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Comparison between the two Italian translations  
*of The Lord of the Rings*

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS:

INTRODUCTION .....	5
FIRST CHAPTER .....	7
1.1 Biography.....	7
1.2 Tolkien's main works .....	9
1.3 <i>The Lord of the Rings</i> and its reception and publication in Italy .....	10
SECOND CHAPTER .....	15
2.1 Theory of translation .....	15
2.2 Difficulties in translating <i>The Lord of the Rings</i> .....	18
2.3 Every translation is a new translation .....	22
THIRD CHAPTER .....	29
3.1 Different translational strategies .....	29
3.2 Analysis of some extracts from the first chapter of <i>The Fellowship of the Ring</i> .....	34
3.3 New names and differences in toponyms .....	38
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	42
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	43
SITOGRAPHY .....	45



# INTRODUCTION

This thesis, derived from my passion for languages and literature, allowed me to deepen my knowledge about translation and about *The Lord of the Rings* that is, in my opinion, one of the greatest adventure stories of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The first time I read *The Lord of the Rings* I was thirteen years old. After reading it I felt that I wanted to know more about the complex fictional world described and created by John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, so I read all the other books I could find about the Middle Earth and its inhabitants. When I heard that a new translation of *The Lord of the Rings* was going to be published, I was looking forward to reading it. When I had to choose a topic which I could investigate for my thesis I had no doubts, because my admiration for Tolkien's works had never decreased. However, the news made me think and wonder about the reasons that could drive a translator to retranslate a work whose translation already existed, and I thought about studying the two translations to see what changed at the different levels of analysis. In this dissertation I therefore decided to talk about retranslation comparing the two Italian translations of Tolkien's work *The Lord of the Rings*, the first by Vittoria Alliata di Villafranca and subsequently revised by Quirino Principe, published by the Astrolabio publishing house in 1967, and the second carried out by Ottavio Fatica and published by Bompiani in 2020.

The first chapter of the dissertation deals with the assumptions and the processes that led Tolkien to create a real fictional world in order to give life to the languages he was creating. The chapter focuses therefore on the important phases of Tolkien's life as a man, professor, and writer; examining in particular his relationship with his texts and the way they were received and published in Italy.

The second chapter of the dissertation presents a general overview on the theory of translation from the Ancient Greece to present day. It subsequently outlines the difficulties faced by translators when translating such a text as *The Lord of the Rings*, that change depending on the criteria followed by the translators in their work. The last part of the chapter focuses on retranslation in general, reflecting upon when it is really necessary and what retranslation strategies are usually used in order to improve previous translations.

The third chapter of the dissertation deals with the different translational strategies used by the two translators in their work and the differences in the resulting texts that those different strategies imply. Some examples will be provided in order to illustrate to the readers the practical realization of

the translational strategies and the resulting features that characterize the two translations. The following part of the dissertation aims to present the analysis of some extracts from the first chapter of *The Fellowship of the Ring*, showing how a passage can be translated in more than one way, reflecting upon which are the most effective translations and offering evidence for the conclusions reached. Finally, the last part of the chapter focuses on one of the most delicate themes in the analysis of the two different translations of *The Lord of the Rings*, the translation of person names and toponyms. The final part aims to provide the reasons that brought Fatica to change some of them in his work, focusing on the justifications given by the translator and the consequences implied by these choices.

# FIRST CHAPTER

## 1.1 Biography

Writing about John Ronald Reuel Tolkien's life is not always easy. At a first glance to his biography, one could think that he lived a dull and monotonous existence. However, to a more careful eye, it reveals an out of the ordinary vitality and a character far from framed in the society in which the Anglo-Saxon professor was deeply immersed. Both from the narrative and the gnoseological point of view, in fact, he succeeded in breaking many of the patterns to which he was tied as a consequence of the cultural and biological stamps that he, as a writer but also as a human being, inherited from his predecessors and ancestors.

John Ronald Reuel Tolkien was born on January 3, 1892, in Bloemfontein, South Africa, to English parents.<sup>1</sup> At the age of three years old, his mother brought him and his younger brother, Hilary, back to England due to health reasons. Tolkien's father died soon afterwards in South Africa, so the family stayed in England and by the summer of 1896 his mother found them a home in the hamlet of Sarehole, just outside the city Birmingham. During the following years they lived in genteel poverty and moved from Moseley to King's Heath Station in 1901 and then to Edgbaston in 1902. Due to economic reasons Tolkien had to retire from King Edwards School and attend St. Philips School until he won a scholarship in 1903 that enabled him to go back to King Edwards.

In 1904 Tolkien's mother died. From her he had inherited the knack for languages, ancient legends and mythology, that will characterize him for his entire life. After her death, he and his brother were made wards of a Catholic priest and under his guide Tolkien showed impressive linguistical skills, proving wonderful abilities in Latin and Greek and, among other languages, Gothic and Old Norse. It is during this period that Tolkien started working at a language of his invention after his first encounter with a constructed language, Animalic, an invention of his cousins, Mary and Marjorie Incledon.

When he was eighteen, he fell in love with Edith Bratt, but the Catholic Priest who took care of him prevented him from seeing and writing her until he was twenty-one years old. This way, the young man dedicated himself to the study of the classics, from Ancient English to Old Germanic. The

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<sup>1</sup> Humphrey Carpenter, *J.R.R. Tolkien. La biografia*, Roma: Fanucci, 2002.

dichotomy between Tolkien's happier days in the rural landscape of Sarehole and his adolescent years in the industrial centre of Birmingham would be felt strongly in his later works.

After the beginning of the First World War, he was commissioned as a temporary second lieutenant in the Lancashire Fusiliers and, in 1916, he married Edith Bratt. He was then summoned to Folkestone for posting to France, where he sank into boredom and composed some poems to pass the time. When he finally arrived at the front in early July 1916, he took part in the battle of the Somme and lost three of his best friends. When he contracted trench fever, he was allowed to return home for a while. A weak and emaciated Tolkien spent the remainder of the war alternating between hospitals and garrison duties, being deemed medically unfit for general service. During his recovery in a cottage in Little Haywood, Staffordshire, he began to work on what he called *The Book of Lost Tales*, beginning with *The Fall of Gondolin*. *The Book of Lost Tales* represented Tolkien's attempt to create a mythology for England, a project he would abandon without ever completing. On 16 July 1919 Tolkien was taken off active service, at Fovant, on Salisbury Plain, with a temporary disability pension.

In 1920 he undertook a translation of Beowulf, which he finished in 1926, but did not publish. In 1921 he became teacher of literature at Leeds University and in the meanwhile kept writing and perfecting *The Book of Lost tales* and his fictional language. In these years he also met and developed a deep friendship with C. S. Lewis, author of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, a co-member of the informal literary discussion group "The Inklings". In 1924 his third son Christopher was born, whom, after the death of the father, published a series of works based on his father's extensive notes and unpublished manuscripts, including *The Silmarillion*. In 1925 Tolkien returned to Oxford as Rawlinson and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon, with a fellowship at Pembroke College and during his time there he wrote *The Hobbit* and the first two volumes of *The Lord of the Rings*. In 1945, Tolkien moved to Merton College, Oxford, becoming the Merton Professor of English Language and Literature, in which post he remained until his retirement in 1959. Four years later her daughter Priscilla was born. Tolkien completed *The Lord of the Rings* in 1948, close to a decade after the first sketches. During his life in retirement, from 1959 up to his death in 1973, Tolkien received steadily increasing public attention and literary fame. Fan attention became so intense that Tolkien had to take his phone number out of the public directory, and eventually he and Edith moved to Bournemouth, which at the time was a seaside resort. The deeply affectionate couple spent there their last years, until Edith died on 29 November 1971, at the age of 82. Tolkien had the name Luthien, which is the name he gave to the elf protagonist of a romantic story contained in *The Silmarillion*, engraved on Edith's tombstone at Wolvercote Cemetery, Oxford. When he died 21 months later, on 2 September 1973 at the age of 81, he was buried in the same grave, with "Beren", Luthien's husband, added to his name.



## 1.2 Tolkien's main works

Undoubtedly, in writing his fantasy books, Tolkien drew on a wide array of influences, including mythology, archaeology, ancient and modern literature. His philological work centred on the study of Old English literature, especially *Beowulf*, and he acknowledged its importance to his writings. Other important texts that influenced Tolkien were the Anglo-Saxon poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the Nordic sagas *Völsunga*, *Kalevala*, *Edda* and the *Nibelungenlied*.

With regard to the essays written by Tolkien, the ones worthy of mention in this dissertation are *On Fairy Stories* and *Monsters and Critics*.

The works of J. R. R. Tolkien are divided into two main branches: the former is about fairy tales and other stories, usually considered “for children”, while the latter is concerned with the books set in the so-called Middle-Earth.

Tolkien's works that pertain to the first branch are the following, listed in chronological order by date of publication, between brackets is reported the original translation of the title in Italian:

- *Farmer Giles of Ham* - 1949 (Il cacciatore di draghi);
- *Leaf by Niggle* - 1945 (Albero e foglia), that contains the short story *Smith of Wootton Major* (Fabbro di Wootton Major), and the theatrical text *The Homecoming of Beorhtnoth* (Il ritorno di Beorhtnoth figlio di Beorhthelm) and the short poem *Mitopoeia* (Mitopoeia);
- *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil* - 1962 (Le avventure di Tom Bombadil);
- *The Father Christmas Letters* - 1976 (Le lettere di Babbo Natale);
- *Mr. Bliss* - 1982 (Mr. Bliss);
- *Roverandom* - 1998 (Roverandom)

The works pertaining to the second group instead, are the following:

- *The Hobbit* - 1937 (Lo Hobbit);
- *The Lord of the Rings* - 1954 (Il Signore degli Anelli);
- *The Silmarillion* - posthumously published by the son Christopher in 1977 (Il Silmarillion);
- *Unfinished Tales of Númenor and Middle-earth* - posthumously published by the son Christopher in 1980 (Racconti incompiuti di Númenor e della Terra di Mezzo);
- *History of Middle-earth* - a twelve book series, some of which posthumously published between 1921 and 1996 (Storia della Terra di Mezzo);

- *The Children of Húrin* - posthumously published in 2007 by Christopher (I figli di Húrin).

If we want to consider the correspondence of the professor as part of the Tolkienian literary corpus too, *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien* - 1981 (La realtà in trasparenza) has to be added to this list.

