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Tolkien's Heroic Quest

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TOLKIEN'S HEROIC QUEST J.R.R. Tolkien was above all else a philologist, a scholarly and expert on the Anglo-Saxon corpus of poetry. Yet, it is not Tolkien's scholarly work which he is primarily remembered for, but his mainstream success with The Hobbit and to an even greater extent The Lord of The Rings. In actuality, Tolkien's scholarly analysis and Tolkien's fiction and creations in the realm of faerie are not independent endeavors; there is an intrinsic connection between his two realms of writing: Tolkien's creative works owe a great debt to his insight into the areas of scholarly study, specifically within his observations on the poem The Battle of Maldon and the Middle English poem, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. Not only does Tolkien bring the literary flavor of these works into his fictional creation, allowing his reader to transcend his time and inhabit a pseudo-era like but much unlike the world of the Anglo-Saxon poems, Tolkien also applies to his creative work his observations of ofermod within The Battle of Maldon and the social/ moral distinction which he interprets within Sir Gawain and the Green. The encompassing claim of this study is that J.R.R. Tolkien operated as a social critic through his fictional writing, and that Tolkien's developing social criticism has its roots in his critical interpretations of The Battle of Maldon and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. J.R.R. Tolkien was primarily concerned with the elevation of man-made social systems over a divine and moral law, and he worked to deconstruct such systems as dangerous and flawed ideology that would inevitably lead to the downfall of man. Tolkien's specific interpretations on the corpus of his study reflect directly back upon the heroics and social mechanics he creates for his fictional realm of Middle-earth. This claim is intended to underline the important relationship between Tolkien's scholarly study and creative endeavor in a way which has not yet been fully developed within the literary criticism on Tolkien. Bibliography and notes. 166pp. ISBN 9781861712394. www.crmoon.com

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