Shedding Light on Illuminated Manuscripts of the Anglo-Saxon Age: An Investigation into the Life and Illustrations of J.R.R. Tolkien

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For decades, the work of J.R.R. Tolkien has fueled investigations in Medieval studies due to his incorporation of Anglo-Saxon themes in his writing. A fact unbeknownst to some readers is that Tolkien was also an avid artist, and the illustrations that accompany many of his pieces are evidence of how Medieval culture influenced his life. The scope of this research project includes gaining a general understanding of the Middle Period, as well as a history of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts and their illuminators. This paper will explore Tolkien’s inspirations as a writer and artist, and conclude with a comparison of his illustrations to manuscript illuminations. After dissecting these pieces, it is clear that Tolkien’s technique, context, style, and content were influenced by the work of Medieval artists and writers.