Tolkien's most prolific years were the ones between 1920 and 1930 and his works could be either short stories invented to amuse his children or legends and mythologies pertaining to his culture and studies. What was necessary to link those two different worlds suddenly arrived when he wrote a short sentence on a piece of a paper: "In a hole in the ground there lived a Hobbit"<sup>2</sup>. That name was so intriguing that Tolkien was inspired to write a book having a Hobbit as a protagonist, to better explain what these strange creatures meant to him.

In 1937 *The Hobbit* was published. The book was so successful that he, with the support of his editor, decided to expand his works and keep writing his stories. Despite being his first work, *The Hobbit* had a fundamental importance in his career as a writer because in this first text is already possible to discern some of the aspects and characteristics of the world he was inventing: Arda. Tolkien, in fact, had begun creating a real imaginary world in 1917, developing a setting in which all the adventures he wrote about are carried out. Around the original nucleus of *The Hobbit* Tolkien developed the fictional world which became known by the name of "Middle Earth" and that became also the setting of *The Silmarillion* and *The Lord of the Rings*, acknowledged as his most important work. Written in a refined language that tried to reconstruct the simplicity and severity of Medieval English, the trilogy was firstly published divided into three separate volumes: *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954), *The Two Towers* (1955), and *The Return of the King* (1955). These three different volumes were reunited in a single book in 1956.

### 1.3 *The Lord of the Rings* and its reception and publication in Italy

John Ronal Reuel Tolkien became a character of interest in Italy especially during the last twenty-five years. Scholars, experts, and fans examined his works and, in particular, *The Lord of the Rings* accurately and thoroughly in every aspect, analysing the linguistic, thematic and cultural issues of his books.

Thanks to the research carried out by the scholar Oronzo Cilli and reported in the volume *Tolkien e l'Italia*<sup>3</sup> it is known that the Mondadori was about to win the publication of *The Lord of the*

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.tolkienlibrary.com/abouttolkien.htm> accessed on July 12, 2021.

<sup>3</sup> Oronzo Cilli, *Tolkien e l'Italia-Il mio viaggio in Italia*, Rimini: Il Cerchio, 2016.

*Rings* twice. Just after the publication of *The Fellowship of the Ring* and *The Two Towers* by Allen & Unwin in England, the main Italian publishing house was closely connected with the English publisher. The Milanese publisher, however, after examining the work and having drawn up opinions about the reading, pulled back, justifying his choice with a number of reasons. First of all, *The Lord of the Rings* was an excessively long novel which, although divided into three volumes, was not considered suitable for the Italian public, that at the time was hungry for stories anchored to reality. This first refusal was followed by another eight years later, in 1962 when Elio Vittorini and Vittorio Sereni, who at the time were working with the Mondadori, objected to the publication, not fully recognizing the value of the work, and judging it with no reference to reality.

Five more years passed before the novel was translated and published in Italy. In 1967, Mario Ubaldini, Roman publisher of the Astrolabio-Ubaldini, won the rights of the publication and in November in the Italian bookstores appeared the first edition of *The Lord of the Rings*. The translation was entrusted to the fifteen-year-old Vittoria Alliata di Villafranca who translated at night, receiving a fee of 800 lire per folder. Of that edition (today very rare) only 400 copies were sold because the target audience of the Astrolabio, accustomed to texts on sociology, psychology, and philosophy, was not ready to welcome such a work.

This way, three years later, in the editorial history of *The Lord of the Rings* was inserted the brand founded in Milan by Edilio Rusconi. The editorial director, Alfredo Cattabiani, at the urging of his co-workers Quirino Principe and Elémire Zolla, finally published in Italy Tolkien's work in a single volume. The Rusconi edition, released in October 1979, passed under the eyes and hands of several collaborators: Zolla wrote the introduction, Principe rewrote the appendices, dealt with various aspects of the translation, drew the Map of Middle-earth and Pietro Crida made the cover image. That edition was an unexpected and immediate success, so desired by the editors that was followed by three following reprints and led to the publication of other editions of *The Lord of the Rings* and the other works written by Tolkien.

Until 1999, 10 editions of *The Lord of the Rings* were published by the Rusconi publishing house: seven in a single volume and three divided into the three different books. The most important editions are the one "in brown leather" (1970) and the one "in green leather" (1984 and 1997), very rare and valuable for the type of paper and for the leather binding used, and also because only a few copies were printed. After the failure of the Rusconi publishing house, with the year 2000 the Tolkien titles passed to the Bompiani publishing house, that still holds the rights. A major turning point was marked in 2003, when the digitization of the text led to some changes in the translation thanks to the work of the Italian Tolkienian Society. Currently, the Bompiani editions on *The Lord of the Rings* are sixteen, of which ten in a single volume and six in trilogy. Other Italian publishers that over the past

fifty years have entered the history of this masterpiece are Euroclub, De Agostini, Club degli Editori, Edizione Club, Mondolibri and RCS Quotidiani.

The last two years represented a turning point in the editorial history of the book because the publishing house Bompiani recently published a new edition of *The Lord of the Rings* with a new translation written by Ottavio Fatica in 2019. This new translation exacerbated a mainly political conflict between different Tolkien realities that remained silent for a long time and only recently came back to the surface. While it should be noted that the first translator Alliata, at the time only fifteen years old, was not tied to the right-wing nor to the left-wing, Fatica with his translation tries to give a re-elaboration of Tolkien's work seen from the political point of view of the left.

To better understand how Tolkien, his work and his mythology were received in Italy, the historical, political, and cultural context of this country in the 1970s must first be explained. The Italian context of the time was based on the clear political-ideological opposition between the right and the left which also permeated the cultural sphere. On the basis of this principle and this political climate, two different judgements were made immediately: on the one hand the right and the extreme right found in the novel some elements that they felt similar to their worldview (myth of noble blood, exaltation of the past and of a pre-industrialized world, a non-democratic society) and adapted them to their ideals, very often distorting its meaning. This is also demonstrated by the fact that the far-right youth organization called "Fronte della Gioventù" [Youth Front] organized manifestations called "Campi Hobbit" [Hobbit Camp] between 1977 and 1981. The "Campi Hobbit" were advertised as a place where political activists, musicians and artists could build a new "alternative" cultural movement. As explained by John Last in his article, "for Italy's disillusioned youth, Tolkien's books seemed to affirm the noble struggle of traditional societies against the encroaching menace of industrialization, progressive politics, and groupthink".<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, the hegemonic culture based on the dogmas of Marxism, and the left, first rejected the text as not in conformity with the canons they followed; and in a second phase they instead hurled on *The Lord of the Rings* a whole series of criticisms and accusations that did not concern the style of the novel but its content. Tolkien has in fact been accused of being a racist, an anarchist, a fascist, and of having set Stalin and the Soviet Union in a bad light by comparing them to Sauron and Mordor. Despite these accusations, Tolkien always took a firm position against the ideology of the Third Reich and his work was never associated with Traditionalism in the English-speaking world. In my opinion, *The Lord of the Rings*, as many other literary works, has served during the 70s as an empty model which people try to fill with their own ideologies and should be read and translated without any further motive than the one

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/hobbit-camps-fascism-italy> accessed on August 10, 2021.

of keeping together the many varied components of the text without adding ideologies that are not present in the original work or taking away nuances of meaning.

This climate of rigid opposition between the two Italian systems of thought slowly began to dissolve with the occurrence of two relatively recent events: the centenary of Tolkien's birth and the release of Peter Jackson's films (2002-2004). Critics and the press, in many cases, have revised their original positions trying to clear the reading and interpretation from any political and ideological judgement, helping new readers and fans approach the novel in an unbiased way, permitting them to generate their own opinions on Tolkien's work.<sup>5</sup>

Today the novel in Italy has taken on the size of a best seller and has also inaugurated in our country a true Tolkienian cult, together with all the other works of the English writer, which are being read by an increasing and heterogeneous number of people.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://tolkienitalia.net/?p=3973> accessed on July 20, 2021.



# SECOND CHAPTER

## 2.1 Theory of translation

The verb “to translate” was expressed in Ancient Greek through the verbs “metafero”, “metagrafo” and “metafrazo”, that mean respectively “to transport”, “to transcribe” and “to paraphrase”. Similarly, in Latin the verbs “converto” and “imitor” had the same function, meaning respectively “to copy” and “to imitate”. As we can observe in the Cambridge Dictionary, the definition of “to translate” is “to change writing or speech from one language into another”.<sup>6</sup> The etymology derives from Latin *translat-* ‘carried across’, past participle of *transferre*, from *trans-* ‘across’ + *ferre* ‘to bear’<sup>7</sup>.

Among the first to deal specifically with translation was Cicero, who distinguishes between “*interpres*” and “*orator*”: he used the former to indicate the predominantly legal translator and the latter to indicate the translator dedicated to art.<sup>8</sup>

During the 14<sup>th</sup> century, with the translations of Augustine’s texts, the problem is applied to the translations to Latin and to Italian vulgar and is focused on the distinction between “horizontal translation” and “vertical translation”, the first operating between different vulgars and the second between Latin and vulgar. After Dante’s, Boccaccio’s and Petrarch’s works, the verb “*traducere*” came to be used, referring to the simple version from Greek to Latin.

During the 15<sup>th</sup> century, on the other hand, the term “*traductio*” begun to be used, incorporating the meanings of “imitate”, “convert” and “express”.

The concept of translation became then gradually more specific to indicate the activity of a subject that transposes a written statement from a natural language to another. On the one hand, Martin Luther defends his translation choices in the German version of the Bible by stating that the text of arrival must comply with the “criterion of acceptability” and be therefore smooth to read so as to be well understood by the reader.<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, Cervantes, with a rather ironic attitude,

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<sup>6</sup> <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/it/> accessed on August 5, 2021.

<sup>7</sup> <https://languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-en/> accessed on August 5, 2021.

<sup>8</sup> Bruno Osimo, *Storia della traduzione: riflessioni sul linguaggio traduttivo dall'antichità ai contemporanei*, Milano: Hoepli, 2002.

<sup>9</sup> Lawrence Venuti, *The Translation Studies Reader*, London: Routledge, 2000.

considers translation as an inverted tapestry compared with its straight, since semantic and morphological references from one language to another can in no way be reproduced with equal precision.<sup>10</sup> Another Spanish scholar and writer, Ortega y Gasset, subsequently expresses its disenchantment with the translation process that, in his own words, could prove to be a useless effort in pursuit of an impossible translation.<sup>11</sup>

The two following centuries were characterized, especially in the French-speaking area, by the so-called “belles infidèles” famous translations, which promoted a very elegant and fluent result in the target language, at the expense of the respect for the original text.

