quarto’ – meaning ‘fourth’ – and therefore more closely aligns with the meaning of ‘farthing’ as ‘fourth part’. Its semantic range is broad: the principal meanings include that of a fourth part of objects, elements, or structures; in heraldry, for example, it is synonymous with ‘quarto’ and denotes a section of a coat of arms, while in nautical usage it refers to each of the three longitudinal divisions of a ship and its rigging. In the Middle Ages, it designated each of the four sections into which certain cities were divided, a subdivision deriving from the Roman *castrum*, which, as previously noted, was divided into four parts by the intersection of *cardines* and *decumani*. It is now mostly used to denote an urban district; therefore, it is a familiar term in contemporary Italian usage that also retains historical and technical resonances. For the purposes of this analysis, the most relevant meaning is that of ‘fourth part of a territory’. In this respect, ‘quartiero’ shares the same classical reference as ‘decumano’ – namely, ancient Rome – but proves far more faithful to the source text and to the meaning of ‘farthing’, both in its sense of ‘fourth part’ and in that of ‘portion of a territory’, which ‘decumano’ does not convey.

O	A	A/P	F
Golden Perch	Pertica d’Oro	Pertica d’Oro	Persico d’Oro

The Golden Perch is an inn located in Stock, a village near the eastern borders of the Shire. There appeared to be no inns or pubs bearing the same name in the United Kingdom, although many establishments include the adjective ‘Golden’ and some include the name ‘Perch’ (Hammond, Scull 2005: 112). The name may plausibly derive from the fact that the inn was favoured by local fishermen: as Tolkien himself clarifies, ‘perch’ denotes the freshwater-fish name, not a land-measure

or bird-perch. It is therefore not the 'pertica' (a rather long wooden pole) suggested by Alliota – a clear mistranslation – but rather the 'persico' correctly adopted by Fatica. What is particularly interesting in this case is to understand why Alliota selected the incorrect meaning. Given both the text and the Shire maps included in the English edition – which clearly locate Stock near a river, where the perch would naturally live – and considering her own claim that Tolkien had provided her with a sort of translation manual, the correct interpretation appears to be the more logical – if not the more immediate – choice. One possible explanation is that the sense she adopted had greater prominence in the Oxford English Dictionary or other references, or that the name was not among the ones explicitly discussed in the notes Tolkien is said to have sent her.

O	A	A/P	F
Grey Havens	Rifugi Oscuri	Porti Grigi / Rifugi Oscuri	Grigi Approdi

The Grey Havens are harbours situated on both sides of the Gulf of Lune in western Eriador, renowned for the ships the Eldar used to depart from Middle-earth to Eressëa or Valinor. After Sauron's defeat the last of the Noldor departed from the Grey Havens for Valinor, leaving Middle-earth; from the same haven also set sail Gandalf, Elrond, and Galadriel, the Keepers of the Rings, together with Bilbo and Frodo – both former Ring-bearers – and, some years later, Samwise. The name is a rendering in the Common Speech of the Sindarin name *Mithlond* (Hammond, Scull 2005: 28): *mith* signifies 'grey', while *lond* means 'harbour'.

The most accurate literal translation into Italian is therefore that proposed by Fatica and in most occurrences in the Alliota/Principe editions ('Porti Grigi'). However, in some occurrences within those editions and in Alliota's earlier rendering, the name appears as 'Rifugi Oscuri': while 'rifugi' may indeed be a possible translation of 'havens', 'oscuri' introduces a connotation absent from both 'grey' and the original text, carrying an almost sinister overtone and situating the expression in a markedly higher register.

O	A	A/P	F
Hoarwell	Fiume Bianco	Fiume Bianco/Grigio	Fiume Pollagrigia

The Hoarwell, also referred to by its Sindarin name *Mitheithel*, is a river that runs through eastern Eriador. It originates in the northern Misty Mountains, to the west of the Rhimdath River, roughly one hundred miles north of Rivendell. The name is a compound of ‘hoar’ (‘pale grey’ or ‘greyish-white’) and ‘well’ (‘spring, source’).

All Italian translations may be considered literal, yet Alliata’s version (also preserved in some earlier Alliata/Principe editions) is both partial – since it removes the reference to the water source and retains only the adjective – and semantically inaccurate: ‘hoar’ does not denote a pure white, but rather a greyish-white or pale grey. In this respect, Fatica’s translation proves more accurate, rendering ‘hoar’ as ‘grigia’ and ‘well’ as ‘polla’, the latter meaning either a fissure in the ground from which a water vein springs or, more commonly, the vein itself at its source, thereby preserving all semantic references of the original.

O	A	A/P	F
Loudwater	Tempestoso	Rombirivo	Riorombante

The Loudwater (whose Sindarin name is *Bruinen*) is a river in eastern Eriador which merges with the Hoarwell. Its southern branch ran through the valley in which Elrond founded Rivendell, near which lay the only known ford of the river (the site where Frodo defeated the Lord of the Nazgûl). It marked the eastern boundary of the Kingdom of Arnor and the northern boundary of Eregion. ‘Loudwater’ is also an archaic name of the Wye River (still in use in Chipping Wycombe, Buckinghamshire) and refers to the incessant sound produced by the force and speed of the rushing waters (Hammond, Scull: 2005: 14 – 15). According to a theory by Patrick H. Wynne, the Sindarin name *Bruinen* would carry the same meaning: *brui* would mean ‘noisy’, while *nen* would mean ‘water’.

Alliata opted for replacement rather than literal rendering, not translating the two elements of the compound literally but instead privileging an image focused on the movement of the waters and their impetuosity rather than on the noise they produced. For this reason, the translations by Principe and Fatica – both literal and quite similar to one another – are considerably more faithful to the original, as they preserve the explicit reference to the sound of the river. Principe's compound clearly evokes 'rombo' ('roar') – or the verb 'rombare' ('to roar, rumble') – and 'rivo' ('river'), while Fatica's solution pairs the noun 'rio' with the adjective 'rombante', thereby reintroducing the same associations.

O	A	A/P	F
Michel Delving	Pietraforata	Pietraforata	Gran Sterro

Michel Delving is the principal town of the Shire; it is located in the Westfarthing, south of its smaller counterpart, Little Delving. It was regarded as a kind of Hobbit capital: the Mayor of Michel Delving (or Mayor of the Shire) was the only individual vested with real authority in the Shire. The town also housed the Mathom-house museum, the Lockholes (tunnels originally used for storage and preservation, later partially converted into prisons during the occupation of the Shire), and the Town Hole.⁽¹⁶⁾ 'Michel' derives from Old English *micel*, meaning 'great'; in Modern English, the form survives as 'mickle' or 'muckle', still attested in several toponyms in the forms 'Michel-', 'Mickle-', or 'Much-'. 'Delving', from the verb 'to delve' ('to dig'), clearly alludes to the Hobbits' skill in excavating holes and tunnels; the approximate meaning of the name is therefore 'great digging' or 'great excavation'.

