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Roman Heroes at Helm's Deep?

Livy, Macaulay, and Tolkien on the Horatius Cocles Episode

Abstract This article analyzes Tolkien's narrative of the Battle of Helm's Deep as a retelling of the Horatius Cocles episode from Livy's *AUC,* which contains descriptions of the defenses and the bridge, a rally encouraged by Horatius, his bold stand both with his companions and alone, and the honors paid to him after the battle. Tolkien's Battle of Helm's Deep contains the same elements split across two narratives: the defense of the causeway leading to the gates of the Deep by Aragorn, Éomer, and Gimli; and, after the fall of the Deeping wall, Aragorn's defiant stand alone on the stairway leading to the inner doors of the Hornburg. Aragorn's double action demonstrates a fulfillment of Livy's exemplary arc. Tolkien's knowledge of Macaulay's "Horatius" provides a possible intermediary that accounts for various additions to the story. However, the larger structure of Tolkien's narrative as well as the imagery that resonates throughout the text distinctly evoke the vivid descriptions of Livy. While both sets of heroes make brave stands against their enemies, Tolkien's warriors represent a civilizing force in their efforts to build and restore their defenses while Livy's Roman heroes destroy the bridge to save their state.

Keywords Livy, Horatius Cocles, Tolkien, Macaulay, Reception, Exemplarity

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ROMAN HEROES AT HELM'S DEEP?[1]

In the middle of the narrative of the battle of Helm's Deep, Tolkien provides several lighthearted interactions between Gimli and Legolas, as the two compare the counts of the enemies each has killed, in an attempt to outperform the other. In the first of these exchanges, Legolas scorns the dwarf's paltry count:

> 'Two?' said Legolas. 'I have done better, though now I must grope for spent arrows; all mine are gone. Yet I make my tale twenty at the least. But that is only a few leaves in a forest.'[2]

Legolas does not merely one-up the count of his friend here. He describes his efforts as a "tale" and then compares the dead to falling leaves, reminiscent of a famous Homeric simile from the sixth book of the *Iliad:*

> As are the generations of leaves, so too are the generations of men.
> The wind pours some leaves upon the ground, but the forest, blooming,
> produces others as the time for spring arrives:
> as for the generations of men, as one springs up, another falls.[3]

Since Legolas makes no mention of the falling of the leaves or the season of autumn, Tolkien's reader must be aware of Homer's simile or perhaps another like it for the elf's metaphor to make sense. There are, of course, numerous works that draw a comparison between autumn leaves and human mortality, including, for instance, texts that are Classical (Verg. *Aen.* 6.309–10), Medieval (Dante *Inf.* iii.112–17), biblical (*Isaiah* 34:3–4), or, for Tolkien, even more recent (Margaret Postgate-Cole's "The Falling Leaves").[4] Given Tolkien's well-established and well-known study of Greek and Latin and love for Homer, the locus

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1 I would like to thank my colleagues of the Utah Classical Association and the anonymous reviewers for their comments on earlier versions of this paper. The final version profited much from their feedback.

2 *LotR* 535.

3 Hom. *Il.* 6.146–49: οἵη περ φύλλων γενεή, τοίη δὲ καὶ ἀνδρῶν. / φύλλα τὰ μέν τ' ἄνεμος χαμάδις χέει, ἄλλα δέ θ' ὕλη / τηλεθόωσα φύει, ἔαρος δ' ἐπιγίγνεται ὥρη· / ὣς ἀνδρῶν γενεὴ ἡ μὲν φύει ἡ δ' ἀπολήγει. Text from Munro and Allen's OCT edition.

4 Postgate-Cole's "The Falling Leaves" (1915), might even have a special resonance for

classicus for a simile on this theme would likely be the Homeric lines just cited.[5] However, I offer this potential intertext not because it matters whether Tolkien had these exact Homeric lines in mind or some other simile on leaves and men falling but instead because the tenor of Legolas' comment in the preceding line promotes a sense of intertextuality and adaptation and encourages the reader to consider a possible intertextual relationship with some other narrative. His claim "I make my tale," can function as the Alexandrian footnote does in ancient literature, wherein the briefest mention of a narrative marks an intertextual relationship between the passage in which it occurs and some previous text.[6] Legolas' "tale" mobilizes a reference to the entire poetic discourse of the well-established simile of autumn leaves and death. It matters not whether Tolkien had in mind any particular text within that dialogue, since Legolas opens the door for the reader to consider the entire discourse as an intertextual node.

This article explores another example of intertextuality between *The Two Towers* and Livy's *ab Urbe Condita* (*AUC*) by arguing that Tolkien's narrative of the Battle of Helm's Deep and, more directly, the episodes that immediately surround Legolas' poetic turn constitute a retelling and adaptation of the story of Horatius Cocles at the bridge from the *AUC*. The correspondences between Tolkien's account and Livy's include the structure of each story as well as specific imagery and language shared between the two narratives.[7] While some elements of the text, such as Legolas' possible Homeric allusion, suggest a type of adaptation that corresponds to ghosting or cultural correspondence in Keen's and James' terminologies, respectively, the details present in Tolkien's narrative rise to the level of engagement in Marshall's schema of reception.[8] As I will argue below, the narrative beats of Livy's version, as well as several of his de-

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Tolkien, given his own initial hesitation to enlist during the First World War. On this reluctance, see his letter to his son, Michael (6–8 March 1941, *Letters* #43) and Garth (2003) 40–44.