Another very important verb, essential to understand the development of the same concept in Germany, is the ancient form “verdeutschen”, that, literally translated, means “to germanise”. Two German scholars named Eric Breitung and Johann Gottfried Herder renovated the thought of the act of translation by understanding that the translational process is not an end in itself, but it is essential for the preservation and development of the language.<sup>12</sup>

In the nineteenth century, in Germany, Friedrich Schlegel, Friedrich Schleiermacher and Wilhelm von Humboldt actively participated in the translational debate, enormously enriching it<sup>13</sup>. While the former focuses on the importance of the incomprehensibility of the text and advises translators against attempting at any cost to impose their interpretation within the translation, the second scholar is among the first to raise the problem of mediation between source culture and receiving culture, proposing the dichotomy between “übersetzen” (written translation) and “dolmetschen” (oral translation). On the other hand, Humboldt upsets the object/sign perspective, stating that the latter is not a mere manifestation of the former but a real form that shapes the object itself from within. Wills, in addition, tried to strengthen the scientific basis of translatology known as “Wissenschaft”, consisting in a science that might have been able to investigate language in an analytical way instead of an empirical one. The contribution of the American Charles Sanders Peirce to translatology is expressed by the concept of the “interpretant sign”, that is a mental entity deriving from the individual experience acting as a linking point between sign and object. Even Wittgenstein, without relying on reading Peirce, uses the concept of “interpretant” to motivate the logical mental passage that allows the translation of the sign into object. Saussure, for his part, treats the same topic

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<sup>10</sup> Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, (1605-1615), London: Penguin Classic, 2019.

<sup>11</sup> José Ortega Y Gasset, *Miseria y Esplendor de la Traducción*, Genova: Il Melangolo, 2001.

<sup>12</sup> Bruno Osimo, *Storia della traduzione: riflessioni sul linguaggio traduttivo dall'antichità ai contemporanei*, Milano: Hoepli, 2002.

<sup>13</sup> Bruno Osimo, *Storia della traduzione: riflessioni sul linguaggio traduttivo dall'antichità ai contemporanei*, Milano: Hoepli, 2002.



by using different terms, with the distinction between “langue” and “parole” to represent the system of signs inside the code on one side and the linguistic act of the speaker on the other side.<sup>14</sup>

The Italian contribution to the debate on translation comes prevalently from Luigi Pirandello and Umberto Eco. The former compares the translator to an actor, justifying the similarity explaining that they both have before them a work already completed and they have to interpret it in their own way. The latter, on the contrary, exploits his experiences in the field of translation to support the thesis that the act of translation is comparable to a bet in which one has to risk their own baggage of knowledge in order to obtain the maximum possible result.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Russian formalist Jakobson defines three different typologies of translation opening new scenarios for the debate<sup>15</sup>. Starting from its now classic communication scheme he differentiates between intralingual translation (within the same language), interlingual (between different languages), and intersemiotic (between different codes). Subsequently, Peeter Torop expands the studies of his colleague by extending the problem of translation also to the metatext and intertext, while Lotman considers translation as a universe of signifiers within which the cultural difference acts as a communication filter between the language of departure and that of arrival.

An essential point to be made is the introduction of the concept of “Äquivalenz” (equivalence), as opposed to “Korrespondenz” (correspondence) theorised by Werner Koller. This concept will subsequently be diversified, depending on the degree and the meaning, in denotative, connotative, normative, dynamic, and formal.

Nevertheless, the last innovation in the translation debate consists of the “translation studies”, that, starting from the homonymous work written by Susan Bassnett, aim through an interdisciplinary approach to study translation from three different points of view: theoretical, descriptive and applied. The Belgian-Dutch school counts prominent scholars as André Lefevere, Raymond Van der Broeck and Antoon Van Dijk. While the former proposes seven different types of possible translation (phonemic, literal, metric, in rhyme, prose version, loose verse and interpretation) each of which favours one aspect of the text against the others, the second exposes the idea that the correspondence between “types” and “tokens” is no longer to be considered as a one-to-one correspondence, but many-to-one. The latter, instead, asserts that no utterance can be isolated from its context, since it is to be considered within a macrostructure, defined as “co-text”, which has the characteristics of coherence, cohesion, and appropriateness.

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<sup>14</sup> Ferdinando De Saussure, *Corso di linguistica generale*, Bari: Editori Laterza, 2009.

<sup>15</sup> Jeremy Munday, *Introducing Translation Studies*, London: Routledge, 2016.

With the success of the “translation studies”, through the polysystem theory spread by the Israeli Itamar Even-Zohar and Gideon Toury in the first half of the century is promoted the idea that translated texts are not a simple copy of the original ones, but constitute a literary unit within the macrosystem of the target language instead, developing the idea that every translation is therefore to be considered as an act able to influence the entire literary polysystem.<sup>16</sup>

The very first essay on translatology to date that is still considered the reference text for every translation scholar, is the work of the American Eugene Nida *Toward a science of translating*. In Nida’s work it becomes clear that it is the firm opinion of the scholar that the form of the message can be negligible, provided that its meaning is clear to the reader. Inspired by Noam Chomsky’s theory of linguistic universals and also based on his own extensive experience in translating the Bible, Nida idealizes three generally valid translation methods: simplification, production and generation.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, it only remains to determine which type of translation the translators will lean towards: will they keep in close contact with the author, or will they get as close as possible to the reader? The wisest choice is undoubtedly to take an intermediate position that can foster both choices without neglecting, as far as humanly possible, any of the two.

## 2.2 Difficulties in translating *The Lord of the Rings*

Tolkien’s work *The Lord of the Rings* is unanimously considered of very difficult translation, as the language used by the author continuously changes through registers that range from epic, to humorous, to poetic. In addition, at least one dozen artificial idioms appear in it, many of which are even related to each other (for example the artificial language of the elves, called “Quenya”).

Drawing from Giuseppe Scattolini’s paper,<sup>18</sup> during the last two years, Italian scholars became aware of a new problem that has urgently imposed itself: the one not of translation but of translatology, that is to say, of the science of translation. Despite the problems faced by the translation of *The Lord of the Rings* carried out by Vittoria Alliaia di Villafranca above mentioned, the translation problem and the question of which were the most appropriate scientific criteria to translate Tolkien has never been raised.

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<sup>16</sup> Lawrence Venuti, *The Translation Studies Reader*, London: Routledge, 2000.

<sup>17</sup> Lawrence Venuti, *The Translation Studies Reader*, London: Routledge, 2000.

<sup>18</sup> <https://tolkienitalia.net/?p=3973> accessed on August 20, 2021

Today this problem arises because of the release of the new translation of *The Lord of the Rings* by Fatica. His translation, in fact, follows exactly opposite criteria to the one written by Alliata. To give two quick examples, Alliata preferred to translate by bringing her style closer to the style of most well-known author for Italians, that is, the one of Dante. This way, the same archaism of Tolkien's text is reproduced through the prose style of the translation. Fatica, on the contrary, dried the prose, making it more similar to that of the English language, and decided to give the idea of the archaic nature of the text thanks to the use of outdated Italian terms and erudite quotations scattered throughout the text in a quite arbitrary way, as has been shown by scholars<sup>19</sup> and as will be discussed later in the last chapter of this dissertation.

This new awareness shows the importance of the problem of translation, taking for granted the translator's interest in informing and caring for people who can only read in translation. Translators who are interested in translatology and pay great attention on the translation show great respect towards the reader, and the willingness to encourage their understanding of the text.

The Italian case is emblematic of what happens all over the world. The great void that can be noticed in any Tolkienian environment is the total lack of a discussion of the problem of translatology. This fact, being Tolkien a translator himself, becomes even more striking.

Tolkien expressly requested that the translators of his own works, and of *The Lord of the Rings* in particular, kept in mind meticulous account of these needs, to the point that he came to produce a real guide in which he explained to the translators how to proceed along the arduous path within the translation of his works.

Regarding the translation of names, considered very important by Tolkien, he himself prepared a glossary which, once delivered to the translators, indicated with the thoroughness of the linguist the meaning and the origin of every single name, even outlining precise guidelines on the type of translation to be adopted.<sup>20</sup> The ultimate purpose was to make the narrated events read (and lived) as if the Middle-earth was an ancient village of the reader's country. That's why a good Tolkienian translation must take into account, in addition to the characteristically multifaceted style of the author, especially the presentation of onomastics and toponymy.

Another challenge to the translation is given by the fact that *The Lord of the Rings* claims to be a translation of the Red Book of Westmarch, with the English language in the translation representing the Westron of the original. This way, translators should pay attention in order to imitate

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<sup>19</sup> Marcantonio Savelli, "Translating Tolkien. The thin line between translation and misrepresentation. An Italian case-study", *Journal of Tolkien Research*, Volume 11, 2020, p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, *Nomenclature of The Lord of the Rings*, Published in: Hammond, W. and Scull, C., *The Lord of the Rings: A readers' companion*, London: HarperCollinsPublisher, 2005.

the complex interplay between English and non-English (Elvish) nomenclature in the book in the language they are translating into. An additional difficulty is the presence of proper names in Old English and Old Norse. Tolkien chose to use Old English for names and some words of the Rohirrim, for example, "Théoden", King of Rohan: his name is simply a transliteration of Old English þēoden, "king". Similarly, he used Old Norse for the names of his Dwarves in *The Hobbit*, such as "Thorin Oakenshield": both Þorinn and Eikinskjalði are Dwarf-names from the *Völuspá* (the best-known poem of the *Poetic Edda*, the modern name for an untitled collection of Old Norse anonymous poems).