Alliata adopts a strategy that combines replacement and addition: while the original name contains no mention of stone, such a term is introduced in her rendering, whereas the adjective 'forata' ('perforated')

(16) Town Hole is a clear pun based on the phonetic resemblance to Town Hall, referring to the Hobbits' skill in digging holes and tunnels. In Italian, the wordplay was not fully reproduced: in the Alliata and Alliata/Principe editions it was rendered simply as 'Caverna-Municipio', whereas Fatica opted for 'Buca Comunale'.

preserves the reference to digging or burrowing. Fatica's translation, by contrast, is more literal and faithful to the source text: 'gran' correctly renders 'great', while 'sterro' maintains the semantic connection to an excavation.

O	A	A/P	F
Mirkwood	Bosco Atro	Bosco Atro	Boscuro

Mirkwood, also known as the Forest of Great Fear, is a vast woodland located east of the Anduin River. Before the Shadow of Sauron's influence fell upon it, it was known as Greenwood the Great; after the Shadow was lifted following Sauron's defeat, it was renamed Wood of Green Leaves. The forest extended from the slopes of the Grey Mountains in the north to the North Undeep in the south, and from the eastern edge of the Anduin valley to Erebor. The forest probably formed part of the primeval woodland that covered much of Middle-earth during the Years of the Trees. It was crossed by the Eldar on their journey toward Valinor. The name 'Mirkwood' was borrowed from ancient geography and early Germanic legend. It is most clearly preserved in Old Norse *myrkviðr*, while an older form is Old German *mirkiwidu*; a reconstructed primitive form is *mirkwi-widu*. The term functions as the mythological name of several forests and is composed of *myrkr* (from which the English *mirk* derives, meaning 'dark') and *viðr* ('wood' or 'forest'). Tolkien himself developed a detailed analysis of the name, explaining its etymology (Carpenter, Tolkien 1981: letter 289):

Mirkwood is not an invention of mine, but a very ancient name, weighted with legendary associations. It was probably the Primitive Germanic name for the great mountainous forest regions that anciently formed a barrier to the south of the lands of Germanic expansion. In some traditions it became used especially of the boundary between Goths and Huns. I speak now from memory: its ancientness seems indicated by its appearance in very early German (11th c.?) as *mirkiwidu* although the **merkw-* stem 'dark' is not otherwise found in German at all (only in O.E., O.S., and O.N.), and the stem **widu-* >

witu was in German (I think) limited to the sense 'timber', not very common, and did not survive into mod. G. In O.E. *mirce* only survives in poetry, and in the sense 'dark', or rather 'gloomy', only in Beowulf 1405 *ofer myrcan mor*: elsewhere only with the sense 'murky' > wicked, hellish. It was never, I think, a mere 'colour' word: 'black', and was from the beginning weighted with the sense of 'gloom'... It seemed to me too good a fortune that Mirkwood remained intelligible (with exactly the right tone) in modern English to pass over: whether *mirk* is a Norse loan or a freshment of the obsolescent O.E. word.

Tolkien suggested preserving its semantic value while employing, when possible, elements conveying a poetic or archaic connotation. It should also be noted that 'mirk' does not merely denote a dark colour or blackness, but it was weighted with the sense of 'gloom', with references to obscurity and shadow.

Alliata opts for a literal translation: although she does not create a compound, her use of 'atro' – which carries the archaic and poetic connotations suggested by Tolkien and does not simply indicate a colour but instead reproduces the semantic associations of darkness inherent in 'mirk' – proves particularly appropriate. Fatica, by contrast, opts for a compound. While his translation is also literal and 'oscuro' faithfully reproduces 'mirk' and the semantic nuances emphasised by Tolkien with reasonable fidelity, it nonetheless lacks the poetic and archaic connotation that 'atro' so effectively preserves.

O	A	A/P	F
Mirrormere	Mirolago	Mirolago	Speculago

Mirrormere is a lake situated beneath the eastern gates of Khazad-dûm. According to the Dwarves of Durin's Folk, after Durin – the oldest of the Seven Fathers of the Dwarves – awoke at Mount Gundabad in the northern Misty Mountains, he travelled south until he came upon the lake. Gazing into its waters, he saw his own image reflected wearing a crown (an illusion created by the reflection of the stars in the sky). Interpreting this as a sign, he founded the city of Khazad-dûm. During the events leading up

to the War of the Ring, the members of the Fellowship passed close to the lake after fleeing from Khazad-dûm; both Gimli and Frodo looked into the water and beheld Durin's crown. 'Mirrormere' is the translation in the Common Speech of the Dwarvish name *Kheled-zâram*, meaning 'glass-lake', and is in fact a compound of 'mirror' and 'mere'.

The compound adopted by Alliata may result from a strategy mixing adaptation ('miro' for 'mirror') and literal rendering ('lago' for 'mere'). It is more plausible, however, that 'miro' is a replacement derived from the verb 'mirare' (from Latin *mīrari*, 'to marvel at, admire', and in Late Latin 'to look'), in reference to Durin gazing into the lake. The conceptual content of the original name is thus preserved, albeit through a different reference. Fatica's translation, by contrast, is more literal: as in Alliata's version, 'lago' translates 'mere', while 'specu-' clearly evokes 'speculare'⁽¹⁷⁾, thereby directly referencing 'mirror'.

O	A	A/P	F
Rivendell	Gran Burrone	Gran Burrone	Valforra

Rivendell is an Elvish outpost in the Misty Mountains, on the eastern border of Eriador. It was situated at the end of a gorge carved by the Bruinen River, well concealed among the moorlands. It was founded by the Half-elf Elrond as a refuge from Sauron and remained his dwelling throughout the Second Age and until the end of the Third, when he departed for Valinor. Bilbo stayed in Rivendell both on his journey to the Lonely Mountain and on his return to the Shire and later retired there after his farewell party to complete his book. Frodo likewise reached Rivendell years later: it was there that the Council of Elrond was held, at which Elves, Dwarves, and Men discovered that their fates were bound to that of the One Ring. The name signifies 'cloven-dell': 'cloven' being the past participle of 'cleave', 'to split', and

(17) 'Speculare' functions both as an adjective (from Latin *specularis*, derived from *speculum*, 'mirror') and as a verb (from Latin *speculari*, 'to observe, to examine', derived from *specĕre* – 'to look'). From an etymological standpoint, the adjectival form would represent a more literal translation than the verbal form, which nonetheless retains the semantic reference of the source text.

'dell' denoting a valley or hollow, generally of small extent. It translates into the Common Speech the Sindarin name *Imladris*, which means 'deep dale of the cleft'. According to an alternative etymology, it represents the Anglicised form of *Karningul*, the Westron translation of *Imladris* (Tolkien 2005: appendix F). Tolkien suggests translating the name according to its meaning or, if this proves to be the preferable option, preserving it in the target language.