5 For Tolkien's study of Classics and Homer, specifically, consider his own words: "I was brought up in the Classics, and first discovered the sensation of literary pleasure in Homer" (2 December 1953, *Letters* #142), as printed in Carpenter's (1981) edition of *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien.* In that same edition see also *Letters* #144, 163, and 209 for other references to Tolkien's study of the Classics.

6 On the Alexandrian footnote, see esp. Ross (1975) 78; on its use to establish intertextual relationships between various passages, see Hinds (1998) 1–5.

7 The term "correspondence" here follows the definition laid out in Hardwick (2003) 9.

8 Keen (2006) and (2019) 10–11; James (2009) 239; Marshall (2016) 20–23.

scriptive images, find their way into Tolkien's *The Two Towers,* which suggests the latter's direct engagement with the former's text. Additionally, as Tolkien adapts elements from the variations of the Horatius story into his narratives of both Helm's Deep and Gandalf at the Bridge of Khazad-Dûm, he employs elements from variants in the ancient traditions surrounding Horatius Cocles and thereby engages with the tradition itself in his revisioning of the story.[9] Tolkien therefore takes the act of reception one step further: instead of retelling a single narrative, he adapts an ancient literary dialogue about Horatius into his text and makes the variations between those accounts a key feature of his own story.

First, then, let us consider the likelihood that Tolkien was aware of the story of Horatius Cocles and, specifically, Livy's version of it. Aside from the general popularity of the story, there is ample evidence that Tolkien had specific knowledge of the tale of Horatius from Lord Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome.*[10] Tolkien's earliest known published poem, "The Battle of the Eastern Field," is a parody of Macaulay's *Lays* and Garth argues that the impetus for Tolkien's "Lost Tales" may also be found in the *Lays.*[11] Tolkien's *On Fairy-stories* recalls an encounter with a young boy, whom Garth has identified as Hugh Cary Gilson, who put no stock in the titular woodland creatures.[12] Tolkien was a friend of the Gilson family, especially Hugh's half-brother Rob, and regularly stayed with them.[13] A letter between the Gilson parents notes that Hugh recited a significant

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9 Revisioning: Marshall (2016) 22.

10 On the general popularity of the story of Horatius Cocles in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries, "A Nation Once Again" (1844) by Thomas Osborne Davis and "The Longest Odds" (1915) by Jessie Pope both feature references to the story. Winston Churchill, too, recalls a story from his childhood in which he recited Macaulay's entire poem at the Harrow school and then engaged with Macaulay again in his studies in Bangalore: Churchill (1930) chs. ii and ix.

11 On the adaptation of Macaulay in "The Battle of the Eastern Field" see Garth (2003) 20. On the connection between the *Lays* and the "Lost Tales" see Garth (2003) 229–230.

12 Tolkien OFS 248; Garth (2010) explores the relationship between Tolkien and the Gilson family and the significance of the exchange between the Gilson youth and Tolkien.

13 Tolkien's signature appears in the Canterbury House visitors' book (Gilson family papers), as shown in Garth (2010) 282. For more on the relationship between Tolkien and the Gilsons, see Garth (2003) esp. 169–170. Tolkien was both a close friend of Rob's and a pupil of R.C. Gilson.

portion of Macaulay's "Horatius" every morning.[14] As Tolkien often stayed with the Gilson family, he had ample opportunity to hear Macaulay's poem on a regular basis.

As for his possible knowledge of Livy's account of Horatius Cocles, Tolkien's training in the Classics, of course, included ample readings in Latin.[15] While he never mentions reading Livy in any of his published letters, the narrative of Horatius is often included among the excerpts of Livy's *AUC* selected for student editions and the story's enduring popularity, mentioned above, makes it not unlikely that Tolkien had had a chance to read the version of the tale found in the *AUC*.[16] Of course, the story was also popular in antiquity, with several authors including accounts of Horatius at the bridge.[17] Additionally, Tolkien's familiarity with Macaulay's *Lays* also provides the opportunity for him to learn of Livy's version even in the unlikely case that he might not have read it otherwise. The introductory essay to Macaulay's "Horatius" discusses the various versions of the story in the ancient tradition and notes the overwhelming preference for Livy's account.[18] Even in the unlikely chance that Tolkien never had the oppor-

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14 Letter from R.C. Gilson to Marianne Gilson, 21 March 1939 (Gilson family papers): "Hugh and I recite more than 300 lines of 'Horatius' every morning. He never seems to tire of it… Somehow the proper Italian pronunciation does not seem to suit the *Lays of Ancient Rome.*" Importantly, this letter dates to the approximate period in which the exchange between Tolkien and Hugh about fairies must have occurred. For additional discussion about how this letter informs the nature of the interaction between Tolkien and the young Hugh see Garth (2010).

