Victorious Nature in Anglo-Saxon England and Fantasy Middle-earth

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Abstract
Common sense argues that a writer with a personal appeal for Old English who worked as a Rawlinson and Bosworth Professor of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford for twenty years (1925-1945) must have had been influenced by this scholarship. From that starting point, this paper aims to provide a source study on how the Anglo-Saxon poem The Ruin from the Exeter Book, is echoed in some descriptions in J. R. R. Tolkien’s The Lord of the Rings. With that intention in mind, a modern and quite literal translation by Kevin Crossley-Holland of The Ruin (2009) is compared and contrasted with three descriptive passages of ruins in The Lord of the Rings: the remains of now-extinct civilisations as found next to Trollshaws, at the foot of Amon Hen and North Ithilien including Minas Morgul. It is not difficult to perceive that all three of Tolkien’s passages, bear a slight if not strong resemblance with their Anglo-Saxon counterpart. The description, tone, imagery and topic portrayed in The Ruin could have fascinated Tolkien, a writer deeply immersed in the Anglo-Saxon world, due to his personal ecological stance. Conscious or unconsciously this may have triggered the inclusion of the theme in his passages, which echo elements from the poem. Even if this were not the case, it would seem that both the writer of the Anglo-Saxon poem and Tolkien must have shared a similar mindset on the representation of how nature triumphs over man-made works.

Keywords: Anglo-Saxon poetry, The Ruin, The Lord of the Rings, nature triumphs, J.R.R. Tolkien