Alliata's strategy combines replacement with addition, partially altering the meaning of the original: 'burrone' likely aims to encompass in a single term both the nuances of 'cleeve' and the idea of a hollow or valley, but 'dell' designates a valley of modest dimensions, which stands in direct contrast with 'gran' ('big, great'). Fatica's translation, although controversial – as it modifies one of the most iconic names in the books – is undeniably more faithful: 'val', an abbreviation of 'valle', accurately corresponds to 'dell' (albeit eliminating its nuance of smallness), while 'forra', referring to a deep gorge with steep, narrow walls, more faithfully conveys not only 'cloven' (or 'riven') but also the geographical description of the place as given in the text.

O	A	A/P	F
The Prancing Pony	Al Puledro Impennato	Il Puledro Impennato	Il Cavallino Inalberato

The Prancing Pony is a well-known inn in Bree, located precisely where the East Road curves around the slopes of Bree-hill. The rooms in the northern wing – designed for Hobbit guests – were situated on the ground floor. It was built long before the War of the Ring, at a time when traffic along the roads was far heavier; even after this traffic declined, however, the inn – owned by the Butterbur family for generations – remained an important hub for the exchange of information and news, since Bree lay at the intersection of the East Road and the Greenway. It was probably here that Gandalf met Thorin Oakenshield prior to the events narrated in *The Hobbit*, and it was here that Frodo, Samwise, Peregrin, and Meriadoc stayed during their journey, on Gandalf's advice, and encountered Aragorn for the first time. According to research conducted by members

of the Tolkien Society, Tolkien is believed to have drawn inspiration for The Prancing Pony from The Bell Inn in Moreton-in-Marsh, which, like the inn in the novel, had three storeys and an entrance through a garden.⁽¹⁸⁾ According to other researchers no inns bearing this exact name existed in Great Britain; however, there was an establishment called The Prancing Horse in Thatcham, Berkshire, as well as several inns containing 'horse' in their name and a number featuring 'pony', including, for example, The Welsh Pony on George Street in Oxford (Hammond, Scull 2005: 31). The adjective derives from the verb 'to prance', whose meaning is nuanced: 'to dance, gambol, caper', 'to swagger, to flounce', 'to move, walk, or behave in an ostentatious or arrogant manner'. The term is frequently used in reference to animals, especially horses; in this context, the Oxford English Dictionary defines it as 'to rise by springing from the hind legs; to move by a succession of such springs'. The noun 'pony', contrary to a common misconception, does not designate a mere foal but different races of small horses.

Both Alliaata and Fatica adopt what can be considered a literal translation, though each presents notable shortcomings. Neither 'puledro' ('foal') nor 'cavallino' ('little horse') correctly convey 'pony': one might argue that 'cavallino', as a diminutive, appropriately evokes the idea of a small horse, whereas 'puledro' fails to reflect the specific characteristics of a pony. In this respect, retention would have been preferable. As for the adjective, 'impennato' (from 'impennarsi', i.e. 'to rear up on the hind legs, lifting the front part of the body') closely reproduces the image conveyed by 'to rise by springing from the hind legs', though it omits the connotation of abrupt or ostentatious movement inherent in 'prancing'. 'Inalberato' derives from 'inalberare' (and not, as the Italian reader may think at first read, 'inalberarsi') and when applied to horses signifies 'to rear up', while in a more general and less common sense it means 'to grow proud, to assume an air of triumph or glory' – a nuance that aligns more closely with the pompous or ostentatious quality of 'prancing'. Moreover, in heraldic terminology 'inalberato' describes the attribute of a horse rearing upon its hind legs. Thus, the two adjectives

(18) The source cited in https://tolkiengateway.net/wiki/The_Prancing_Pony is 'Land-Lord of the Rings' (2 November 2006), published in *The Publican's Morning Advertiser* (accessed 16 October 2011); however, the website is no longer accessible.

are nearly equivalent in meaning, though 'impennato' reflects a register closer to informal Italian, whereas 'inalberato', with its heraldic associations, appears more formal and precise, and preserves additional connotations. Fatica's choice – altering once again an iconic name – provoked much discontent among readers. Some have suggested that 'Il Cavallino Rampante' ('the Rampant Pony') might have been a more fitting solution, though such a rendering would inevitably evoke, for Italian readers, an immediate association with Ferrari and motor racing, thereby appearing incongruous in Tolkien's context.

O	A	A/P	F
Tookland	Tuchilia	Tuclandia	Tooklandia

The Tookland is a vast region of the Shire located in the Westfarthing. Its most important settlement is Tuckborough, in the Green Hills, where the ancestral residence of the Took family, the Great Smials, is located. The Tooks had lived in the Tookland for generations, and by the end of the Third Age it was one of the few areas in which the oldest family of the region still resided. The etymology of the name is clear, as it derives from the family itself. It is worth noticing that this is one of the few names to present three distinct translations.

For the first part of the compound, all three translators preserved the solution they had previously adopted for the surname Took as it appears in the names of the characters belonging to this family. The second part of the compound, however, requires a more nuanced analysis. Allia's choice is the most difficult to interpret, as no conclusive evidence exists to support a precise explanation. Her strategy appears to be one of replacement. The suffix '-ilia' appears in several Italian toponyms (such as 'Sicilia' or 'Emilia'), and it seems likely that Allia's intended to evoke an immediate association with such familiar place names. Principe instead opted for a literal translation, using an element typical of toponymic compounds derived from Germanic languages, thus offering a solution that proves particularly faithful to the original name. Fatica likewise retained this latter element.

O	A	A/P	F
Withywindle	Sinuosalice	Sinuosalice	Circonvolvolò

The Withywindle is a tributary of the Brandywine River. The river valley, the Dingle, was considered the centre of all the unusual events occurring in the Old Forest. Tom Bombadil had met his wife Goldberry in a pool of the Withywindle. From then on, he returned every year to that spot to gather waterlilies for her. During one of these journeys, he encountered the Hobbits, who were facing Old Man Willow, an ancient and hostile tree whose enchantment trapped Frodo, Merry, and Pippin, until Bombadil arrived and freed them. ‘-withy’ is a synonym of ‘willow’ and is not uncommon in English toponyms, unlike ‘windle’. Conceived as a translation from Hobbitish, the name is derived from ‘withywind’, an altered form of the dialectal ‘withwind’, one of the designations of ‘bindweed’ – whose scientific names are *convolvulus arvensis*, *convolvulus sepium* or *convolvulus soldanella*, known in Italian as ‘convolvolò’ o ‘vilucchio’. ‘-windle’ should here be understood in the sense of ‘to move circularly or sinuously; to turn over and over; to whirl’ as also indicated by Tolkien’s own description – ‘a winding river bordered by willows (withies)’. Tolkien comments on several translations, expressing appreciation for the Dutch *Wilgewinde*, which employs the equivalent of the English ‘willow’. His recommendation, in fact, was to devise a neologism that retained the same components as the original name.