15 For Tolkien's study of Latin, see his personal letters cited in n. 5 above. Garth (2003) 12–18 explores Tolkien's earliest steps into various languages, including Latin and Greek, as well as his growing love of linguistics. Goering (2014) explores what Tolkien says about the impact of his study of Latin on his creation of the languages of Middle Earth.

16 For the Horatius story among student editions of Livy that might have been in use during Tolkien's studies, see e.g. Lincoln (1882) 57–58.

17 e.g. Pol. 6.55.1–4, Dion. Hal. 5.23–25, Val. Max. 3.2.1 and 4.7.2, Plin. nat. 34.29, Plut. *Poplicola* 16.4–7, Flor. epit. i.10 (of course, derived from Livy), Sen. epist. 120.7. There are also brief mentions of Horatius in Verg. Aen. 8.650 and Prop. 3.11.63.

18 Macaulay, "Horatius" introduction: "Polybius, there is reason to believe, heard the tale recited over the remains of some Consul or Prætor descended from the old Horatian patricians; for he introduces it as a specimen of the narratives with which the Romans were in the habit of embellishing their funeral oratory. It is remarkable that, according to him, Horatius defended the bridge alone, and perished in the waters. According to the chron-

tunity to read Livy's version directly, then, he was aware of Livy's account and its main details through Macaulay's reference to it.

Various historical schools have examined the nature of the legend of Horatius Cocles. While the source critics attempt to remove later accretions to reveal the simplest, purest version of the story, the structuralists break down the myth to its component parts to uncover the elements shared between various Indo-European cultures.[19] More significantly for this study, recent takes on the *AUC* examine how Livy's account of Horatius Cocles at the bridge (2.10) represents an essential illustration of Livy's method of exemplary historiography.[20] The structure of Roman exempla, as schematized in Roller's recent update to his earlier work on the topic, includes: an action, an evaluation of that action by an audience, its commemoration through a monument, and finally the deed is accepted as a moral standard which other Romans are encouraged to follow.[21] Livy's narrative, too, is distinct from some of the ancient accounts in placing the story of Horatius Cocles within a larger narrative and historical context.[22] As Roller notes, Livy joins his story of Horatius with his narratives of Cloelia and Mucius Scaevola to form a heroic triptych that demonstrates the valor needed to preserve the nascent Republic.[23] Even in the ancient tradition, these three accounts

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icles which Livy and Dionysius followed, Horatius had two companions, swam safe to shore, and was loaded with honors and rewards. ...while the story which Livy has transmitted to us was preferred by the multitude, the other, which ascribed the whole glory to Horatius alone, may have been the favorite with the Horatian house." The text of Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome* used throughout the paper is available here: https://www.gutenberg.org/files/847/847-h/847-h (accessed 28 June 2021), produced for Project Gutenberg by David Reed and David Widger (2006).

19 For the source-critical approach to Horatius Cocles, see Fugmann (1997) 37–49; for the structural anthropological take, see Dumézil (1988) 143–48; Briquel (2007) 58–89 and (2015) gives a recent and updated take on the significance of the comparative Indo-Europeanist approach to the Horatius legend and Livy's *AUC,* respectively.

20 Roller (2004) and (2018) 32–94 examines the cases of Horatius Cocles and Cloelia in detail to establish his model for exemplarity in Livy. Chaplin (2000) 48–49 notes that the story of Horatius is like many of Livy's other *exempla* in that the story is never raised again after its initial appearance in the text.

21 Roller (2018) 4–8, which is a revision of the model laid out in Roller (2004).

22 Among the texts cited above, Dionysius, Plutarch, and Florus are the only others to place the story within its wider historical context.

23 Roller (2018) 32–33.

were taken together as evidence of extraordinary behavior, as Florus calls them the "portents and wonders …who would seem like tall tales today were they not in our annalists."[24] For Livy and the authors who follow him, Horatius Cocles, Cloelia, and Scaevola represent key narratives that help establish the values linked to the founding and subsequent preservation of the Republic. As argued below, Tolkien engages with the concept of exemplarity in Livy and uses the importance that the Horatius myth has for the early Republic to demonstrate how his world and his heroes can surpass their Roman equivalents. First, however, I will examine the narratives of Livy's Horatius and Tolkien's Battle of Helm's Deep to explore the correspondences between these two accounts.

HORATIUS AND ARAGORN HOLDING THE CROSSING

Livy's story of Horatius opens by establishing the danger the Romans are facing and describing what defenses they have at their disposal. He first establishes that Porsenna's attack is an existential threat for the Republic:

> Not ever before this had such fear come upon the senate: that is how powerful Clusium was at that time and how great the fame of Porsenna was. They were not only afraid of the enemy but even their own citizens, as they feared that the plebs would be shaken by fear, admit the kings into the city, and accept peace even if it were accompanied by slavery.[25]

Fear, felt across the spectrum of Roman society, resonates throughout the passage (*terror … timebant … metu*). While Livy frames the dread from the perspective of the senate, the people too are expected to become terror-stricken at the approach of Porsenna's forces. In fact, in anticipation of the plebs' terror, the

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24 Flor. epit. 1.10.3–4: *Tunc ill atria Romani nominis prodigia atque miracula, Horatius, Mucius, Cloelia, qui nisi in annalibus forent, hodie fabulae viderentur.* Vergil, too, joins Horatius and Cloelia on the Shield of Aeneas at *Aen.* 8.646–651.