The relation of such names to English, within the history of English, and of the Germanic languages more generally, is intended to reflect the relation of the purported "original" names to Westron. The Tolkien scholar Tom Shippey states that Tolkien began with the words and names that he wanted, and invented parts of Middle-earth in order to resolve the linguistic puzzle he had accidentally created by using different European languages for those of peoples in his legendarium.<sup>21</sup>

In *Nomenclature of The Lord of the Rings* Tolkien wrote:

It is desirable that the translator should read Appendix F in Volume III of *The Lord of the Rings* and follow the theory there set out. In the original text English represents the Common Speech of the supposed period. Names that are given in modern English therefore represent names in the Common Speech, often but not always being translations of older names in other languages, especially Sindarin (Grey-elven). The language of translation now replaces English as the equivalent of the Common Speech; the names in English form should therefore be translated into the other language according to their meaning (as closely as possible).<sup>22</sup>

This quotation, apart from revealing the fact already stated in this dissertation that Tolkien acted as a translator of Elvish names, shows not only that the translators should take account of this when translating the text in their own language, the "Language of Translation", but also that it would be desirable for them to have a knowledge of the Elven languages to reach a deeper understanding of Tolkien's text. Since in this dissertation we took the Italian case as emblematic, in the Italian translations of *The Lord of the Rings* the Elven languages have never been valued. In the translation written by Alliata-Principe this fact could not be appreciated, because at the time the Elven languages were not known. Today, after the Elven languages have been made known and studied, not only did the new translator Fatica not take it into account, but even believes that studying them is a waste of

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<sup>21</sup> Tom Shippey, *The Road to Middle-earth*, London: HarperCollinsPublisher, 2005.

<sup>22</sup> John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, *Nomenclature of The Lord of the Rings*, Published in: Hammond, W. and Scull, C., *The Lord of the Rings: A readers' companion*, London: HarperCollinsPublisher, 2005.

time, a game that Tolkien makes to mock the reader, when, on the contrary, to him they were an extremely serious thing.<sup>23</sup>

Another element that the author highlights regarding the criteria of his translation is the euphonic one: Tolkien preferred the rendering of sound to that of the "philological" meaning. Here the claims of philology that may be presented by translators and editors of translations fall again, because according to Tolkien this is not a translation-logic criterion to be taken into account in the first instance.

Another feature of the of *The Lord of the Rings*'s style that it is difficult to translate and that has been highlighted in the new translation by Fatica is the fact that the language used by Tolkien changes according to the narration. As explained by Fatica himself: "una caratteristica dello stile del romanzo: una lingua che parte piana, al livello terragno degli Hobbit, e cresce con l'esplorazione di paesaggi e regni sempre più antichi e grandiosi, fino a diventare prosa poetica nelle scene più epiche, e infine ritornare (faticosamente) alla terra e alla lingua comune di partenza. È stata la nuova traduzione italiana a farci scoprire che il romanzo non è scritto tutto con lo stesso registro linguistico, lo stesso lessico e lo stesso stile, bensì ha un andamento che corrisponde a quello della storia narrata." [a feature of the novel's style: a language that starts flat, on the ground level of the Hobbits, and grows with the exploration of landscapes and kingdoms more and more ancient and grandiose, until it becomes poetic prose in the most epic scenes, and finally return (with some efforts) to the ground and to the common language of the beginning. It was the new Italian translation that made us discover that the novel is not written entirely with the same linguistic register, the same lexicon and the same style, but has a course that corresponds to that of the story told].<sup>24</sup>

The next point concerns the consistency of the translation. Tolkien would certainly not have approved the changes in the nomenclature of the Alliaata translation revised by Principe, where there are the "Baggins" next to the "Serracinta", nor the jumps of the translation of Fatica, which passes from "Took" to "Brandaino": according to the author, in fact, a translation must be consistent with itself, otherwise the result is the insertion of unexplained elements without a "place in the fictional linguistic history of the period"<sup>25</sup>.

According to Tolkien, translation problems are not of secondary importance, on the contrary, they are absolutely essential for the coherence of the Secondary World and consequently for the suspension of disbelief. Inconsistent translations draw the reader out of the story and prevent him,

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<sup>23</sup> Marcantonio Savelli, "Translating Tolkien. The thin line between translation and misrepresentation. An Italian case-study", *Journal of Tolkien Research*, Volume 11, 2020, p. 10.

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.jrrtolkien.it/2020/11/10/a-trento-un-convegno-tolkien-e-la-traduzione/> accessed on August 21, 2021.

<sup>25</sup> John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, *Nomenclature of The Lord of the Rings*, Published in: Hammond, W. and Scull, C., *The Lord of the Rings: A readers' companion*, London: HarperCollinsPublisher, 2005.

therefore, to fully enjoy the narrative. In addition, to understand the translation methodology proposed by Tolkien it seems that a knowledge of the essay *On Fairy Tales*<sup>26</sup> and of Tolkien's poetics is also necessary, otherwise the concepts of "Secondary World" and "suspension of disbelief" would be unknown. This is another criterion, after knowledge of the Elven languages, which according to Tolkien designates an ideal translator of his texts.

Moreover, as explained by Scattolini in his article, if the translational criteria indicated by Tolkien serve the coherence of the narrative and the poetics that holds it together, violating them means violating narration itself, tampering with the text. A translator cannot avoid putting his own interpretation in the translation and leaving out some of the meanings and references present in the original text, certainly, but there is a big difference between doing so unconsciously or under circumstantial obligation and doing it, instead, in a perfectly conscious and deliberate way. In this second case the translator is cheating and acting dishonestly, delivering to readers a text counterfeited by him by choice.<sup>27</sup>

### 2.3 Every translation is a new translation

According to the Turkish scholar Şehnaz Tahir Gürçağlar, a retranslation is the result of the act of "translating a work that has previously been translated into the same language"<sup>28</sup>. While the term has been used to define different concepts, including indirect translation, also known as relay translation, where the resulting text is a translation of a translation, in translation studies the current accepted meaning refers to a new translation into the same target language of a previously translated work.

There are many reasons for which a text should be translated more than once. According to Fabiana Fusco the main reason is the decreasing appreciation of the already existing translations, synthesized in an inevitable "aging" of translations.<sup>29</sup> The theorists, literary critics and translators themselves agree in recognizing the transience of translation and in attributing to linguistic and ideological factors the cause of such fragility.

As a matter of fact, natural languages (and in the specific case of the new translation of *The Lord of the Rings* carried out by Fatica, Italian language) change and evolve at a very fast pace,

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<sup>26</sup> John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, *On Fairy-Stories* (1947), London: HarperCollinsPublisher, 2008.

<sup>27</sup> <https://tolkienitalia.net/?p=3973> accessed on August 22, 2021

<sup>28</sup> Şehnaz Tahir Gürçağlar, "Retranslation" published in Mona Baker & Gabriela Saldanha, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, London: Routledge, 2019, p. 233.

<sup>29</sup> Fabiana Fusco, "La ritraduzione nel panorama degli studi traduttologici", *Translationes*, Volume 7, 2015, p. 3.

sometimes rendering some texts obsolete after a few decades. Therefore, the retranslation of a book can be due to the passing of time, and in this case a translator should update the text in order not to risk alienating potential readers with archaic words, always being careful to keep the style and message intact. However, as argued by Giorgia Rambaldi, while the first translations of literary works such as *Moby Dick* or *Pride and Prejudice* are old and need to be updated because language has changed, during the last forty years Italian language has not undergone substantial changes compromising its understanding. Therefore, Rambaldi affirms that retranslating *The Harry Potter saga* or *The Lord of the Rings* for this reason is pointless.<sup>30</sup>

In this respect, Berman argues that “toute traduction est appelée à vieillir, et c’est le destin de toutes les traductions des “classiques” de la littérature universelle que d’être tôt ou tard retraduites.” [every translation is destined to grow old, and it is the destiny of all the translations of the “classics” of universal literature to be retranslated sooner or later]. The French scholar adds then that the only translations that can escape this transience are the so-called “grandes traductions”, whose fate follows the destiny of the original work instead.<sup>31</sup>

In Lawrence Venuti’s opinion, texts with very great cultural authority, including “the Bible, [...] the Homeric epics, Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, Shakespeare’s plays, or the Miguel de Cervantes novel *Don Quixote*, are likely to prompt retranslation because different readerships in the receiving culture may have different interpretations, and may want to apply their own values to the text.”<sup>32</sup> As a matter of fact, as thoroughly explained by Fabiana Fusco<sup>33</sup>, such types of texts perform in the culture of arrival different functions, but equally crucial: while the multiple retranslations of the Bible, sacred text of three great religions, aim to make known and propagate the word of God, the retranslation of argumentative texts aims to spread among specialists of specific branches of knowledge the fundamentals of modern thought. However, as stated by Lawrence Venuti, to better understand the nature of retranslation it should also be remembered that the luck of this process is particularly observable in the literary panorama, since the appearance of a series of translations manifests the will to perpetuate that text as a work of art, or rather as a ‘classic’.<sup>34</sup>

Another important reason is that translators want to improve the quality of older translations. With the enhancing of the lexicographical resources and terminology research combined with a better foreign language competence, the translators can work with greater ease and satisfaction, contributing

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<sup>30</sup> <https://paperpurrr.blogspot.com/2019/08/parliamone-perche-ritradurre.html> accessed on August 23, 2021.

<sup>31</sup> Fabiana Fusco, “La ritraduzione nel panorama degli studi traduttologici”, *Translationes*, Volume 7, 2015, p. 2.

<sup>32</sup> Lawrence Venuti, “Retranslations: The creation of value”, published in *Bucknell Review*, Volume 47, 2004, pp. 25-38.

<sup>33</sup> Fabiana Fusco, “La ritraduzione nel panorama degli studi traduttologici”, *Translationes*, Volume 7, 2015, p. 5.

<sup>34</sup> Lawrence Venuti, “Retranslations: The creation of value”, published in *Bucknell Review*, Volume 47, 2004, pp. 25-38.

together with a more detailed critical analysis of the work and its author, to a better understanding of the original text.

This perspective is connected in some ways to some considerations attributable to the hypothesis of retranslation (*hypothèse de la retraduction*) advanced by Antoine Berman and Paul Berman in 1990 but which dates back to the cyclical view of translation suggested by Goethe. Such a 'hypothesis' is configured as a sort of movement of each retranslation towards the ST (source text). While the first translation would tend to appear domesticating adapting the text to the norms and conventions of the target language and culture, since it would have the task of introducing the ST into the culture of arrival; the successive, a foreignizing translation closer to the original, would bring to light the spirit, the essence and otherness of the ST. It could be possible that such movement is facilitated by the continuous professionalization of the translators who use more sophisticated lexicographical and terminological tools, however, Berman and Berman's hypothesis has been tested by several scholars who have suggested that it is too simplistic. In an article on retranslation in Finland, Paloposki and Koskinen argue that although many retranlations do conform to Berman and Berman's model, "there are no inherent qualities in the process of retranslating that would dictate a move from domesticating strategies towards more foreignizing strategies."<sup>35</sup>

Retranlations may also be made in order to account for a revised edition of the source text, or because a translator wants to present a new interpretation or creative response to a text. Although this last reason is most common in poetry and drama, as explained in an interview by Matteo Colombo, the new translator of *The Catcher in the Rye* written by J.D. Salinger: "Una ritraduzione è sempre giustificata, ogni nuova opinione su un testo è lecita."<sup>36</sup> [a retranslation is always justified and every new opinion on a text is fair and acceptable], therefore, the only point that remains to be clarified is whether a retranslation is necessary or unnecessary.