Both Alliata’s and Fatica’s translations, though different in form, may be considered literal. Alliata creates a compound that joins ‘sinuo-’ (an abbreviation of ‘sinuoso’, clearly evoking the meandering course of the river and thus rendering the semantic field of ‘-windle’) with ‘-salice’ (translating ‘withy-’, preserving the reference to the willows that line the riverbanks). Fatica, by contrast, combines ‘cir-’ (an abbreviation of ‘circo-’, reflecting the sense of ‘to move circularly’) with ‘convolvolò’, corresponding to ‘withwind’.

CHAPTER IV

TRANSLATING RHYMES

4.1. Translating poetic language and rhymes

Poetic texts are open texts, intrinsically bound to the reader's interpretative process. Their particularly complex structure makes it possible to convey a volume of information that could not otherwise be transmitted through the means of ordinary linguistic structures. Their components – rhythm, phonology, word order, and rhyme – can be analysed individually, yet they acquire full meaning only through their interrelation within the text. Recreating such a text in another language, and consequently addressing a different cultural context, constitutes a significant translational challenge, whose primary aim is to identify the most appropriate verse form for the metapoem.

Holmes (in Diadori 2012: 148-149) notes that, beyond literary works and literary criticism, there exist additional metaliterary genres related to poetry, and proposes a classificatory framework in which verse translation (or metapoetry) occupies a central position. Expressed in verse, it functions as a mediating point between the poetic traditions of the source and target languages. The main goal is the selection of the most appropriate verse form for metapoetry, and Holmes identifies four possible solutions: the first two derive from form (as the translator seeks an equivalent in the target language), the third from content, and the fourth does not derive from either form or content (Diadori 2012: 148-149):

- the **mimetic form** treats form as the primary translational criterion. It allows the translator to imitate the form of the original poem and prioritises the preservation of the original poem's verse structure in the metapoem. It is particularly suited to audiences open to unfamiliar poetic conventions, as it deliberately produces a sense of estrangement;
- the **analogical form** prioritises the reproduction of the original poem's effect rather than its form, selecting a verse structure that fulfils an equivalent function within the target poetic and literary tradition. Grounded in a domesticating approach, it allows the poem to be naturalised for the target audience;
- the **organic form** regards content and form as inseparable: the focus is on the content and the semantic material, meaning the form is accordingly adapted;
- the **extraneous form** allows the metapoem's form to remain independent of the source poem, granting the translator greater freedom in conveying meaning through minimal cultural adaptation and aligning closely with translation by imitation.

Lefevere proposes seven strategies for the translation of poetic text (Lefevere 1975 in Bassnett-McGuire 1980: 81):

- **phonemic translation**, that attempts to reproduce the source language sound in the target text while trying to maintain the sense;
- **literal translation**, that prioritises word-for-word translation, often distorting the sense and the syntax of the source text;
- **metrical translation**, which reproduces the original meter and focuses on formal aspects, often at the expense of the coherence;
- **poetry into prose**, that focuses on the meaning while often distorting the sense, communicative value and syntax of source language (although not to the same extent as with the literal or metrical translation);
- **rhymed translation**, which aims to reproduce both rhythm and rhyme;
- **blank verse translation**, that sometimes allows for greater fidelity to the source text, although the chosen structure, especially verse form, limits the translator;
- **interpretation**, under either the form of *version* (where the substance of the source text is retained but the form is changed) or *imitation*

(where the translator produces a poem of his own which draws inspiration from the original without reproducing its sense and form).

Lefevere emphasises that the main limitation of these strategies lies in privileging one aspect of the text over others, ultimately compromising the organic unity of the work – an element that Susan Bassnett also considers fundamental. The translator should therefore adopt a strategy that results in a text enabling the reader, in some way, to access the original, creating a metapoem that restores the source text as a cohesive whole. It is commonly believed that poetic texts are inherently untranslatable and that only a poet can successfully render them from one language into another. However, translators and scholars of comparative literature often challenge this view, arguing that poetic translation can indeed be seen not as a reproduction of the original, but as a unique metatextual work – in this case, a poetic translation (Diadori 2012: 153–154).

It is, of course, essential to consider the nature of the poetic text and assess the relative importance of meaning and musicality – the latter often being (together with sound and form) a key element in poetic texts addressed to younger readers. Consequently, the translator may choose to prioritise certain aspects of the communicative levels over others, depending on what emerges as most significant after analysing the source language, the target language, the poetic form, and any imagery present in the text (Lathey 2016: 101–105).

4.2. The *Ring Verse*: a comparison of the three Italian translations

Although Tolkien is best known for his prose works, he also composed a wide range of poems, such as *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil and Other Verses from the Red Book* (1962); *The Road Goes Ever On: A Song Cycle* (1968); *Bilbo's Last Song* (1974); a translation of a collection of Middle English poems, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: with Pearl and Sir Orfeo* (1975). Numerous poetic texts can be also found throughout *The Hobbit*, *The Silmarillion*, and *The Lord of the Rings*: in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, for instance, there are over thirty poetic passages encompassing various genres, including chants, songs, hymns, riddles, and poems.

For this reason, as in the case of names, a selection was necessary: the most iconic composition, commonly referred to as the *Ring Verse*, was chosen for analysis.

Original		
Three Rings for the Elven-kings under the sky, Seven for the Dwarf-lords in their halls of stone, Nine for Mortal Men doomed to die, One for the Dark Lord on his dark throne In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie. One Ring to rule them all, One Ring to find them, One Ring to bring them all and in the darkness bind them In the Land of Mordor where the Shadows lie.		
Alliata	Alliata/Principe	Fatica
Tre Anelli per i Re Gnomici	Tre Anelli ai Re degli Elfi ⁽¹⁾ sotto il cielo che risplende,	Tre Anelli ai Re degli Elfi sotto il cielo,
Che dominano nell'eternità		
Sette per i Principi dei Nani	Sette ai Principi dei Nani nelle lor rocche di pietra,	Sette ai Principi dei Nani nell'aule di pietra,
Che nei manieri di pietra sono,		
Nove per i Miseri Uomini	Nove agli Uomini Mortali che la triste morte attende,	Nove agli Uomini Mortali dal fato crudele,
Destinati alla mortalità		
L'Unico per l'Oscuro Signore	Uno per l'Oscuro Sire chiuso nella reggia tetra	Uno al Nero Sire sul suo trono tetro
Seduto sull'oscuro trono		
Nella Terra di Mordor	Nella Terra di Mordor, dove l'Ombra nera scende.	Nella Terra di Mordor dove le Ombre si celano.
Dove l'Ombra incombe.		
L'Unico Anello per dominarli,	Un Anello per domarli, Un Anello per trovarli,	Un Anello per trovarli, Uno per vincerli,
L'Unico Anello per trovarli,		
L'Unico Anello per afferrarli	Un Anello per ghermirli e nel buio incatenarli,	Uno per radunarli e al buio avvincherli
E vincolarli nell'oscurità		
Nella Terra di Mordor	Nella Terra di Mordor, dove l'Ombra cupa scende.	Nella Terra di Mordor dove le Ombre si celano.
Dove l'Ombra incombe.		