25 Liv. 2.9.5: *Non unquam alias ante tantus terror senatum invasit; adeo valida res tum Clusina erat magnumque Porsennae nomen. Nec hostes modo timebant sed suosmet ipsi cives, ne Romana plebs, metu perculsa, receptis in urbem regibus vel cum servitute pacem acciperet.* The text for all citations of Livy comes from Ogilvie's OCT edition.

senate makes concessions to the people in order to avoid their fear leading to the capitulation of the city.[26]

In Tolkien's *Two Towers*, the people of Rohan experience a similar existential threat with the approach of Saruman's army. As Théoden and his forces march toward Helm's Deep, they share exchanges among themselves and with those they encounter that drive home how dire the threat they face is:

The host rode on. Need drove them. Fearing to come too late, they rode with all the speed they could, pausing seldom. ...

'Many miles lie between,' said Legolas, gazing thither and shading his eyes with his long hand. 'I can see a darkness. There are shapes moving in it, great shapes far away upon the bank of the river; but what they are I cannot tell. It is not mist or cloud that defeats my eyes: there is a veiling shadow that some power lays upon the land, and it marches slowly down stream. It is as if the twilight under endless trees were flowing downwards from the hills.'

'And behind us comes a very storm of Mordor,' said Gandalf. 'It will be a black night.' ...

At length [the horseman they encountered] spoke. 'Is Éomer here?' he asked. 'You come at last, but too late, and with too little strength. Things have gone evilly since Théodred fell. We were driven back yesterday over the Isen with great loss; many perished at the crossing. Then at night fresh forces came over the river against our camp. All Isengard must be emptied; and Saruman has armed the wild hillmen and herd-folk of Dunland beyond the rivers, and these also he loosed upon us. We were overmastered. ...Where is Éomer? Tell him there is no hope ahead.' ...

The rumour of war grew behind them. Now they could hear, borne over the dark, the sound of harsh singing. They had climbed far up into the Deeping-coomb when they looked back. Then they saw torches, countless points of fiery light upon the black fields behind, scattered like red flowers, or winding up from the lowlands in long flickering lines. Here and there a larger blaze leapt up.

'It is a great host and follows us hard,' said Aragorn.

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26 Liv. 2.9.6–8. Miles (1995) 115–116 describes how this action represents Livy's idea that the virtue and wisdom of the senate ensures the survival of the city in various moments of crisis.

'They bring fire,' said Théoden, 'and they are burning as they come, rick, cot, and tree. This was a rich vale and had many homesteads. Alas for my folk!'[27]

Fear, hopelessness, destruction, and darkness loom over the people of Rohan and Tolkien's heroes in these passages. Present participles ("fearing … pausing seldom") drive the action and show the progressive nature of the concern felt by the heroes. Their greatest fear ("to come too late") becomes fulfilled when the nameless horseman the group encounters tells them "You came at last, but too late" and "there is no hope ahead." Much like Livy's Rome, both the leaders of the group – Théoden, Gandalf, Aragorn, and Legolas among them – and the common folk of Rohan are shown to share the fear of the approaching storm that Saruman's army represents. As Legolas first looks back to see what follows them, he sees only shadows and darkness. Later, as their company looks behind them, they can discern the path of destruction that their foes have left in their wake. Théoden speaks of the area they are observing as no longer rich and populated, as it once was, but as already destroyed. Just as Porsenna and the Etruscans destroy the Janiculum on their way to Rome, Saruman's army has already devastated the Westfold on their approach and now intends to destroy the forces at Helm's Deep.[28] The anonymous horseman notes his total despair after narrating several of these skirmishes. In his description of one such clash, he says, "we were overmastered," which subtly echoes Livy's sentiment that the Roman plebs would accept slavery (*servitute*) if only it meant peace. As Porsenna falls upon Rome and Saruman's army upon Helm's Deep, terror descends on all parties as the consequences of losing the impending battles mean the loss of Rome and Rohan, respectively.

Livy next tells how the people from the surrounding areas flee into Rome and describes the defenses that will protect the city:

As the enemy approached, every single person departs their fields and makes for the city. They surround the city itself with guards, some parts seem to be safe because of the walls, others because the Tiber blocked the way.[29]

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27 *LotR* 526–530.

