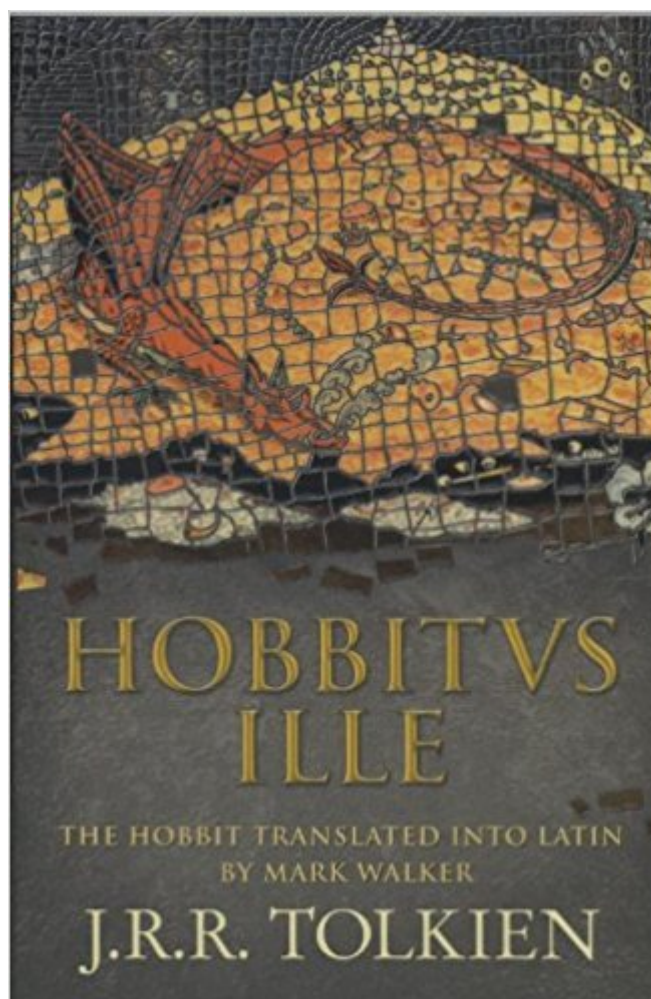


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Hobbitus Ille: The Latin Hobbit



Synopsis

Fascinating for Latin learners and for Tolkien fans of all ages, *The Hobbit* has been translated into Latin for the first time since its publication 75 years ago. In foramine terrae habitabat hobbitus. (âIn a hole in the ground, there lived a hobbit.âTM) *The Hobbit*, is one of the worldâs most popular classic stories, appealing to adults as much as to the children for whom J.R.R. Tolkien first wrote the book. Translated worldwide into more than 60 modern languages, now *Hobbitus Ille* is finally published in Latin, and will be of interest to all those who are studying the language, whether at school or at a higher level. In the great tradition of publishing famous childrenâs books in Latin, professional classicist and lifelong Tolkien fan Mark Walker provides a deft translation of the entire book. His attention to detail, including the transformation of Tolkienâs songs and verses into classical Latin metres, will fascinate and entertain readers of all ability, even those with only a minimal acquaintance with the language.

Book Information

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Age Range: 12 - 17 years

Grade Level: 7 - 12

Customer Reviews

Some of the reviews of this translation call for a response. A book like this ought above all to be judged on the basis of how nearly it attains its goals. First of all, then, some of the complaints can be dispensed with. The price of the kindle edition or the absence of the English text are irrelevant to how good the book is. (N.B. If an description says "Latin and English", this means nothing more than that the book contains Latin, and that it contains English. It does not imply that is a

dual-language edition of the text, unless it explicitly says so.) As for its being "bad latin" or "a latin catastrophe", I think such complaints overlook the purpose of the translation. One reviewer complains, "This is not the experience of Neo-Latin that one finds in Winnie Ille Pu or Harrius Potter." But that's not a problem, because the translator was not aiming at such an experience. Take the first example: Winnie Ille Pu is a more elegant and finely crafted text than this one. But it's also a kind of joke: in a letter to Roger Lancelyn Green, C.S. Lewis calls it "a Latin version of a children's book in such extremely advanced Latin that only an adult could possibly read it". For goodness' sake, it has notes giving precedents for its expressions from Virgil and Apuleius and Greek derivations of certain terms in its glossary. It's the literary equivalent of a teddy bear sculpted in immaculate marble: a thing of beauty, perhaps, but a thing to be admired rather than used; just as a marble teddy bear cannot be played with by children like a plush one, but will sit on an adult's desk and remind him of his childhood, Winnie Ille Pu is of no use to the Latinate neophyte, but provides a pleasing diversion for those whose scholarship is already well advanced.

It is a huge task to translate such a classic novel as "The Hobbit" into Latin, and the translator should be commended for attempting it. Unfortunately, however, he is clearly not up to it, seeing that literally every page contains basic grammatical errors, such as* erroneous usage of words; consider, for example, the sentence "paene in aliquo loco paene ex aliquo, cum uento aut nullo, nani ignem accendere possunt". (In the original: "Dwarves can make a fire almost anywhere out of almost anything, wind or no wind.") The main problem is that "aliquis" simply does not mean "any" in this sense; it means "some". So the Latin translates to "Dwarves can make a fire almost in some place, almost out of some thing..." (or even "... from some place"; the meaning is unclear.) Poor dwarves!* faulty morphology: "utamus" instead of "utamur", "ulterias" in place of "ulteriores", "eum" once when it should be "id", "arboris suis" instead of "arboris suae", "reficeri" for "refici", to name just a few examples. (To be fair, note that these are isolated mistakes, and that the forms are not consistently faulty throughout.)* non-Latin constructions and syntax: for example, "epistolium tuum non accepi quoad decem atque quinque quadraginta, exactum esse." (Original: "I didn't get your note until after 10.45 to be precise.") That is not the way to indicate the time in Latin, and "to be precise" can not be rendered with an infinitive in Latin when the meaning is "in order for me to be precise." As another example we can take the admonishment "silly time to go practising pinching and pocket-picking..."

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