(1) In the 1970 edition, 'Elves' is still translated as 'Gnomi', exactly as in the 1967 edition (see Chapter 3, section 3.3). For this reason, the first line of the poem reads: 'Tre Anelli ai Re dei Gnomi sotto il cielo che risplende.'

This text contains a multitude of allusions and references to key elements of the story and, in just eight lines, summarises the history of the Rings and foreshadows Sauron's dark plans. It is an ancient poem from Elvish tradition that recounts the creation of the Rings of Power and the forging of the One Ring by Sauron during the Second Age. The version found in the novel is, in fact, a translation made by Gandalf into the Common Speech from the original text, which was written in the Black Speech of Mordor. The third-to-last and penultimate lines formed part of the spell from which Sauron's power derived. Inscribed by Sauron in Tengwar⁽²⁾ characters on the Ring, they became visible only when heated in fire; otherwise, it remained smooth and unmarked. Isildur was able to record the inscription only because the Ring was still red-hot when he cut it from Sauron's hand. Gandalf later discovered the inscription through Isildur's account and ultimately confirmed its existence by casting the Ring into the fire in Frodo's presence, thereby identifying it as the One Ring after seeing the inscription.

The original text consists of eight lines. Its metrical structure is not consistent: the first two lines, as well as the fifth, sixth, and final ones, are hendecasyllables, while the third is octosyllabic, the fourth a nine-syllable line, and the seventh contains thirteen syllables. The rhyme scheme follows the pattern ABABACCA, and in the final four lines a chiasmic arrangement is discernible (the fifth and eighth being identical, while the sixth and seventh display an almost parallel structure). The composition can be divided in two distinct ways: either according to textual pauses or according to metrical scheme and content. In the former case, one can identify a pentastich stanza followed by a tercet, as the strong pauses (full stops) occur at the end of the fifth line and at the end of the final one. In the latter case the structure corresponds to two quatrains. Particularly striking are the alliterations in 'm', 'n', 's', and above all 'r': the latter is especially significant, as it aptly represents the language of Mordor. Tolkien himself, when reciting the Ring Verse, markedly emphasised this vibrant consonant – absent in English, though present in Italian.

(2) An elaborate writing system invented by Feanor, the most skilled artisan among the Noldor. They were the second clan of the Elves that came to the West and the greatest in lore and craft.

The first quatrain follows a recurring pattern: it begins by mentioning the Rings, then proceeds to identify their bearers, and finally the places in which they dwell. The only exception is represented by the Men in the third line, for whom a defining characteristic – mortality – is instead highlighted. It is worth emphasising the doubling of this concept – Men are described as both ‘mortal’ and ‘doomed to die’ – as well as the conspicuous alliteration of ‘m’ and ‘d’ – ‘Mortal’, ‘Men’, ‘doomed to die’.

The Rings are explicitly mentioned only in the first line, then omitted and subsequently reintroduced in an anaphoric position from the sixth to the eighth line. The numerical sequence follows an ascending progression up to the third line, only to be interrupted by ‘One’ in the fourth. This choice appears anything but casual, as it draws the reader’s focus to the One Ring, forged to dominate all the others. As in the third line with the notion of death, the adjective ‘dark’ is repeated here: Sauron is the ‘Dark Lord’, and ‘dark’ is his throne; Mordor is the ‘Black Land’ over which Sauron rules – from the Sindarin *mor*, ‘black, dark’ and *dôr*, ‘land’ (Carpenter, Tolkien 1981: letter 144; Tolkien 1977–2009 edition: appendix).

The sixth and seventh verses, inscribed by Sauron on the One Ring, are the most famous and important lines and should therefore considered inseparable. They describe the Ring’s ultimate purpose and form the climax of the text. Each line is divided into two distinct hemistichs, separated by a comma in the first verse and a conjunction (‘and’) in the second. The first are identical in both syntactic and lexical structure, differing only in the choice of verb (‘rule’ versus ‘bring’). This lexical variation foregrounds the rhetorical figure of *hysteron proteron*, whereby the sequence of words is inverted with respect to the natural order of actions. Logically, one must first find, gather, and bind before exercising dominion; in this text, however, ‘rule’ precedes the other verbs, underscoring its centrality as Sauron’s ultimate goal. Notably, the verbs of the second hemistichs, ‘find’ and ‘bind’, rhyme. These four lines may also be analysed according to a chiasmic structure: ‘rule’ and ‘bind’ embody Sauron’s goals; ‘find’ and ‘bring’ designate the practical actions that necessarily precede the fulfilment of these goals.

The Italian translations diverge significantly from one another, although they share a common emphasis on reproducing both the

content and certain phonetic effects of the original text. The alliterations in ‘m’, ‘n’, ‘s’, ‘t’, and especially ‘r’ are consistent and strongly marked across all three Italian versions:

‘l’Oscuro Signore Seduto sull’oscuro trono’,
 ‘dominarli / trovarli / afferrali / vincolali
 nell’oscurità / Nella Terra di Mordor’,
 ‘sotto il cielo che risplende / Sette’, ‘lor rocche di pieta’,
 ‘Mortali / che la triste morte attende’, ‘nella reggia tetra /
 Nella Terra di Mordor /
 dove l’Ombra’,
 ‘domali, / trovarli, / ghermili / incatenarli’,
 ‘Tre / Re’, ‘Principi / pieta’,
 ‘Mortali / crudele’, ‘Nero Sire / sul suo trono tetro /
 Nella Terra di Mordor’,
 ‘trovarli, / vincerli, / radunali / avvincerli’.

Alliata, unlike Principe and Fatica, does not preserve the original verse structure: by dividing the text differently, she doubles the number of verses from eight to sixteen.⁽³⁾ The metrical scheme, as in the original, lacks consistency, and it diverges markedly from Tolkien’s. The first seven lines are decasyllables, the eighth a nine-syllable line, the ninth a heptasyllable, and the tenth a hexasyllable. Lines eleven through fourteen alternate between hendecasyllable and decasyllable, while the fifteenth and sixteenth are identical to the ninth and tenth. As for rhyme, the only lines paired are the second–sixth–fourteenth, fourth–eighth, ninth–fifteenth, tenth–sixteenth, and eleventh–twelfth–thirteenth. Rather than proposing a scheme reflecting this precise distribution – which would be outlined as ABCDEBFDGHHIIBGH – it is more reasonable to treat the verses as doubled. This outlines the more regular alternation ABABCDAC, which more closely approximates the source text. As with the original, the poem can be divided either into two double quatrains (based on content) or into a double quintain and a double tercet (based on punctuation), always bearing in mind that the number of verses has been doubled.