28 Liv. 2.10.3: *captum repentino impetu Ianiculum.* "Janiculum was taken by a sudden attack."

29 Liv. 2.10.1: *cum hostes adessent, pro se quisque in urbem ex agris demigrant; urbem ipsam saepiunt praesidiis. alia muris, alia Tiberi obiecto vibebantur tuta.*

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Tolkien, too, describes the people of the Westfold finding refuge at Helm's Deep and the defenses that will protect them:

> 'Behind us in the caves of the Deep are three parts of the folk of Westfold, old and young, children and women,' said Gamling. 'But great store of food, and many beasts and their fodder, have also been gathered there.' …
>
> The king and his Riders passed on. Before the causeway that crossed the stream they dismounted. In a long file they led their horses up the ramp and passed within the gates of the Hornburg. There they were welcomed again with joy and renewed hope; for now there were men enough to man both the burg and the barrier wall.
>
> Quickly Éomer set his men in readiness. The king and the men of his household were in the Hornburg, and there also were many of the Westfold-men. But on the Deeping Wall and its tower, and behind it, Éomer arrayed most of the strength that he had, for here the defence seemed more doubtful, if the assault were determined and in great force. …
>
> The Deeping Wall was twenty feet high, and so thick that four men could walk abreast along the top, sheltered by a parapet over which only a tall man could look. Here and there were clefts in the stone through which men could shoot. This battlement could be reached by a stair running down from a door in the outer court of the Hornburg; three flights of steps led also up on to the wall from the Deep behind; but in front it was smooth, and the great stones of it were set with such skill that no foothold could be found at their joints, and at the top they hung over like a sea-delved cliff.[30]

In each case, there is a focus on the totality of the residents of the surrounding land retreating to the defenses. Livy's "every single person" (*pro se quisque*) is reflected in Tolkien's "old and young, children and women." The Deeping Wall and the Hornburg correspond to Livy's walls (*muris*) and city (*urbem*), respectively. In both narratives, the defenders are divided up between these places and the farmers from the surrounding countryside take refuge behind these fortifications. The Deeping Wall also serves as an analogue to the Tiber from the story of Horatius Cocles. Where Livy's Tiber serves as the key blocking feature (*obiecto*) for the Etruscan attack, Tolkien's Deeping Wall will be the key barrier stopping

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30 *LotR* 531. Tolkien had also, just a little earlier in his narrative, provided a more general description of the Hornburg and Helm's Gate.

the attack of Saruman's army. The description of the Deeping Wall is expanded, compared to the other parts of the fortifications, to include its height, battlement, the closely-fitted stones, the overhang at the top, and even its capacity for troops. The Deeping Wall becomes insurmountable to the attacking army. The heroes of each account must hold the points where the Tiber and the Deeping Wall are traversable or accessible if they want to stave off the attack of the enemy.

There are two such passable points in the defenses at Helm's Deep: the causeway that leads to the main gates and a staircase that leads from the Deep to the Hornburg. Tolkien notes the presence of the staircase in the description just cited and the causeway will be discussed further below. These two crossing points are Tolkien's equivalents to the Pons Sublicius, which Livy describes as follows:

> The wooden pile-bridge nearly provided an entrance to the enemy, had there not been one man, Horatius Cocles. The city of Rome was fortunate to have had him as its bulwark that day.[31]

While Livy leaves no suspense as to the outcome of the ensuing battle, he does make it clear that the bridge could provide access (*iter*) to the city. Of course, given the various means of public commemoration of Horatius Cocles that existed in Livy's day, there would be little point in attempting to build tension by withholding the outcome of this battle.[32] Instead, Livy can develop some suspense in his narrative by not indicating directly or immediately which version of the story he will tell. Livy's *unus vir* hints that he may tell the account where Horatius stands alone, as the hero does in Polybius.[33] Livy's use of the perfect tense (*habuit*) and a past contrafactual (*ni ... fuisset*) marks a shift from the

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31 Liv. 2.10.2: *pons sublicius iter paene hostibus dedit, ni unus vir fuisset, Horatius Cocles; id munimentum illo die fortuna Urbis Romanae habuit.*

32 Roller (2018) 36–53 discusses the various types of monuments that could serve to commemorate Horatius' deed, including: a statue, the Pons Subilicius, his wound and cognomen, the so-called "Path of Cocles" mentioned in Prop. 3.11.63 (*Coclitis abscissos testator semita pontes*), and various images or narratives that depict a soldier swimming in full armor.

33 Pol. 6.55.1–4. Note that Macaulay's introduction to the "Horatius" lay, cited above in n. 18, notes this basic difference between Polybius' and Livy's versions of the story. I will discuss the various versions of the Horatius story and how Tolkien's narrative engages with them in the conclusions below.

present verbs (*demigrant … saepiunt*) favored in the narrative up to that point. Livy also compares Horatius to a *munimentum,* a word that audibly echoes the eventual results of his actions, the *monumentum.* Livy's description of the infamous bridge and his introductory remarks to the character of Horatius thereby signal that the hero might die in this telling of the story, as if he is already in the past and preserved by a monument. This feature, like the *unus vir* above, hints toward the Polybian version of the story, in which Horatius Cocles dies after leaping into the Tiber.

