An Analysis of Preserving Imaginative and Mythological Elements in Indonesian Lyrics Translation

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This study investigates the preservation of imaginative and mythological components in the Indonesian translation of J.R.R. Tolkien's "Far Over the Misty Mountains Cold." The words are abundant in fantastical places, mythical figures, and vibrant natural imagery that establish an enchanting ambiance. Translating such a text necessitates meticulous attention to preserve symbolic significance, aesthetic elegance, and cultural subtleties. This research employs a descriptive qualitative methodology utilizing comparative text analysis between the source and target texts. The results indicate that although the translation effectively preserves mythical names and the fundamental narrative structure, essential poetic elements like melody, rhyme, and metaphorical richness are often diminished. This influences the interpretive depth and the poetic ambiance of the original. The study emphasizes that while the fundamental content is retained, the preservation of poetic aesthetics is a significant challenge. It suggests further solutions including footnotes, adaptable rhythmic variations, and innovative methods to maintain the imaginative and symbolic dimensions for the intended audience.

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INTRODUCTION

Literary translation, particularly of lyrical texts, presents a unique set of challenges due to its rich use of imagery, symbolism, and stylistic devices. These challenges are heightened when translating works that contain imaginative and mythological elements, as they are often deeply rooted in the source culture and language. When such texts are translated, the translator is faced not only with the task of conveying meaning, but also of preserving the aesthetic, emotional, and cultural resonance of the

original. Failure to do so can result in the loss of the author's intent, poetic power, and even the narrative world being built.

J.R.R. Tolkien's lyrical works, especially those found in *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, exemplify literature that blends poetic structure with mythology and imagination. His poem *"Far Over the Misty Mountains Cold"* is rich in linguistic inventiveness, alliteration, neologisms, and mythic imagery, reflecting the world-building techniques of fantasy literature. Translating such a poem into Indonesian requires more than linguistic competence—it demands sensitivity to the poetic form, narrative function, and mythological depth embedded in the original text.

Indonesia, with its own diverse cultural and mythological traditions, provides an interesting context for analyzing how foreign mythologies are received and reinterpreted. This study explores how imaginative and mythological elements in Tolkien's poem are preserved, adapted, or lost in its Indonesian translation. By applying theories of literary translation and stylistic analysis, the research aims to reveal the translator's role in maintaining the integrity and richness of fantasy literature when presented to a new linguistic and cultural audience.

The analysis of preserving imaginative and mythological elements in translated fantasy song lyrics is crucial because such texts blend narrative, cultural, and poetic dimensions in complex ways. In literary translation, fantasy works stand out for their dense world-building, unique mythologies, and figurative language that often defy direct equivalence (Lefevere, 1992). One notable example is J.R.R. Tolkien's lyrical piece "Far Over the Misty Mountains Cold" from The Hobbit, which carries vivid imagery of dwarven heritage, ancient kingdoms, and legendary quests (Lee, 2014). This song is not merely decorative but functions as a narrative and cultural anchor within Tolkien's vast "legendarium." Its language draws from Old English, Norse, and other mythic traditions to create atmosphere and depth that are tightly tied to its original cultural context (Le Guin, 2014).

Translating a text like this into Bahasa Indonesia involves more than linguistic substitution; it requires careful decisions about how to carry over mythological references, invented names, archaic expressions, and poetic features such as rhyme and rhythm. According to Levy and Mendlesohn (2016), fantasy literature, especially for younger audiences, depends heavily on the believability of its imaginary world, which is built through consistent stylistic and symbolic choices. When transferred to another language, these features risk being lost or altered. As Wulandari (2019) explains, literal translation and modulation are frequent strategies in translating poetry but may not always capture the nuanced tone intended by the author. Studies by Erwan and Nur Ali (2022) and Helmawan and Lestari (2022) similarly stress that imagery and poetic structure must be preserved to maintain the literary integrity of translated poems. Figurative language—metaphors, personifications, and symbolic images—also plays a central role in constructing mood and meaning (Ediwarman et al., 2023).

Moreover, the preservation of mythic elements links closely with how cultural identity and collective memory are carried across linguistic borders. Nurgiyantoro et al. (2024) note how mythological transformation in modern Indonesian novels demonstrates the dynamic ways local cultures reinterpret universal archetypes. Sari (2019) adds that translated poetry can risk losing cultural specificity when symbolism is generalized or overly domesticated. These concerns are relevant for Tolkien's song,

which contains references that go beyond literal meaning and resonate with philosophical reflections on exile, loss, and longing (Bassham & Bronson, 2012).