(3) For formatting reasons, the actual line division of the Alliata/Principe and Fatica translations could not be preserved in the table. It was therefore marked by different blocks, each corresponding to a single line.

At the level of meaning, Allia's translation departs from the source text in several respects. Elven-kings, for instance, are described as 'reigning for eternity' – perhaps a reference to their immortality – whereas in the original they are simply 'under the sky'. In the source text, Men are described as 'mortal' and 'doomed to die', a doubly emphatic reference that enhances their mortal condition. Allia, by contrast, renders them as 'miseri', possibly alluding to the collocation 'miseri mortali' ('wretched mortals') or, more broadly, to their destiny of inevitable death – a condition perceived as unfortunate from the Elvish immortal perspective. Allia may also have avoided the term 'mortali' to prevent redundancy with 'destinati alla mortalità'. In the original, such redundancy does not occur, since 'mortal' and 'die' do not display any graphic similarity. It is also worth noticing the use of the noun form, although this choice is justified by the need to preserve rhyme with 'eternità' and 'oscurità'. Strictly speaking, 'mortalità' denotes 'the condition of being mortal, that is, subject to death': men are not destined for mortality as such, but for death itself, as the conclusion of life; mortality, by contrast, constitutes an inherent characteristic, an essential property, not something to be reached. It is nonetheless significant that the same syntactic structure is reproduced, with variation only in the final element: in the original, Men are 'doomed to die' (adjective plus verb), whereas in Allia's translation they are 'destinati alla mortalità' (adjective plus noun). Given that in this context 'doomed' is directly linked to 'die' and conveys the sense of an adverse yet inevitable fate, 'destinati' may be considered appropriate, even if it does not carry the same negative connotations. 'Doom' denotes 'a judgement or decision, especially one formally pronounced; a sentence; mostly in adverse sense, condemnation, sentence of punishment', 'fate, lot, irrevocable destiny (usually of adverse fate; rarely in good sense)', 'final fate, destruction, ruin, death'. Similarly, the verb 'to doom' means 'to pronounce judgement or sentence upon; to judge', 'to pronounce judgement or sentence against; especially to condemn to some fate', 'to destine or consign to some adverse fate or lot'. It therefore encompasses the notion of destiny, but one that is almost invariably hostile, an unavoidable condemnation – such as death.

Unlike Principe and Fatica, who render the adjective 'dark' that appears twice in the fourth line in two distinct ways, Allia consistently

translates both instances as ‘oscuro’, thereby preserving the structure of the original verse. The possessive adjectives are omitted as is the pronoun ‘all’ in the sixth and seventh lines. The alliterative sounds correspond almost exactly to those identifiable in the original text. Three verbs deserve closer examination. ‘To lie’ in the fifth line encompasses a wide range of meanings: in this case, ‘incombe’ conveys the senses of ‘to lie in ambush’, ‘to be set, fixed, or arranged in some specified position or order’, ‘to rest or be imposed as a burden, charge, obligation, etc. upon a person; to be incumbent or obligatory upon; to press or weigh upon’. It denotes something positioned in a determinate place that weighs, metaphorically, upon someone, which aptly captures the oppressive Shadow of Sauron. ‘To bring’ likewise admits of several meanings; ‘afferrare’ primarily reflects the sense of ‘to cause to come along with oneself; to fetch [...]’; it implies motion towards the place where the speaker or auditor is, or is supposed to be, being in sense the causative of come’.

In the source text, ‘bring’ conveys a broader semantic range: while the Ring’s purpose is indeed to seize, take, or capture, it also entails gathering and bringing together. ‘Bind’, by contrast, generally means ‘to make fast with a tie; to fasten, tie up’, but in this context it primarily carries the sense of ‘to deprive of personal liberty, make a captive or prisoner’. ‘Vincolare’ – ‘to bind or fasten with constraints’, ‘to restrict or impede freedom of movement’ – is arguably more formal than required and should therefore be understood in a more figurative sense.

Another point of note is that ‘One’, occurring anaphorically in the fourth, sixth, and seventh lines, is translated as ‘L’Unico’, that is, as an adjective rather than a numeral, accompanied by the definite article (which is absent in the source text). For the other Rings, by contrast, simple cardinal numerals without any article are used. Her choice thus accentuates the distinction between Sauron’s Ring and the others.

With regard to rhythmic structure, the fourteenth line proves unusual: ‘nell’oscurità vincolarli’ would be expected, following the same inverted syntactic structure already present both in the fourth line (at the syntactic level) and in the fifth, seventh, and eighth (in terms of the arrangement of noun and adjective). In this way, the rhyme with

the three preceding lines would have been preserved, producing the sequence ABABCDDC (while still maintaining the grouping into double lines).

Taking all these observations into account, it becomes almost impossible to place Allia's translation into a single category among those proposed by Holmes: in fact, it does not preserve either the sound or the meter of the original verses, but rather seems to aim at reproducing their overall effect and at conveying meaning and content not through a well-defined form, but by trying to respect the pattern through which the original presents the same content. According to Lefevere's classification, it could be described as literal (since it privileges semantic content over literary value) but also as an interpretation (as it takes inspiration from the original, seeking to preserve its sense while changing its form).

Principe heavily revised Allia's translation and his version is certainly the best known. In this translation, the number of verses is kept equal to that of the original text, but the structure changes and, unlike the English text, the meter remains constant. By analysing the text and counting the metrical syllables, it becomes clear that Principe's structure is that of the double octave, which, however, can only be maintained by applying certain metrical figures. The first line requires a dialefe, preserving adjacent vowels (the first at the end of a word and the second at the beginning of the following word) where elision would normally occur. The third line requires a synalepha, whereby adjacent vowels (the first at the end of a word and the second at the beginning of the following word) are pronounced as a single syllable. In the fifth and eighth lines, a diastole is employed, involving a rhythmic shift of stress from the antepenultimate to the penultimate syllable. The first hemistich of the fifth and eighth lines should therefore be analysed as truncated octosyllabic lines. An analysis focused more closely on pronunciation from a grammatical perspective would consider them as decasyllables. It should also be noted that, unlike the original text, the two hemistichs are separated by a comma. The alternation of rhymes is the same as in the original text (ABABACCA), and again the poem can be divided either into two quatrains (following the content) or into a five-line stanza and a tercet (following the punctuation).