Tolkien also makes a brief description of each of his navigable points as he launches into his narrative of the battle of Helm's Deep. The stairway that leads up to the Hornburg and that will later come under attack was noted in the description above. First, however, our heroes must defend the Hornburg gate which takes the brunt of the first wave of attack:

> The enemy surged forward, some against the Deeping Wall, other towards the causeway and the ramp that led up to the Hornburg-gates. …
>
> Éomer and Aragorn stood together on the Deeping Wall. They heard the roar of voices and the thudding of the rams; and then in a sudden flash of light they beheld the peril of the gates.
>   'Come!' said Aragorn. 'This is the hour when we draw swords together!'[34]

The attacking army has gained the causeway that leads to the main gate of the Hornburg and begun to assault the gates directly. Tolkien focalizes the realization of the danger this battering represents through the eyes and ears ("they heard … they beheld …") of Éomer and Aragorn. Livy also frames his description of the initial attack of the Etruscans from the perspective of his hero:

> [Horatius] happened to be stationed at the bridge when Janiculum was taken by a sudden attack and then he saw that the enemy was running down impetuously and that the terrified throng of his soldiers was abandoning their arms and their ranks.[35]

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34 *LotR* 533.

35 Liv. 2.10.3: *qui positus forte in statione pontis cum captum repentino impetu Ianiculum atque inde citatos decurrere hostes vidisset trepidamque turbam suorum arma ordinesque relinquere.*

Horatius, Aragorn, and Éomer themselves note the dangers that they are fac-
ing at the hands of their enemies. The realization spurs Horatius and Aragorn to
action to oppose the enemy's attack. In each instance the sudden nature of the
hero's comprehension ("in a sudden flash"; *repentino*) of the danger incites their
fear. While Tolkien mirrors Livy's point of focalization and the heroes' reactions
in the opening narratives of the battle, his heroes surpass Livy's by both hear-
ing and seeing the attack. Tolkien's heroes also outnumber Livy's in this initial
encounter: Aragorn and Éomer act as a pair, both in sensing the danger and in
responding to it jointly ("together … together"), while Horatius has – up to this
point – stood alone (*unus vir*).

Aragorn's response to the attacks also demonstrates points of correspondence
between Livy's and Tolkien's narratives. Horatius rallies his fellow defenders,
orders the bridge to be destroyed, and shifts the fear from the Romans to the
enemy:

> He grabs each of them, one by one, and blocks their way and calls on them to wit-
> ness as he swears by the faith of both gods and men that they are fleeing from their
> abandoned posts in vain. If they were to leave a passageway in the bridge behind
> them, then there would be more of the enemy on the Palatine and Capitoline soon
> than there were on the Janiculum. So, he admonishes them to tear apart the bridge
> with steel, with fire, with whatever they could, and he would receive the enemy's
> attack, as much as he could resist with one body. Then he advances to the entrance
> of the bridge, conspicuous among the backs that could be seen of those already flee-
> ing the battle, and, with his arms at hand and turned for giving battle, he astound-
> ed the enemy, in complete surprise at his audacity.[36]

Horatius physically impedes the retreat of his countrymen as he rallies them to
aid in the defense of the city. Since he is the one who sees the enemy's initial ap-
proach, he is in the best position to advise the most appropriate course of action.

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36 Liv. 2.10.3–5: *reprehensans singulos, obsistens obtestansque deum et hominum fidem
testabatur nequiquam deserto praesidio eos fugere; si transitum pontem a tergo reliquissent,
iam plus hostium in Palatio Capitolioque quam in Ianiculo fore. itaque monere, praedicere ut
pontem ferro, igni, quacumque vi possint, interrumpant: se impetum hostium, quantum corpore
uno posset obsisti, excepturum. vadit inde in primum aditum pontis, insignisque inter conspecta
cedentium pugna terga obversis comminus ad ineundum proelium armis, ipso miraculo auda-
ciae obstupefecit hostes.*

Here that means taking down the bridge, the enemy's only means of approaching the city. At this point in the narrative, Livy continues to hint that Horatius will stand alone in his account (*corpore uno*). He then shifts the perspective from Horatius to the enemy, as the hero strides onto the bridge and becomes highlighted (*insignis*) against a backdrop of fleeing Romans. Thereupon the Etruscans are struck with fear (*obstupefecit*) as Horatius' boldness (*audaciae*) shocks them. The alteration in perspective here presents the Etruscans as the first audience of Horatius' defiant act. As noted above, the audience and its evaluation of the deed is a vital step in the exemplary loop.[37]

After they see the danger posed by the attack of the Orcs along the causeway, Aragorn and Éomer sally out in an attack to defend the causeway and the gates in an account that contains many narrative beats similar to Livy's. They rally a few troops and make their way through a door that opens to a side path with access to the causeway.[38] As they charge forth, they stun the attackers much as Livy's Horatius does:

> Together Éomer and Aragorn sprang through the door, their men close behind. The swords flashed from the sheath as one. …

> Charging from the side, they hurled themselves upon the wild men. Andúril rose and fell, gleaming with white fire. A shout went up from wall and tower: 'Andúril! Andúril goes to war. The Blade that was Broken shines again!'
> Dismayed the rammers let fall the trees and turned to fight; but the wall of their shields was broken as by a lightning-stroke, and they were swept away, hewn down, or cast over the Rock into the stony stream below. The orc-archers shot wildly and then fled.[39]

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37 Roller (2004) 3–4 describes how "the Etruscans focalize much of Livy's account … it is to their gaze that most Romans turn their backs, but Horatius (to their amazement) turns his weapons" (n. 2).