Xu Jianzhong, author of the article *Retranlation: Necessary or Unnecessary*, by analysing the different aspects of retranslation, draws the following conclusion. The Chinese scholar argues that the direct retranslation of literary works should be encouraged because it is the incarnation of artistry and the significance of it is to surpass former translated version(s). Such retranlations are made in order to increase the notoriety of literary works, and not to discredit previous translations.<sup>37</sup> The direct retranslation of science books should be strictly limited because, unlike direct retranslation of literary works, it is only for the spreading of scientific truths, not for the readers' appreciation, so it needs no

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<sup>35</sup> Outi Paloposki and Kaisa Koskinen, "A thousand and one translations: Revisiting retranslation", Gyde Hansen, Kirsten Malmkjaer, Daniel Gile, *Claims, Change and Challenges in Translation Studies: Selected Contributions from the EST Congress*, (2001), Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2004, pp. 27-38.

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.rivistastudio.com/tradurre-ancora-il-giovane-holden/> accessed on September 10, 2021

<sup>37</sup> Jianzhong Xu, "Retranlation: Necessary or Unnecessary", *Babel*, 2003, pp. 193-202.



competition in artistic approaches. But if the language and terms of the translated versions are not accurate, wrong or out of date, it is needed. Indirect retranslation, although it loses some of the information of the original, should be accepted because it is a good supplement to direct translation.

During the last years several books have been retranslated a number of times, for example many classic Russian novels written by Dostoevsky, such as *The Brothers Karamazov* and *The Idiot*. Both translations, carried out by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky from Russian to English have been well-received.<sup>38</sup> Differently, the recent retranslation of *Moby Dick* completed by Fatica for Einaudi in Italy did not have the same success. Fatica's attempt received a lot of critics, especially for the language choices adopted, considered enigmatic by many critics, and, at times, even rather obsolete.<sup>39</sup>

Another emblematic case is the new translation of Grimm's *Fairy Tales* appeared in 2014, entitled *The Original Folk and Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm* and published by Princeton University Press. The editor and translator was Jack Zipes, who included in the volume all the 156 stories from the first editions of 1812 and 1915, many of which were omitted from other editions and translations because of their disturbing subject matter. The new translation revealed the extent to which previous translations had been censored, or based on censored source texts.<sup>40</sup>

Retranslation is also common in subtitling, while it is less common in dubbing, because the response from viewers is not always positive.

An interesting question raised by the Chinese scholar Yanjie Li in the article *A General Review of Existing Retranslation Study* is whether or not the "ideal translation" in literary translation exists.<sup>41</sup> After stating that translation activities reached a climax in the twentieth century, the so-called "age of translation", the essay explains that this kind of concentrated retranslation activities has brought about quite a number of problems. As a result, translation scholars are deeply concerned about this issue and they carry out the debates over retranslation phenomenon in order to cope with this in a proper way, writing essays on retranslation and developing the branch of Translation Studies. According to Yanjie Li, moreover, while some translators are in favour of the activity of retranslation and think that it helps literary texts not to be turned away by the readers, other scholars disagree with

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<sup>38</sup> <https://eizie.eus/en/news/1092659205> accessed on August 20, 2021.

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.linkiesta.it/it/article/2015/12/29/e-traduci-come-mangi-da-moby-dick-in-poi-le-migliori-e-le-peggiori-ver/28721/> accessed on August 18, 2021

<sup>40</sup> Alison Flood, "Grimm brothers' fairytales have blood and horror restored in new translation", *The Guardian*, 12 November 2014.

<sup>41</sup> Yanjie Li, "A General Review of Existing Retranslation Study", *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, Volume 3, October 2013, pp. 1908-1912, p. 1909.

such actions, bringing as a motivation the fact that in their opinion there is only one true meaning and that other alternatives of interpretation might cause confusion and chaos in understanding the text.

In Xu Jun's opinion<sup>42</sup>, the so-called "ideal translation" must contain three levels of connotation. First, an "ideal translation" must achieve its perfection both in understanding and expression, without any mistakes in understanding and any blank in interpretation. It can be equivalent to the text in content and can also rival with the text in form. Accordingly, there remains no possibility and necessity for retranslation. Secondly, this "utopic translation" purports to "be immortal", so as to last beyond time and space. Regardless of which age it is, the "ideal translation" is to be adored as classics. Hence there is no necessity to make any correction or adjustment for the translation with the changes of times, language, or readers' aesthetic taste. Thirdly, the "ideal translation" also includes the meaning of "the perfect model".

What Xu Jun does not consider is that it is natural that different translators may have different understandings and expressions of a text when confronted with it. Therefore, different translations regarding the same text seem to be reasonable and acceptable. To conclude, since the concept of "ideal translation" may remain relative and utopic, for it is questionable to set an absolute standard for what might be the "ideal translation", it is sensible to think that the activities of retranslation are justified and acceptable.

Charles S. Kraszewski theorises four relevant retranslation strategies that can be followed by translators in order to improve previous translations<sup>43</sup>. These strategies are interesting to investigate in order to broaden the readers' horizon in understanding what underlies retranslation. The first strategy is called "corrective translation" and it refers to the retranslation of a text already existing in a bad or faulty translation in order to provide the target language receptor with a more faithful reproduction of the original. The goal of corrective translation is to make a better translation of a work that already existed in the target language in an imperfect form. The second strategy, called "critical translation", refers to the retranslation of a literary work already existing in a translation free of errors and "acceptable" in order to give a new interpretation to the original work. By definition, the goal of a critical translation is to retranslate a work already available to the public in an acceptable form in the target language, in order to present the reader with a valid interpretation of the original work that the earlier translations do not possess. The third type of translation strategy is "proselytizing translation". Like critical translation, it refers to the retranslation of a work already existing in an acceptable form in the target language, but it is characterised by the intent of emphasizing its special

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<sup>42</sup> Yanjie Li, "A General Review of Existing Retranslation Study", *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, Volume 3, October 2013, pp. 1908-1912, p. 1910.

<sup>43</sup> Charles S. Kraszewski, *Four Translation Strategies Determined by the Particular Needs of the Receptor*, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1998.

meaning for a particular, well-defined group of receptors via an interpretation of the text according to their customs, ideas, or worldviews in order to modernise its message. The last relevant translation strategy is “neoconceptual translation”. This strategy, like the previous two, refers to the retranslation of a work already existing in an acceptable form in the target language, but differs in the intent of eliminating gender discrimination or certain violent inclination reflected in the language of translation. Its goal is to purify the language of translation being careful to avoid such discriminatory effect in translation.

Given the impossibility to transfer a text from a natural language to another maintaining its meaning in its entirety, it is necessary to reflect on the fact that the translation must respect, on the one hand, the author of the original text and, on the other, the readers that chose that edition of the text trusting the work of the translators. This way, the translator has to choose between semantic rendering, focused on the language of departure, or communicative rendering, focused on the language of arrival and in favour of the reader, as already stated by Schleiermacher in his famous quotation: “Either the translator leaves the author in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader towards him; or he leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author towards him”.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Lawrence Venuti, "Genealogies of Translation Theory: Schleiermacher", *Traduire la théorie*, Volume 4, n° 2, 1991, p. 125-150.



# THIRD CHAPTER

## 3.1 Different translational strategies

The job of the translator has always been underestimated, and sometimes misunderstood. The difficulty of it consists in keeping together the many varied components of a text in a language other than their own and it can be considered a success when it provides the users of the translation as many nuances present in the original text as possible. The current discussion on the translations of *The Lord of the Rings*, one written by Vittoria Alliata di Villafranca and revised by Quirino Principe and the other carried out by Ottavio Fatica, brought the translation problems up to date again. While other Italian translations of Tolkien's works were generally appreciated and did not record particular controversies, except for a few terms that were discussed by the scholars and then accepted by the readers, the new translation of *The Lord of the Rings* by Fatica has been widely criticised. Marcantonio Savelli argued that "this translation represents an occasion for reflection on the risks of potential misrepresentation of Tolkien's work, the implications of which could also arise in similar contexts relating to other countries, for which this episode could constitute an interesting case-study."<sup>45</sup> An example of positive criticism of a work written by Tolkien concerns the first translation of *The Silmarillion*, carried out by Francesco Saba. This translation was subsequently revised and partially retranslated by Marco Respinti, editor of the second edition of the book, that corrected some parts captivating the readers and the critics even more than the first translation. Differently from Fatica's translation, this is an example of a retranslation that was accepted and appreciated by the fans.

Having read both Alliata-Principe and Fatica's translations of *The Lord of the Rings* I can easily affirm that I found them to be very good and faithful to Tolkien's original text. Generally speaking, they both allow the reading of the novel without serious confusion or misunderstanding and allow the readers to follow the narrative smoothly. However, to understand the criticism made of the new translation of *The Lord of the Rings* we should first analyse the different strategies used by the translators.

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<sup>45</sup> Marcantonio Savelli, "Translating Tolkien. The thin line between translation and misrepresentation. An Italian case-study", *Journal of Tolkien Research*, Volume 11, 2020, p. 2.

One of the most striking characteristics of Alliata-Principe's translation is the use of endiads. Where in the original text Tolkien wrote one adjective (or adverb or name), in the Italian translation we often find two adjectives (or adverbs or names), one reinforcing the other. One example of this is the adjective "merry", that in the Italian translation becomes "allegro e spensierato"<sup>46</sup>.