Analysing the lexical choices, it can be noticed that 'Re Gnomici' ('Gnome Kings') is replaced by the more accurate 'Re degli Elfi' ('Elven Kings'); the first line is also expanded with the relative clause 'che risplende' ('that shines'), which is absent in the original text. In the second line, the possessive adjective – omitted by Alliata – is retained, while in the third a significant change occurs. In the original text, the subject of both hemistichs is 'Nine' ('Rings' is implied); in Principe's translation, however, 'Nove' serves as the subject only in the first hemistich, while in the second it is replaced by 'la triste morte' ('sad death'): it is she, in fact, who awaits Men. This phrasing is certainly weaker than 'destinati', especially considering that death is described as 'sad', whereas in the original 'doomed' conveys more a sense of adverse fate and damnation. In the third line, the Italian text gains an assonance absent in the original but quite fitting in context ('mortalì', 'morte'), while in the fourth, the repetition of 'dark' is omitted: Sauron is indeed the 'Oscuro Sire' ('Dark Lord'), but his stronghold is described as 'tetra' ('gloomy'). The use of 'chiuso' is also peculiar, as it almost suggests that Sauron is hiding, which contrasts sharply with the sense of strength and power conveyed by the image of the throne present in the original text.

The clear use of synecdoche should also be noted: in the original, Sauron sits 'on his dark throne', whereas in Principe's translation he is 'nella reggia tetra' ('in the gloomy stronghold'). Another synecdoche (shared with Alliata's translation) can be found in the fifth and eighth lines: 'shadows' is translated in the singular as 'ombra'. The verb 'scendere' ('to descend') used to translate 'lie' is necessary to preserve the rhyme but is semantically less faithful than 'incombere' ('to loom') in respect to the source text. Furthermore, adjectives which are absent from the source text are added, each linked to the concept of darkness and slightly modifying the verses that are identical in the original: the 'Ombra' is 'nera' ('black') in the fifth line and 'cupa' ('dark') in the eighth. As Alliata had done, Principe also omits the pronoun 'all' in both the sixth and seventh lines. The use of 'domare' ('to tame') to translate 'rule', though not common, proves appropriate in this case: 'domare' means 'to subjugate' or 'to bring under control' and is synonymous with 'piegare', 'sottomettere', 'controllare', and 'dominare' ('to bend', 'to subdue', 'to control', 'to dominate'). The meaning of 'rule'

– i.e., ‘to exercise sway or influence over’, ‘to have under one’s control’, ‘to hold supreme command or authority’, ‘to dominate, control; to prevail in’ – is fully conveyed. The translation of ‘bring’ does not differ from Alliata’s version, since ‘ghermire’ is a synonym of ‘afferrare’ (‘to grasp’, ‘to seize’), while ‘scendere’ should be understood in the sense of ‘calare’ (‘to descend’), as a synonym of ‘incombere’ (‘to loom’). Likewise, ‘incatenare’ (‘to chain’), like ‘vincolare’ (‘to bind’), carries a much more specific, concrete connotation than the source text and should therefore be interpreted figuratively: the source text employs the verb in its broadest sense, referring to imprisonment, to the act of depriving someone of their freedom. The repetition of ‘One Ring’ in an anaphoric position is particularly evident and of fundamental importance in the English text, and Principe preserves it.

It is impossible to classify Principe’s translation within a single category, since multiple aspects of the original are considered most important and therefore maintained in the target text – effect, meaning, and content. Unlike Alliata, Principe also pays strong attention to rhythm and meter, even though they do not match those of the original text. According to Holmes’s framework, this translation could be considered both analogical and organic. Using Lefevere’s classification, it can be described as literal (though not word-for-word) for the importance it places on semantic content, rhymed for the attention given to metrical rhythm and rhyme, but it can also be defined as an interpretation insofar as it seeks to preserve the meaning while altering the verse form.

Fatica’s translation differs considerably from both Principe’s and Alliata’s, although it remains similar in some respects (especially those related to meaning). In an interview published on 29 April 2018 in *Robinson*, the cultural weekly supplement of *La Repubblica*, the translator offered Loredana Lipperini a preview of what his version of the *Ring Verse* would be:

**Will the famous Ring Verse also remain as we know it?
The one that ends with ‘Un Anello per domarli, un Anello
per trovarli, / Un Anello per ghermirli e nel buio incatena-
rli, / Nella Terra di Mordor, dove l’Ombra cupa scende’?**

«The translation will be different – I will not say how. I respect Tolkien’s

internal logic. A kind of masochistic pleasure for the translator lies precisely in attempting to reproduce the English scheme in Italian.»⁽⁴⁾

These remarks suggest that Fatica's main goal is to preserve the poem's rhyme scheme and metrical structure. Although the rhymes may initially appear to be absent, their pattern in fact follows the English original, ABABACCA. 'Pietra' in the second line and 'tetro' in the fourth form an imperfect rhyme (or assonance) through the use of 'tr', while 'cielo' in the first line, 'crudele' in the third, and 'celano' in the fifth and eighth lines create a hypermeter rhyme – i.e., a rhyme between a paroxytone and a proparoxytone word, in which the final syllable is either elided through synalepha or counted in the following line. Since the distribution of the content across the lines corresponds to the original, the text can likewise be divided into two quatrains, or into a five-line stanza and a tercet. The internal logic of the rhythmic structure is also respected, since (exactly as in the original text) it is not kept constant: the first line is a hendecasyllable, while the second, third, sixth, and seventh lines are composed of an octosyllable and a senarius, and the fourth is a dodecasyllable; the fifth and eighth lines are composed of a heptasyllable and an octosyllable.

The most noticeable element, when analysing the first line, is the highly literal translation, which therefore differs from Principe's version in the absence of 'che risplende'. In the second line, the final vowel of the adverb 'nelle' is elided in contact with 'aule' to maintain the metrical pattern, and the possessive is omitted – exactly as in Alliata's translation. 'Aule' preserves not only the meaning but also the sound of 'halls'. In the third line, the explicit repetition of the concept of death expressed in the source text by 'mortal' and 'die' is removed: Men are indeed mortal, but the idea that their cruel fate is death is left merely as an intuition for the reader. The adjectival construction 'dal fato crudele' renders 'doomed to die' more faithfully, not only in terms of syntactic structure and word class, but also semantically: 'fato crudele' renders the nuances of 'doomed' more precisely than Principe's 'che la triste morte attende' ('whom sad death awaits').

(4) Translation mine. The verses from the poem were kept in Italian as the interviewer aims at further emphasising them as the focus of the question.

In the fourth line, the repetition of 'dark' is omitted: the adjective is translated first as 'nero' and then as 'tetro'. While 'oscuro' would have been semantically more appropriate, it would have disrupted the metrical structure. Moreover, this choice enriches the line with alliteration. The fifth and eighth lines are identical, respecting the original structure; the synecdoche is dropped, and 'Shadows' become 'Ombre', which do not loom or descend but rather 'si celano' ('hide'), capturing the nuance of 'lie' in the sense of 'to remain in a state of inactivity or concealment': the Shadows hide, ready to strike.