Therefore, this study aims to examine how the imaginative and mythological elements embedded in "Far Over the Misty Mountains Cold" are preserved in its Indonesian translation. Specifically, it investigates the representation of nature imagery, mythological references, poetic devices, and invented terms, the translation strategies used, and the extent to which these choices retain the poetic and symbolic qualities of the original. This research intends to contribute to the discourse on fantasy translation by highlighting the translator's role as both an interpreter and cultural mediator in preserving literary imagination across languages.

METHOD
Research Design
This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design to analyze the preservation of imaginative and mythological elements in the Indonesian translation of J.R.R. Tolkien's lyrical poem *"Far Over the Misty Mountains Cold."* A qualitative approach is suitable for exploring the nuanced interplay of language, culture, and style in both the source and target texts. The research is grounded in Lefevere's (1992) theory of translation as rewriting, which emphasizes how translation is shaped by ideological, cultural, and aesthetic influences. This theoretical lens allows for the interpretation of the translator's choices beyond linguistic accuracy, highlighting the broader cultural and artistic implications.

Research Instruments
The instruments used in this research include two primary texts: the original English version of the poem as found in *The Hobbit* and a recognized Indonesian translation. These are supplemented by secondary sources such as academic journals, literary criticism, and previous studies on poetic and fantasy translation. Notable references include Wulandari (2019) on poetic modulation, Helmawan and Lestari (2022) on ideological translation strategies, and Erwan and Nur Ali (2022) on imagery in translated verse. These sources provide context for evaluating translation techniques and their cultural significance.

Data Collection and Analysis
Data were collected through purposive sampling and close reading of the selected texts. Units of analysis include lexical items, mythological references, metaphors, neologisms, rhyme schemes, rhythm, and alliteration. Special focus is given to Tolkien's invented words and place names as markers of his mythopoeic world (Lee, 2014).

For data analysis, three methods were applied:
1. Textual comparison to identify shifts in meaning, tone, and poetic effect between the original and the translation;
2. Thematic categorization to organize translated elements into categories such as nature imagery, fantasy vocabulary, and mythological symbols;
3. Interpretive commentary to explore the underlying logic behind translation choices.

These analyses are guided by Lefevere's (1992) theory and supported by Chesterman's taxonomy of translation strategies, offering a structured yet flexible framework for interpreting literary translation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Fantasy Elements in the Original Lyrics and Their Translation

The original version of Tolkien's "*Far Over the Misty Mountains Cold*" is deeply embedded with fantasy elements such as mythical quests, legendary treasures, enchanted mountains, and long-lost kingdoms. These components are not just decorative but serve as essential narrative tools that establish the poem's fantastical atmosphere. Through rich poetic imagery and carefully crafted diction, Tolkien invites readers into a world of imagination rooted in myth and folklore.

In the Indonesian translation, most of these fantasy elements are retained, allowing the general storyline and mythical setting to remain recognizable. However, several expressions are noticeably simplified or adapted into more familiar cultural references. While this may enhance readability for Indonesian audiences, it also risks reducing the original's mystical depth and narrative complexity. The subtleties of Tolkien's language, especially his use of archaic and evocative terms, sometimes lose their layered meanings in translation.

This translational shift can be understood through Lefevere's (1992) theory of translation as rewriting. According to Lefevere, translations are shaped by the dominant cultural, ideological, and literary expectations of the target audience. Thus, the simplification of certain expressions in the Indonesian version reflects the translator's negotiation between preserving the fantasy tone of the source text and making it accessible to local readers. This highlights the translator's active role in mediating between two literary cultures.

3.2 Representation and Preservation of Nature Imagery in the Translation

Nature imagery plays a central role in Tolkien's lyrical style, particularly in "*Far Over the Misty Mountains Cold.*" His descriptions are not merely decorative but serve to create atmosphere, evoke emotion, and enhance the mythical tone of the poem. The use of natural elements such as fire, trees, and mountains helps ground the fantastical narrative in a vivid, sensory reality that resonates with readers across cultures.

One of the most striking examples of nature imagery can be found in the line, *"The fire was red, it flaming spread."* This line combines color, movement, and temperature in a compact poetic structure, creating a powerful visual and kinesthetic image. Similarly, in the line *"The trees like torches blazed with light,"* Tolkien blends metaphor and simile to animate the natural world, turning passive scenery into active, glowing forces that seem to participate in the unfolding journey.