This translational choice has been criticised by the new translator Fatica, bringing it as an example to motivate his statement that Alliata-Principe's translation has been "un'avventura improvvisata"<sup>47</sup> [an adventure carried out without the proper preparation] and that it contains "500 errori a pagina per 1.500 pagine" [500 errors per page for 1500 pages]. In fact, in the new translation by Fatica there is no trace of endiads, with the result of being more adherent to the original text. To the accusation the first translator Alliata replied defending her work by saying that Fatica "ha preso per errori delle forme espressive dantesche, come l'endiadi e la dittologia, che evidentemente ignora. È noto che questi stilemi, tutt'altro che curiosi, venivano usati dal Poeta per esprimere e rafforzare dei concetti grazie a coppie di sinonimi o di vocaboli i cui significati si completano reciprocamente"<sup>48</sup>. [Fatica took for errors some of Dante's expressive forms, such as endiads and dittology, which he obviously does not know. It is known that these styles, anything but curious, were used by the Poet to express and strengthen concepts through pairs of synonyms or words whose meanings complement each other].

In my opinion Alliata's choice might have the goal of making the Italian translation more aulic and epic in a way which the Italian readers were used to, being the endiads a peculiarity of Dante's work, even though this characteristic is not present in Tolkien's original text.

Another aspect that is very important to analyse is the translation of common and technical terms. This process seems to be problematic in Fatica's translation, in fact, in his work there are two constant tendencies which, due to the repetitiveness and frequency that characterize them, rather than being mere episodic events, seem to reflect, at least in part, an intentional choice by the translator. These tendencies are the introduction of a low or strongly colloquial tone and the introduction of modern technical terms, both without justification from the original text. Fatica, in fact, sometimes chooses to translate a common English word with a word that in Italian is used much more rarely. An example can be seen in the passage "[n]o stain yet on the Moon was seen"<sup>49</sup>, translated by Fatica with "[l]a Luna era da macchie monda". In the Italian sentence the verb "mondare" is a term much more aulic and sought after than the very common English "to be seen".

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<sup>46</sup> John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954), London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2005, p. 31.

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.jrrtolkien.it/2018/04/29/tradurre-il-signore-degli-anelli-intervista/> accessed on August 18, 2021.

<sup>48</sup> <https://www.ilgiornale.it/news/gi-mani-tolkien-s-poesia-no-allideologia-1628045.html> accessed on August 20, 2021.

<sup>49</sup> John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954), London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2005, p. 441.

The old translation by Alliata-Principe, although not free from errors, does not present the macroscopic and frequent semantic shifts that can be identified in the new one. This qualitative difference can be explained with the different intentional approach developed by the more recent translator.

The third characteristic analysed is the structure of periods. In the translation of Alliata-Principe a recurrent choice is the merging of two periods in one sentence. To give an example, the periods “[t]he Lord Sauron the Great, so he said, wished for our friendship. Rings he would give for it, such as he gave of old”<sup>50</sup> become “[i]l Signore Sauron il Grande, egli disse, desiderava la nostra amicizia, in cambio di anelli uguali a quelli che soleva dare anticamente”. Another example is “[f]ruitless did I call the victory of the Last Alliance? Not wholly so, yet it did not achieve its end”<sup>51</sup> that becomes “[h]o chiamato inutile la vittoria dell’Ultima Alleanza, ma non lo fu del tutto, pur rimanendo senza conclusione”, also losing the question mark and the resulting nuance. In the sentence Elrond is in fact uncertain about the words just spoken, and he is thinking aloud. However, this idea is not transmitted by Alliata-Principe’s translation that, changing the structure of periods, changes as a consequence the nuances of meanings that are perceived by the readers while reading the text. This is one of the most frequent danger of a free translation. Fatica in this aspect is much more faithful to the original text since in his translation the two sentences remain with the same construction.

As regards the syntactic structure of the periods, both in the translation of Alliata-Principe and in that of Fatica there are many situations in which the Italian period does not follow the structure of the English one. In my opinion this translational choice is correct because otherwise the sound of the translated sentences would be very strange to the Italian readers. However, there are also situations in which a linear syntactic structure of the original corresponds to an Italian structure in which the parts of the period are reconstructed in a more refined and poetic way. For example, “Sam walked beside him, saying nothing”<sup>52</sup> is translated by Alliata with “Sam camminava al suo fianco, silenzioso” and by Fatica with “[a]ccanto a lui camminava Sam in silenzio”. In the last sentence the subject is moved to the end of the period. Another example is the sentence “birds were singing”<sup>53</sup> that is literally translated by Alliata-Principe with “gli uccelli cantavano” and by Fatica with “cantavano gli uccelli”, in which the verb and the subject are exchanged.

In both translations there are situations where the subject of the period is changed by the translators. Some explanatory examples are the following sentences. In "only a small part is played

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<sup>50</sup> John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954), London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2005, p. 313.

<sup>51</sup> John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954), London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2005, p. 317.

<sup>52</sup> John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954), London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2005, p. 311.

<sup>53</sup> John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954), London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2005, p. 311.

in great Deeds by any hero"<sup>54</sup>; the subject of Tolkien's period is "a small part" and the original syntax, translated, would sound more or less like this: "solo una piccola parte è giocata nelle grandi imprese da qualsiasi eroe". In the translation of Alliata-Principe the sentence becomes "la parte recitata nelle imprese memorabili dagli eroi non è che molto piccola", while in Fatica's translation it turns into "nelle grandi imprese un eroe svolge al più un piccolo ruolo". In doing so, the subject of Fatica's sentence becomes "a hero" and "small role" is just a complement to the subject of the period.

An example in which Alliata-Principe changes the subject of the period is the sentence "[i]t is plain enough what you are pointing at"<sup>55</sup>, which is a sentence that Bilbo says at the end of the Council of Elrond, when he believes he must be the one to fulfil the mission of the Ring. In the original text the sentence is impersonal, and so it remains in Fatica's translation: "[è] abbastanza chiaro dove vuoi arrivare". Differently, Alliata changes the subject, which becomes Bilbo: "[v]edo chiaramente a cosa vuoi arrivare". A few lines below Alliata-Principe's translation changes again the subject of a sentence: "I was very comfortable here, and getting on with my book"<sup>56</sup> becomes "[m]i sentivo molto a mio agio qui, ed il mio libro stava andando avanti"; in so doing the subject of the second period goes from "I" (implied) to "my book". Finally, an example in which both Fatica and Alliata-Principe change the subject of a period is the sentence "it does not look like coming true"<sup>57</sup> that could be translated as "non sembra che si avvererà". In both translations the impersonal verb changes and the subject becomes "I", in Alliata-Principe's translation becomes "ho l'impressione che non potrà avverarsi" and in Fatica's "ho come l'impressione che non si avvererà".

The strategy used to translate dialogues and language registers differs in the two translations. As already stated, with Fatica's translation, the Italian readers can finally understand the fact that *The Lord of the Rings* is not entirely written with the same linguistic register and that the style used by the author changes according to the course of the plot. This way, the language starts at a low level during the first chapters, becoming a poetic prose in the most epic scenes and returning to the initial level towards the end of the novel, when the setting is Hobbiton again. This aspect is a major improvement carried out by Fatica, that gives Italian readers a new perspective to the novel, allowing them to better understand Tolkien's style and fully appreciate the complexity of the work.

Similarly, in translating the dialogues, Fatica tries to render the eccentricity and the peculiarity of certain characters. However, while Alliata-Principe's translation does not transmit the differences between the personalities of the characters, Fatica sometimes fails to convey the same characteristics of the original text, creating new personalities in order to differentiate some character from the others.

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<sup>54</sup> John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954), London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2005, p. 352.

<sup>55</sup> John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954), London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2005, p. 351.

<sup>56</sup> John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954), London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2005, p. 351.

<sup>57</sup> John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954), London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2005, p. 351.



An example is given by a sentence told by Hamfast Gamgee, Samwise's father: "A very nice well-spoken gentlehobbit is Mr. Bilbo, as I've always said. [...] Not that the Brandybucks of Buckland live in the Old Forest; but they're a queer breed, seemingly"<sup>58</sup> In the original text, the author creates the character of a rustic country old man who speaks in an ungrammatical way. Fatica, translating the sentence with "Il signor Bilbo è un gentilhobbit ammodo, compitissimo, come ho sempre detto. [...] Non che i Brandaino di Landaino vivano dentro la Vecchia Foresta; però per essere una strana genia lo sono." changes the syntactic structure of the periods to create a different way of speaking from the one of the other characters and, by doing so, makes more effective the linguistic style used by Tolkien for the character of Gaffer. The old translation, on the contrary, did not deviate too much from the register of other characters, causing the loss of the characteristic of the original text. However, while in the original text Hamfast uses all common and daily terms suitable to his simple and rustic way of thinking, Fatica, translating "nice" that is a very common term with "ammodo" that is a less common term in Italian, little used in spoken language or used in some regionalisms, or "well-spoken" (literally "who talks well") with "compitissimo" that is a word that refers to "compito" that is again a refined term and certainly not of daily use, makes the Gaffer seem bizarre and not rustic.

In Alliata's translations there are sometimes interpolations and omissions. In her work it happens, though rarely, that parts of a sentence or whole periods of the original text are not present, and the motivation of these choices is unknown. To give an example, "Sam walked beside him, saying nothing, *but sniffing the air*, and looking every now and again with wonder in his eyes at the great heights in the East"<sup>59</sup> becomes "Sam camminava al suo fianco, silenzioso, e guardava di tanto in tanto, con stupore negli occhi, le alte vette ad oriente", in which "but sniffing the air" is omitted. Fatica reintroduces the missing part but translates the phrase "sniffing the air" with "respirava a pieni polmoni" which means breathing to full lungs, a phrase that does not align perfectly with the original.

These examples show how both Alliata-Principe's and Fatica's version of *The Lord of the Rings* are not perfect translations and confirm the theory of the impossibility of creating a perfect translation.

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<sup>58</sup> John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954), London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2005, p. 28.

<sup>59</sup> John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954), London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2005, p. 311.

### 3.2 Analysis of some extracts from the first chapter of *The Fellowship of the Ring*

The new translator Fatica expressed himself in an extremely critical way towards the previous translation, saying that “bisognava pur rendersi conto che non era possibile correggere cinquecento errori a pagina per millecinquecento pagine. Non c’è paragrafo mondo da lacune e sbagli.”<sup>60</sup> [It was necessary to realize that it was not possible to correct five hundred errors per page for one thousand five hundred pages. There is no paragraph without gaps and mistakes].