Analysing the most significant lines, the sixth and seventh, it can be noticed that Fatica also removes the pronoun 'all', and the rhetorical figure of hysteron proteron (preserved in both Alliata's and Principe's versions) is abandoned. The sequence of actions is no longer 'rule' > 'find' > 'bring' > 'bind' (with 'rule' appearing first even though it is logically last) but 'trovare' > 'vincere' > 'radunare' > 'avvincere'. 'Vincere', in the sense of 'to overcome, subdue, dominate', follows the logical chain and comes after 'trovare'. The use of 'avvincere' to render 'bind' is particularly fitting, as it carries a less practical and more figurative nuance than 'vincolare' or 'incatenare'.

Furthermore, 'al' allows for a different shade of meaning from the one found in the original text: the verse reads 'in the darkness', which implies that Sauron's prisoners are bound (or chained) among themselves after being gathered in a dark place. 'Al buio' has the same literal meaning as 'in the darkness' or 'in the dark', but it can also be interpreted as 'to the darkness', using 'al buio' not as a locative state but as a destination – a place (however figurative) to which the prisoners are bound irrevocably until they are swallowed by it. They are chained to the darkness, become part of it, and have no way back, plunging into oblivion. 'Radunare' renders with notable fidelity the original nuance of 'bring', whose semantic scope is broader than 'to seize' or 'to grasp'. What stands out most in these two lines – and most clearly distinguishes them both from the source text and from the two preceding translations – is the absence of anaphora: Alliata had repeated 'L'Unico Anello' and Principe 'Un Anello', both reproducing the anaphoric pattern built on 'One Ring'. Fatica, by contrast, makes the same choice as Principe in translating the first hemistich of the sixth line with 'Un

Anello', but he then entirely omits the noun in the two following hemistichs, replacing 'Un' with 'Uno', consistently using the capital initial to mark the distinction from the other Rings.

A single, unequivocal definition of Fatica's translation remains impossible – even when considering the elements analysed above and the translator's own statements. According to Holmes's classification, the translation may fundamentally be considered organic, since it takes the poem's content (and semantic material) as its point of departure, to which form must be subordinated. However, insofar as there are points at which form influences content and semantic choices, the translation may in those instances also be described as analogical. According to Lefevere's taxonomy, it may be defined – like Principe's version – as literal but not word-for-word, given the importance accorded to semantic content; rhymed, because it reproduces the rhyme scheme and maintains the same metrical inconsistency as the original (although it does not employ the same meter); and, in a certain sense, it may be regarded as an interpretation, insofar as it seeks to preserve the meaning of the source text while altering its form.

CONCLUSIONS

As highlighted by this research, the translation of names and rhymed texts in *The Lord of the Rings* has posed an especially demanding challenge for translators. Both elements display features that require, in translation, a level of attention comparable to that invested by the author in their creation. Names incorporate intra- and extra-textual references that reflect distinctive traits of a character or place and constitute one of the most immediate means of conveying information about them, thereby guiding readers' interpretation. Rhymed texts, by contrast, possess an internal coherence that is often difficult to reproduce in the target text: the translator must consider rhyme scheme, metre, content, and meaning, and is frequently compelled to privilege one component over another.

In the case of *The Lord of the Rings*, the author did not provide specific guidance on how to translate rhymed texts: across the three Italian editions examined, three markedly different versions of the *Ring Verse* emerge. Although all three primarily foreground content, the other aspects on which they focus – rhyme scheme, adherence to the original metre, and literal meaning – vary considerably.

With regard to names, Tolkien offered invaluable assistance in the “Guide to the Names in *The Lord of the Rings*”, where he explains the etymology of selected names and the references they contain, while also indicating which names should be translated and how, specifying

which elements are essential to preserve in the target text and which are not. It is therefore especially revealing to examine how different translators, while engaging with the author's recommendations, either adopt distinct translation strategies or apply similar strategies while arriving at different solutions.

In the Italian context, it is also particularly instructive to consider the novel's editorial history, which developed in a frequently complex manner and inevitably had repercussions for translation. It thus becomes apparent that what readers have long regarded as the 'historic' translation is in fact the product of an extensive revision by Quirino Principe of Vittoria Alliata's original text, from which it sometimes diverges substantially. It must also be noted that very few copies of Alliata's version – withdrawn from circulation shortly after publication – survive (and consequently very few people have been able to read it), whereas the Principe revision was reprinted repeatedly for almost fifty years, effectively remaining the only widely accessible Italian translation for that extended period. It is therefore unsurprising that the names, descriptions, and rhymed verses it contained entered the collective imagination and popular culture (also owing to the film trilogy), and it was entirely predictable that any subsequent changes would provoke reactions among readers who had grown attached to a text with which they had, quite literally, grown up.

This is precisely what occurred when the publication of the new translation by Ottavio Fatica was announced: it triggered intense controversy and attracted substantial criticism. Predictably, the most contested aspects were names and rhymed passages, whose renderings were often deemed inaccurate or even 'unfaithful' by fans. The analysis developed in this work therefore set out to compare three Italian translations of *The Lord of the Rings*, focusing on these two critical points. All three display problematic features and prove more or less faithful to the source text in different respects.

Translations are, of course, also subject to personal taste, and it is therefore impossible for any one version to be appreciated in the same way by all readers; yet it is equally important to recognise that retranslation is both frequent (and, to a degree, inevitable) in literary contexts. While evaluations of translations and retranslations are unavoidably

influenced by individual preferences, one should nevertheless strive for the greatest possible objectivity, distancing oneself in particular from the sense of security that comes from long familiarity with a single version that has become part of one's cultural repertoire or of the collective imagination. Instead, translations should be analysed more dispassionately in order to identify the strategies employed by translators, determine whether the author's intentions and guidance have been respected, assess whether essential elements have been preserved, and – most importantly – establish whether the effect of the source text has been successfully reproduced in the target text.

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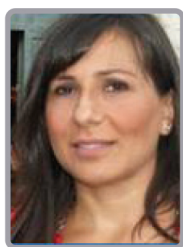
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TRANSLATION, RETRANSLATION AND THE ITALIAN RENDERINGS OF TOLKIEN'S *THE LORD OF THE RINGS*

This book explores the exceptional cultural phenomenon of *The Lord of the Rings*, a work that has attracted millions worldwide and reshaped modern fantasy. At its heart lies Tolkien's deep philological passion: the creation of languages, peoples, and an entire mythology. Translating such a sophisticated tapestry poses distinctive challenges, especially when it comes to names and rhymed verses, those elements that are crucial to the story's meaning and function. The Italian publishing history of Tolkien's work of art is particularly complex, marked by withdrawn editions, contested revisions, and a recent much debated retranslation. By comparing three Italian versions and drawing on Tolkien's own *Guide to the Names*, this study offers an organised investigation of how translators have travelled through these linguistic and cultural difficulties. It sheds light on the delicate balance between fidelity and creativity, and, eventually, manages to reveal how the choices we make in translation shape the reception and the enjoyment of a literary monument.



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