38 *LotR* 533: "Running like fire, they sped along the wall, and up the steps, and passed into the outer court upon the Rock. As they ran they gathered a handful of stout swordsmen. There was a small postern-door that opened in an angle of the burg-wall on the west, where the cliff stretched out to meet it. On that side a narrow path ran round towards the great gate, between the wall and the sheer brink of the Rock."

39 *LotR* 533–534.

The lightning that had previously revealed to our heroes that the gates were in peril now serves to undo the would-be attackers. As the heroes jump out, their swords "flash," "gleam," and "shine." The enemy then becomes afraid ("dismayed") at the sudden appearance of a foe and find themselves easily swept aside by the "lightning-stroke" of the attack. While the note of their dismay indicates momentarily the perspective of the attackers, Tolkien focalizes this account from the perspective of the other defenders on the wall, who shout when they see Andúril flash in the darkness. Just as a bolt of lightning allowed Aragorn and Éomer to see the danger from the wall, now their fellow defenders see the flashes from the heroes' attack shine out in the darkness and take heart. Although Aragorn and Éomer are not alone in this defense, Tolkien does highlight throughout this narrative how they work "together" and their swords flash "as one," as a subtle hint toward Livy's *unus vir* or to prescriptively suggest how Aragorn will later stand as the sole defender of the stairway.

The danger, however, has not passed as Aragorn and Éomer now evaluate the status of the gates:

> 'We did not come too soon,' said Aragorn, looking at the gates. Their great hinges and iron bars were wrenched and bent; many of their timbers were cracked.
>
> 'Yet we cannot stay here beyond the walls to defend them,' said Éomer. 'Look!' He pointed to the causeway. Already a great press of Orcs and Men were gathering again beyond the stream. Arrows whined and skipped on the stones about them. 'Come! We must get back and see what we can do to pile stone and beam across the gates within. Come now!'[40]

While they stand there in front of the gates, the arrows of the Orcs fly around them. Livy's Horatius, too, faces the missiles of his enemies as he makes his stand on the bridge.[41] These gates offer the only protection from the approach of the causeway, which is again filling with attackers. In a similar vein to the way that Horatius knows that the reprieve granted by his bold stand is only temporary and thus directs his compatriots to break down the bridge, here Éomer ad-

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40 *LotR* 534.

41 Liv. 2.10.9–10: *clamore sublato undique in unum hostem tela coniciunt. quae cum in obiecto cuncta scuto haesissent, neque ille minus obstinatus ingenti pontem obtineret gradu.* "With a shout, they threw their spears from all sides against their sole opponent. All these stuck fast in his outthrust shield and he no less resolutely blocked the bridge with his massive stride."

vises that they rebuild and reinforce the gates to block off the entrance allowed by the causeway. The Pons Sublicius is, of course, a wood-pile bridge as the name implies.[42] The gates of the Hornburg are here made of "timbers" and the heroes use "beams" to reinforce them further. The tools Horatius encourages his compatriots to use to break down the bridge also appear in Tolkien's narrative. Livy's "iron" (*ferro*) is repeated as the "hinges and iron bars" of the gates. The "fire" (*igni*) appears in the imagery of Aragorn's sword, as noted above, as well as the speed with which the heroes run toward the causeway ("like fire"). In a separate episode shortly after this, Gimli assists Gamling in blocking up the culvert of the Deeping-stream. As the dwarf offers his help, he says, "We do not shape stone with battle-axes … but I will help as I may," using language that approximates Livy's *quacumque vi possint*.[43] Every means for destroying the bridge that Horatius describes thus appears in Tolkien's narrative of the reinforcement of the gates and, later, the culvert, with most of them doubled in Tolkien's account.

As Aragorn and Éomer begin to rush toward the gates and make the repairs, they are ambushed by a sudden attack from some of the orcs who previously were hiding along the causeway:

> They turned and ran. At that moment some dozen Orcs that had lain motionless among the slain leaped to their feet, and came silently and swiftly behind. Two flung themselves to the ground at Éomer's heels, tripped him, and in a moment they were on top of him. But a small dark figure that none had observed sprang out of the shadows and gave a hoarse shout: *Baruk Khazâd! Khazâd ai-mênu!* An axe swung and swept back. Two Orcs fell headless. The rest fled.
>
> Éomer struggled to his feet, even as Aragorn ran back to his aid.
>
> The postern was closed again, the iron door was barred and piled inside with stones. When all were safe within, Éomer turned: 'I thank you, Gimli son of Glóin!' he said. 'I did not know that you were with us in the sortie. But oft the unbidden guest proves the best company.'[44]

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42 OLD s.v. *sublica,* "wooden stake" or "pile."

43 *LotR* 536.

44 *LotR* 534. The two Orcs that Gimli kills here are the two that he proudly tells Legolas that he killed in the quote shared at the opening of the paper. That passage immediately follows Gimli's action on the causeway.