According to Erwan and Nur Ali (2022), visual and kinesthetic imagery are dominant features in poetic texts and must be carefully preserved during translation to retain their aesthetic and emotional power. They argue that weakening or omitting such imagery can result in a loss of poetic richness and diminish the reader's immersive experience, especially in genres like fantasy, where atmosphere is key.

The Indonesian translation of Tolkien's poem generally succeeds in maintaining the essence of these natural images. The core imagery of fire and light is retained, allowing the translated version to evoke similar scenes and emotions as the original. However, some metaphorical intensity is reduced through the use of more straightforward

language or culturally familiar expressions, which can slightly tone down the fantastical effect.

This subtle shift in imagery highlights the challenges faced by translators when navigating between poetic fidelity and cultural accessibility. While the translated version remains faithful to the narrative and retains much of its visual impact, certain stylistic nuances are inevitably softened. This demonstrates how translation involves not only linguistic transfer but also artistic judgment in balancing meaning, mood, and metaphor across languages.

3.3 Interpretation of Mythological Cultural References in Indonesian

Tolkien's lyrics in *"Far Over the Misty Mountains Cold"* are rich with mythological references that form the backbone of his fictional universe. These include allusions to Dwarven heritage, legendary ancestors, mystical kingdoms, and sacred lands. Names such as "Durin," a revered Dwarven patriarch, and "Dale," a kingdom associated with ancient alliances and heroic tales, are not mere place names but symbols of historical depth and cultural continuity within Tolkien's legendarium. These elements contribute significantly to the song's mythic tone, grounding it in a sense of ancient grandeur and otherworldly mystery.

Translating such mythological content into another language, particularly for a different cultural audience, poses significant challenges. These references are often deeply embedded in the narrative logic of the fantasy world, and any misrepresentation or oversimplification can weaken their significance. The translator must decide whether to retain the original names and mythic structures or to adapt them to suit the cultural context of the target readership. This decision has aesthetic and interpretive consequences, especially in genres like fantasy where world-building is crucial.

In the Indonesian translation, many original names — such as "Durin" and "Dale" — are preserved. This practice supports the retention of Tolkien's mythological framework and helps maintain a sense of authenticity for readers familiar with the legendarium. By keeping these names intact, the translation respects the constructed mythology and honors the original narrative structure. It also allows Indonesian readers to engage more directly with Tolkien's fantasy world without filtering it through a culturally substituted lens.

However, there are instances where certain cultural or historical references are subtly adapted or toned down in the Indonesian version. These adaptations may be driven by the translator's intent to enhance clarity or accessibility, especially for readers who may be unfamiliar with Northern European mythological conventions. While such choices can help bridge cultural gaps, they risk diminishing the mythic resonance of the original. This is particularly evident when metaphorical or symbolic expressions rooted in Western mythology are replaced with more general or localized interpretations.

As Nurgiyantoro et al. (2024) point out, the transformation of mythology in literature must be handled with care. Preserving core narrative values — such as heroism, lineage, and spiritual connection to place — is essential for maintaining the integrity of the source text. In Tolkien's case, mythology is not just background — it is foundational. Thus, while the Indonesian translation captures the general structure and content of the mythological elements, occasional shifts in tone or emphasis may

affect the reader's experience of the mythic dimension. The translator's role, therefore, extends beyond linguistic transfer to cultural stewardship, mediating between fantasy traditions and the expectations of a new audience.

3.4 Handling of Specific Terms, Archaic Words, and Tolkien's Neologisms

One of the defining features of Tolkien's literary style is his use of archaic language and invented terminology, which serve not only as stylistic devices but also as essential components in constructing the depth and authenticity of his fictional universe. Terms such as *"Durin's Day"* and *"Dwarrowdelf"* are not arbitrary; they are deeply rooted in the internal mythology and linguistic history of Middle-earth. These words carry cultural and historical weight within the narrative and are designed to evoke a sense of ancientness and mystique, connecting the reader to a world that feels as if it existed long before the story was told.

In translation, these elements pose a significant challenge. Some translations choose to preserve the original terms, allowing readers to experience the text as Tolkien intended, while others provide descriptive renderings to clarify meaning for a target audience unfamiliar with such terminology. For instance, *"Durin's Day"* may be retained in English or translated with an explanatory phrase that refers to a specific dwarvish festival or celestial event. Similarly, *"Dwarrowdelf"*—an archaic word for a dwarven hall—is sometimes preserved or translated as "balai kaum kurcaci," a more direct and culturally neutral phrase. Each approach carries implications for how the mythos and tone of the text are experienced by readers.