In order to obtain an unbiased comparison of the two translations and to understand the veracity of the accusation made by Fatica, this dissertation will analyse some passages taken from the short introductory chapter of Tolkien’s work. This chapter, far from being one of the most critical points of Tolkien’s work with regard to its artistic and content meanings, is a valuable example of the different translational approach used by the two Italian translators. By the analysis of these examples the reader can judge for himself whether the serious accusations made by Fatica to the previous translation are corroborated or not rather refuted by the examples set out below and commented upon.

The editions used for the analysis are *The Fellowship of the Ring*<sup>61</sup> published by HarperCollinsPublishers in 2005 for the original text in English, *Il Signore degli Anelli*<sup>62</sup> with the translation by Alliata and revised by Principe, published by Mondolibri in 2004 in a single volume containing the whole trilogy, and for the last translation by Fatica the edition used is *La Compagnia dell’Anello*<sup>63</sup> published by Bompiani in 2019.

Tolkien’s original text	Alliata – Principe’s translation	Fatica’s translation
Hobbits are an unobtrusive, but very ancient people, more numerous formerly than they are today; for they love peace and quiet and good tilled earth: a well-ordered and well-farmed countryside was their favourite haunt.	Il popolo Hobbit è discreto e modesto ma di antica origine, meno numeroso oggi che nel passato. Amante della pace, della calma, e della terra ben coltivata, il suo asilo preferito era una campagna scrupolosamente ordinata e curata.	Gli Hobbit sono un popolo schivo ma di ceppo antichissimo, un tempo assai più numeroso di adesso; amano la pace, la tranquillità e la buona terra dissodata: l’ambiente da loro preferito era una campagna organizzata e coltivata a dovere.

<sup>60</sup> <https://www.jrrtolkien.it/2018/04/29/tradurre-il-signore-degli-anelli-lintervista/> accessed on August 18, 2021.

<sup>61</sup> John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, *The Fellowship of the Ring* (1954), London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 2005.

<sup>62</sup> John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, *Il Signore degli Anelli* (1966), Milano: Mondolibri, 2004.

<sup>63</sup> John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, *La Compagnia dell’anello* (1966), Milano: Bompiani, 2019.

In the first example above mentioned the author is describing the Hobbits, imaginary people similar to humans, of small size and with hairy feet. Tolkien often uses archaisms scattered through the text and starting the sentence again after the comma with a “for” is a clear example of this characteristic, denoting a high style not of common use. The word “ordered” is translated by Alliata-Principe with “ordinata” and by Fatica with “organizzata”, which are both adherent translations. What does not seem appropriate is the addition of “a dovere” in Fatica’s translation, which lacks the proper elegance and sweetness. Tolkien sees the Hobbits as an example of creature in natural harmony with the earth. They cultivate neither to duty (Fatica “a dovere”) nor for duty, but scrupulously, with care (Alliata-Principe “con cura”). In my opinion Tolkien wants to imply with love and care.

Tolkien’s original text	Alliata – Principe’s translation	Fatica’s translation
They dwelt in the upper vales of Anduin, between the eaves of Greenwood the Great and the Misty Mountains.	Dimoravano nelle alte vallate dell'Anduin, tra la Grande Foresta Verde e le Montagne Nebbiose.	Dimoravano nelle alte valli di Anduin, tra la gronda di Boscoverde il Grande e i Monti Brumosi.

In this passage Tolkien explains where the Hobbits used to live before crossing the mountains and moving to the Shire. What is significant to point out is the fact that the Anduin is a river and not a toponym of the vales themselves. This is well known to those who read the book because the river Anduin appears several times in the novel, and it is among the major ones of the Middle Earth. Although the English syntax in the original text is not easy to understand, Alliata-Principe’s translation gives the correct idea of the river, while Fatica does not clarify the meaning of the sentence not making use of the definite article, not transmitting to the readers the correct idea of how the topography of the Third Age was. Another important observation regards the term “gronda” used by Fatica to translate “eaves”. It is a correct translation, given the fact that “gronda” is the first meaning in the dictionary for the English “eaves”<sup>64</sup>, however, it should be noted that “gronda” it is not a word of common use in Italian and most of the readers would not understand the meaning, being it a technical term, more suited to an agrarian treatise than to the literary text that is being translated. The last point to be made in this passage is about the different names of the toponymy, that change from a translated text to the other. In my opinion in this case there is not a real necessity of changing the toponyms because the resulting translation of “Misty Mountains” by Fatica is very similar to Alliata-Principe’s. In addition, the first translation of misty that can be found in the English-Italian dictionary is “nebbioso”<sup>65</sup>, exactly the same translation that can be seen in Alliata-Principe’s text.

<sup>64</sup> <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/it/dizionario/inglese-italiano/eaves> accessed on August 25, 2021.

<sup>65</sup> <https://www.wordreference.com/enit/misty> accessed on September 8, 2021.

Tolkien's original text	Alliata – Principe's translation	Fatica's translation
All that was demanded of them was that they should keep the Great Bridge in repair, and all other bridges and roads, speed the king's messengers, and acknowledge his lordship.	Fu loro solamente chiesto, come compenso, di riparare tutte le strade e i ponti, in particolar modo il Grande Ponte, di augurare buon viaggio ai messi del re e di riverire la sua regalità.	Come contropartita dovevano soltanto tenere in buono stato Ponte Grande e tutti gli altri ponti e le strade, agevolare il passaggio dei messi del re e riconoscere la sua signoria.

Regarding the third passage we are taking under consideration, we can see that Fatica translates “[a]ll that was demanded of them” with “[c]ome contropartita”, which is a commercial term, used in trading and therefore outside the required stylistic register. The meaning of the extract is the fact that the king was not interested in the Hobbits' welfare and gave them a land that had long been in disuse and that then becomes the Shire, the Hobbits' land. In exchange of this, the Hobbits had to keep the bridges and the streets repaired. Another possible misunderstanding in the translation of Fatica is that he translates “Great Bridge” with “Ponte Grande”, inducing the readers to believe that there is a “Ponte piccolo” “[Little Bridge]. On the contrary, the Great Bridge is really great, and it is called like that because it is big, as Alliata-Principe's translation correctly suggests using the definite article before the name. In the following part “speed the king's messengers” the most appropriate translation is Fatica's “agevolare il passaggio dei messi del re”, that is closer to the literal meaning of the original text. Alliata-Principe's “augurare buon viaggio” appears very free instead, although it can be justified because the Hobbits could do nothing to make the king's messengers faster than they already were, and it is indicative of the Hobbit's character, naturally calm and relaxed.

Tolkien's original text	Alliata – Principe's translation	Fatica's translation
Had long been accustomed to build sheds and workshops.	Solevano costruirsi laboratori e botteghe.	Erano abituati da molto a costruirsi rimesse e officine.

In this passage in the original text by Tolkien we find “sheds and workshops”, used to describe the Hobbits' habit to build places where to work in contact with nature, such as farmhouses or barns. While Alliata-Principe's translation is “laboratori e botteghe” Fatica translates with “rimesse e officine”. Both translations are correct and do not present problems of literal meaning. However, it should be noted that Italian words like “rimessa” and “officina” are closely related to the car industry, an environment totally different from the Hobbit's landscape, connected to earth and nature instead.

Therefore, this word choice, although correct from a literal point of view, appears to be questionable if related to the text that is being translated.

Tolkien's original text	Alliata – Principe's translation	Fatica's translation
The oldest kind were, indeed, no more than built imitation of smials, thatched with dry grass or straw, or roofed with turves, and having walls somewhat bulged.	Il tipo più antico non era che un'imitazione degli smial, dai tetti di paglia, di erba secca o di muschio, e dai muri leggermente curvi.	Quelle più antiche, a dire il vero, imitavano nella conformazione gli smial, con il tetto d'erba secca o paglia, coperto di cotica, e le pareti alquanto rigonfie.

The last extract that will be analysed contains a particularly unhappy translational choice. In the original text the roofs of the Hobbit's houses are covered with "turves". The first meaning of the dictionary is "tappeto erboso"<sup>66</sup>, and in Alliata-Principe's translation "turves" becomes "muschio" (moss), maintaining a clear meaning. In Fatica's translation the term becomes "cotica", which in Italian refers to "pork rind". After carrying out some research I could acknowledge the existence of the term "cotica erbosa"<sup>67</sup>, purely technical and scientific, but in the passage translated the adjective "erboso" (grassy or made of grass) does not appear, so the reference to the pig seems unavoidable. An interesting fact is that according to Marcantonio Savelli the term "cotica" (for "turf") recurs five times in the new translation, and, as he affirms "it is a mistake that sounds even comical in Italian".<sup>68</sup> In addition, the archaeological data inform us of houses of Scandinavian peoples in the early Middle Ages, as well as probably of Anglo-Saxon peoples of the same period, covered with turf, or even partially embedded in natural reliefs like earthwork, by virtue of the thermal insulation power conferred by this solution.<sup>69</sup> It is probable that Fatica, while translating, was not aware of this custom and gave a translation that is likely to be incomprehensible to most readers. Another problematic passage is the following part. The "walls somewhat bulged" becomes in Fatica's translation "le pareti alquanto rigonfie" [quite swollen walls], but what is not understandable is what is inside the walls and why. It appears to be logical that the walls are curved instead. This extract is translated by Alliata-Principe very freely from a syntactical point of view, but at least it is clear in the meaning and not wrong in the substance.

<sup>66</sup> <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/it/dizionario/inglese-italiano/turf> accessed on August 27, 2021.

<sup>67</sup> <https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/cotica/> accessed on August 27, 2021.

<sup>68</sup> Marcantonio Savelli, "Translating Tolkien. The thin line between translation and misrepresentation. An Italian case-study", *Journal of Tolkien Research*, Volume 11, 2020, p. 3.

<sup>69</sup> John D. Magill, "A History and Definition of Green Roof Technology with Recommendations for Future Research", Southern Illinois University Carbondale, 2011 pp. 3-4

### 3.3 New names and differences in toponyms

One of the most delicate themes in the analysis of the two different translations of *The Lord of the Rings* is that of the translation of person names and toponyms. This constitutes an interesting point because generally, in the case of literary texts, the common practise is to leave the names of the characters unchanged, not translating them and keeping the diction of the original language. As we already know, this practise does not apply to Tolkien's works because he created a guide to translation, in order to help translators to know which names should be translated, and which left unchanged. The intent of the author was to let the translators know how to keep the familiarity of the names for the foreign readers, similar to the one the English readers felt while reading the original text. However, it should be noted that during the years the Italian readers have developed a different understanding of the English language and culture. For this reason, nowadays English names and places appear much more familiar to the Italian reader than they were during the preparation of the first translation of *The Lord of the Rings* (Alliata-Principe). On the other hand, it is interesting to notice that today the use of Italian names or surnames for characters that are clearly defined by English cultural references appears sometimes unnatural.

It should be noted that Fatica's translation generally follows the indications given by Tolkien in the Nomenclature of *The Lord of the Rings*<sup>70</sup>. An interesting fact is that none of the translators decided to translate all names to Italian or keep them all in the original version. On the contrary, in both the old edition and the new one, some Hobbit names or surnames, such as "Baggins", have been left exactly like in the original text, while others, such as "Samwise", changed in both the translated versions. In the new translation by Fatica nearly all the names have been changed from how they appeared in the previous Italian edition. This attempt to mark a distance from the previous translation has been a source of perplexity and discussion for many readers and scholars accustomed to the names present in Alliata-Principe's text. It should be made known that in the first edition translated by Alliata for the publishing house Astrolabio, almost all the names had been translated following Tolkien's indications, and were then subsequently changed by Quirino Principe that brought some of them back to the original English version for the publishing house Rusconi in 1970.

As pointed out by the scholar Wu Ming 4 (pseudonym of Federico Gugliemi, Italian writer, and member of the AIST - Italian association of Tolkienian studies -) in his article,<sup>71</sup> in the new

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<sup>70</sup> John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, *Nomenclature of The Lord of the Rings*, Published in: Hammond, W. and Scull, C., *The Lord of the Rings: A readers' companion*, London: HarperCollinsPublisher, 2005.

<sup>71</sup> <https://www.jrrtolkien.it/2020/01/12/aragorn-il-forestale-uno-studio-filologico/> accessed on September 3, 2021.

translation, the name that most upset the passionate readers of *The Lord of the Rings* is “Aragorn il Forestale”. The original word used by Tolkien to define his character Aragorn is “Ranger” and Alliota-Principe’s translation of the word is “Ramingo”. Wu Ming affirms that “Ramingo” belongs to a register too high compared to the original word “Ranger”, which is commonly used by the English people. In addition, while Alliota-Principe’s translation of “Ranger” relies on the first meaning given by the Oxford English Dictionary and attested since 1593, which is “a rover, wanderer”, Fatica’s translation is based on the second and the third meaning, that are respectively “a forest officer, a gamekeeper” and “a body of mounted troops, or other armed men, employed in ranging over a tract of country”. The philological research carried out by Wu Ming affirms that “Forestale” is a word that better explains the meaning of “Ranger” because in the Middle Earth they are a corps of hunters-fighters in strong association with forest and in continuous movement through a wild territory that have the task of surveying and are also potentially embittered by sedentary population. In my opinion this research, although correct and thorough, does not address the basic problem, which is not the origin of the word “Ranger”, but the sound of the word “Forestale” to Italian ears, accustomed to its meaning that refers to something, according to the Italian dictionary Treccani, “che riguarda le foreste e in genere i boschi”<sup>72</sup> [regarding forests and woods in general], and strongly associated with the “Guardia Forestale” [Forestry Service]. The new translator, Fatica, regarding this point affirms that “Riguardo poi a Forestali (che sono i Ranger), la vecchia traduzione aveva "Raminghi". Ora, a me "Raminghi" sembra un tipo di ordine di frati, non mi convince. Se la prima traduzione avesse avuto scritto Forestali e io avessi tradotto con Raminghi mi avrebbero mandato a ramengo a me. Comunque, io ho scelto Forestali, perché? Perché questi sono dei signori che vanno su e giù lungo i confini della Contea per tutelarli da una potenziale minaccia, e loro nascostamente vagano proteggendoli.”<sup>73</sup> [As for Forestali (who are the Rangers), the old translation had "Raminghi". Now, to me "Raminghi" seems a type of order of friars, in my opinion it does not work. If the first translation had written “Forestali” and I had translated with “Raminghi” the fans would have protested in any case. Anyway, I chose “Forestali”, why? Because these are men who go up and down along the borders of the Shire to protect them from a potential threat, and they sneak around protecting them]. It should be noted that it is very simplistic to reduce the role of the Rangers to that of "going up and down along the borders of the Shire", because as Tolkien informs the readers and as it is well explained by the Italian word “ramingo”, a Ranger in the Middle Earth is someone exiled who is bound to wander after having lost the native land, Númenor. For this reason, in my opinion, Alliota’s translation “Ramingo” manages to render not only the meaning of the word but also the context behind the mere meaning.

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<sup>72</sup> <https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/forestale/> accessed on September 3, 2021.

<sup>73</sup> <https://www.cercatoridiatlantide.it/ottavio-fatica-parma-nuova-traduzione-il-signore-degli-anelli/> accessed on September 3, 2021.

Another name which did not fail to attract the attention of the fans is the translation of “Prancing Pony”, the famous inn in Bree where Frodo Baggins and the other Hobbits Sam, Pippin and Merry met Aragorn for the first time. While the first translation was “Puledro Impennato”, in the new version we can find “Cavallino Inalberato”. Regarding this choice Fatica affirms that the fans would have preferred “Cavallino Rampante”<sup>74</sup>, however, he explains that the term “prancing” in heraldry only refers to animals such as lions. Horses, on the other hand, are not called “rampanti” in Italian, but rather “inalberati”, according to the technical vocabulary of heraldry. So, translating prancing with “impennato” or “rampante” is technically incorrect, though appropriate to the context.

An example of improvement in the translation of the nomenclature is given by the name “Samplicio” that it can be found in Fatica’s translation. The original “Samwise” written by Tolkien became “Samvise” in Alliata-Principe’s work. However, as it can be clearly seen, the word has no meaning in Italian, while the original name in English is an Anglicisation of the old English term for half-wit and denotes a foolish or stupid person. The original hobbit name of Sam is “Banazîr”, that, as explained by Tolkien himself, means “half-wise, simple”<sup>75</sup>. This way the original meaning of Sam’s name can be accessible to the Italian readers too, with a name that is familiar to the Italian context.

An example of toponym that was translated differently in the two editions is “Mirkwood”. The name refers to a great dark forest inhabited by elves and while in Alliata-Principe’s translation we find “Bosco Atro”, in Fatica’s version is translated with “Boscuro”. The word is a neologism obtained by merging together two Italian words: “Bosco” [Wood] and “Oscuro” [Dark]. Savelli affirms that “while “Atro” is an uncommon word with an archaic feel that seems appropriate, at the ears of the Italian reader, the name “Boscuro” is perceived as a puerile term, more appropriate for a fairy tale for children than for an epic text: a wood more suitable for *Little Red Riding Hood* than for *The Fellowship of the Ring*.”<sup>76</sup>

Through the analysis of the examples described above what can clearly be seen is the difference between the two conceptions of Tolkien’s work that transpire from the choices of the two translators. As it appears in Tolkien’s famous essay *On Fairy-Stories*,<sup>77</sup> he makes no mystery of being a conservative man, deeply critical of modernity and technological innovation, and, as confirmed by his studies and profession, he was a lover of ancient epic and the Middle Ages.

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<sup>74</sup> <https://www.cercatoridiatlantide.it/ottavio-fatica-parma-nuova-traduzione-il-signore-degli-anelli/> accessed on September 3, 2021.

<sup>75</sup> John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, *Nomenclature of The Lord of the Rings*, Published in: Hammond, W. and Scull, C., *The Lord of the Rings: A readers' companion*, London: HarperCollinsPublisher, 2005.

<sup>76</sup> Marcantonio Savelli, “Translating Tolkien. The thin line between translation and misrepresentation. An Italian case-study”, *Journal of Tolkien Research*, Volume 11, 2020, p. 14.

<sup>77</sup> John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, *On Fairy Stories* (1947), London: HarperCollinsPublisher, 2008.



From Alliata-Principe's translation, in which prevails an archaic language characterised by a clear and slow rhythm, it is understandable the nature of the original text. *The Lord of the Rings* is, in fact, an epic text, written by a scholar of medieval literature, translator of chivalric sagas and Norse epic, Anglo-Saxon and Celtic. Fatica's translation, on the other hand, tries to transport the text out of its period, to our days, in order to bring the text closer to the new readers of Tolkien's work. In doing so he transported the text to our modern world, with the drawback of losing the authenticity of Tolkien's language to gain the benefit of a greater smoothness.

Undoubtedly, changing the names of a fictional world that have been used during the last fifty years in fan fictions, videogames and, above all, in the dubbing of Peter Jackson's film adaptations of Tolkien's work is a brave choice. Thanks to the existence of these alternatives to the books, even those who are not great readers and consider *The Lord of the Rings* too challenging to read might have heard of Aragorn as a "Ramingo", and not as "Forestale". This situation created a certain discomfort in fans who had become accustomed to the first version of the names, and it is similar to what recently occurred with the new retranslation of *Harry Potter*. In the case of the *Harry Potter Saga* the editor of the retranslation Stefano Bartezzaghi, together with a committee of translators, fans and scholars, decided to bring almost all the person names and surnames back to the English original version, with the exception of a few names whose diffusion and affirmation in the collective imagination played an important role: to the committee seemed in fact very risky to change the names of such relevant characters as Silente and Piton [Dumbledore and Snape in the original text] in the retranslation of the books.

Finally, getting back to *The Lord of the Rings*, the risk generated by Fatica's translation is that different generations of Italian readers and fans will not be able to discuss and talk about Tolkien's work without misunderstandings and discomforts. As a result, these differences between film and books might discourage new readers to challenge themselves reading a book that is equally enjoyable and enigmatic in itself, without the need for further difficulties in the nomenclature of the characters and toponymy.

In my opinion it would be wrong to affirm that one translation is better than the other because Alliata-Principe's translation and Fatica's followed two different criteria. It is very important to be able to find a meeting point between the two versions in order to have a unitary vision of the text in general and appreciate its complexity. What one translation might fail to convey of the original text, should be looked for in the other, without focusing only on errors and inaccuracies, but only trying to improve the text and increase the knowledge of Tolkien's fictional world. The benefits of the process of retranslation can be seen when a translation results complete and more integrated by the following versions and it is able to keep alive the debate and the interest in the text.

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