Scholars such as Lee (2014) and Levy & Mendlesohn (2016) argue that preserving Tolkien's original terminology, including both real and invented archaic terms, is critical for maintaining the internal consistency and integrity of the fictional world. These terms are often connected to the languages Tolkien invented, such as Khuzdul or Sindarin, and removing or replacing them may disrupt the linguistic realism that is central to his world-building. Moreover, these elements contribute to the immersive quality of the narrative by grounding it in what feels like a fully developed historical and cultural system.

However, the translation of archaic verbs, poetic contractions, and inverted syntax often leads to simplification. Constructions like *"ere the moon rose"* or *"'neath the trees"* may be translated into more modern or literal equivalents in Indonesian, potentially losing their poetic cadence or antiquated charm. While such simplification may increase readability and comprehension, it can also flatten the stylistic richness that characterizes Tolkien's verse. The translator, in this case, must strike a delicate balance between fidelity to the original tone and clarity for the target audience, especially in a context where poetic archaism may not have a direct equivalent.

Ultimately, these choices reflect broader questions in literary translation about how to handle linguistic uniqueness and authorial voice. In Tolkien's work, language itself is a carrier of myth and identity. Therefore, translating his archaic and invented terms is not merely a matter of lexical substitution, but a careful negotiation between preserving fictional authenticity and ensuring cultural accessibility. The success of a translation, then, often depends on how effectively it can convey both the meaning and the aesthetic texture of the original language.

Table 1. Selected Neologisms and Their Translation

No	Term in Source Text	Indonesian Translation	Strategy Used
1	Dwarrowdelf	Negeri Kurcaci Tua	Modulation
2	Durin's Day	Hari Durin	Borrowing
3	Thrain	Thrain	Retention

3.5 Challenges and Solutions in Translating Fantasy Lyrics

Translating high fantasy lyrics presents various linguistic, cultural, and poetic challenges. Sari (2019) points out the risk of cultural dilution that can occur in lyrical translation. To address this issue, strategies such as using contextual footnotes, preserving names and terms (Lee, 2014), and employing rhythmic approximation techniques (Lefevere, 1992) can be implemented.
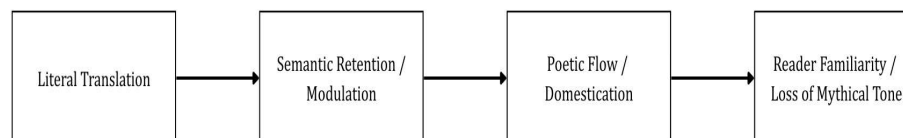

Figure 1. Diagram of Strategy-Effect Relationship in Translation

In essence, the findings demonstrate a complex balance between preserving meaning, form, and imaginative richness in Tolkien's lyrics. While the Indonesian translation achieves some success, further refinement and interpretive strategies could enhance its cultural and poetic fidelity.

CONCLUSION

This study examines the retention of imaginative and mythological components in the Indonesian translation of J.R.R. Tolkien's lyrical poem "Far Over the Misty Mountains Cold." The qualitative descriptive analysis indicates that the Indonesian adaptation successfully preserves much of the fundamental fantasy narrative; however, certain aspects—such as poetic nuance, mythological richness, and archaic language—are occasionally simplified or modified, thereby impacting the complete conveyance of Tolkien's original tone and world-building. Fantasy aspects such as magical locales, legendary quests, and mythical characters are predominantly preserved, however certain phrases are adapted to align with the target culture. Tolkien's lyrical expression predominantly retains nature imagery; yet, some metaphors diminish in strength due to more literal or simpler translations. Mythological references and neologisms like "Durin's Day" and "Dwarrowdelf" are approached using diverse tactics, including borrowing, modulation, and descriptive substitution—each affecting the reader's perception of the legendary realm. The results emphasize the translator's dual function as a linguistic intermediary and cultural custodian. Translating fantasy lyrics involves not just communicating meaning but also preserving stylistic, symbolic, and narrative integrity. The study emphasizes the significance of translation procedures that reconcile integrity to the

original material with an awareness of the cultural and poetic expectations of the target audience. This study enhances the discourse on literary translation, especially regarding fantasy literature, and advocates for increased focus on the preservation of imaginative and mythopoeic elements in cross-cultural narratives.

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