Gimli's appearance on the causeway surprises not only the Orcs, but even Éomer, whom he saves. In fact, Tolkien notes that "none had observed" him. The dwarf's sudden attack startles the Orcs, who flee before his onslaught. Although Gimli was not involved in the initial assault on the causeway, his action here mirrors that of Aragorn and Éomer. All three of the heroes leap out, flash their weapons, and cause the enemy to flee in fear. With Gimli's arrival, Tolkien's narrative of the holding of the causeway provides the major thematic notes of the prevailing tradition of Horatius Cocles: three heroes stand together to defend a narrow passageway, the fall of which would give access to the defenseless citizens within, and they block subsequent access by reinforcing the gates (in contrast to the Romans who dismantle the bridge), before escaping to safety behind the newly barred passageway. However, Tolkien's adaptation of the Horatius legend will continue with a second parallel event occurring later at Helm's Deep, and to which I will return below.

As shown above, in several ways Livy alludes to the tradition that Horatius Cocles stands on the bridge alone (*unus vir ... corpore uno*). As the narrative continues, Livy has Horatius' two companions (*duos tamen*) arrive on the bridge.[45] The audience may be surprised at their sudden appearance: note, for instance, the impactful position of *duos tamen* at the beginning of the line. In a similar way, Tolkien's readers might be stunned by the unexpected arrival of Gimli on the causeway, as "none had observed him" before he leaps out to attack these Orcs.

While the assistance of Larcius and Herminius is a well-known part of the ancient tradition, Livy's ordering of the account allows Horatius to strike fear into the enemy on his own first and builds the suspense of what version of the story Livy intends to tell.[46] Once Horatius' companions do appear, however, Livy transitions into the traditional account by having them join in his defense of the bridge:

> With [Larcius and Herminius] he checked the initial storm of the attack and what was the most tumultuous part of the battle for a while. Then, when there was just a

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45 Liv. 2.10.6: *duos tamen cum eo pudor tenuit, Sp. Larcium ac T. Herminium, ambos claros genere factisque.* "However, shame held two men there with him: Spurius Larcius and Titus Herminius, both of them distinguished in birth and in their deeds."

46 Ogilvie (1965) 259 describes what can be said about Larcius, Herminius, and their families, both of which are ultimately of Etruscan origin.

small part of the bridge remaining and those who were breaking it apart were calling them back, he forced even them to head back to safety.[47]

While their part in the action is brief (*parumper*), Larcius and Herminius join Horatius in withstanding the brunt of the enemy's attack, which Livy describes as a violent approaching storm (*procellam ... tumultuosissimum*). Tolkien uses a similar set of imagery to portray Saruman's army. As described above, when the heroes set out toward Helm's Deep and Gandalf and Legolas looked behind them, Gandalf remarks, "And behind us comes a very storm of Mordor."[48] Throughout that passage, Tolkien frequently used darkness ("black night," "veiling shadow," "black fields"), contrasted with flashes of light ("countless points of fiery light"), to describe the impending gloom and destruction that the advancing enemy represents.

As the Orcs begin their assault on Helm's Deep, another storm breaks out, literally and figuratively:

> The sky was utterly dark, and the stillness of the heavy air foreboded storm. Suddenly the clouds were seared by a blinding flash. Branched lightning smote down upon the eastward hills. ... Thunder rolled in the valley. Rain came lashing down.
>
> Arrows thick as the rain came whistling over the battlements, and fell clinking and glancing on the stones. ...
>
> Ever and again the lightning tore aside the darkness. Then the Orcs screamed, waving spear and sword, and shooting a cloud of arrows at any that stood revealed upon the battlements; and the men of the Mark amazed looked out, as it seemed to them, upon a great field of dark corn, tossed by a tempest of war, and every ear glinted with barbed light.
>
> A storm of arrows met them, ...[49]

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47 Liv. 2.10.7: *cum his primam periculi procellam et quod tumultuosissimum pugnae erat parumper sustinuit; deinde eos quoque ipsos exigua parte pontis relicta revocantibus qui rescindebant cedere in tutum coegit.*

48 *LotR* 527.

49 *LotR* 532–533.

As the attack begins, the stormy imagery works on multiple levels. The sky itself is torn apart by the bad weather that has been threatening the heroes since they were first approaching Helm's Deep. Then Tolkien paints the waves of arrows fired at the defenders by the Orcs as "rain" and "cloud."[50] Finally, as the defenders look out from the wall, the approaching army resembles a storm-tossed field of grain. Both Livy and Tolkien thereby use the image of an oncoming storm to describe the attacks of the Etruscans and Orcs, respectively. Tolkien, however, has taken Livy's imagery and expanded it by including an actual thunderstorm and by focalizing a storm-based simile through the eyes of the defenders.

Livy resumes his narrative after Larcius and Herminius depart by having Horatius issue a challenge to the Etruscans that stuns them again, as he did when he began his defiant stand on the bridge:

> Then [Horatius], casting his fierce eyes menacingly toward the leaders of the Etruscans, he calls them out one by one, then he rebukes them as a group: 'Slaves of arrogant kings, forgetful of your own liberty, you come to attack others!' They hesitated for a short time, while each one was hoping that someone else would begin the fight. Then shame provoked them to attack and with a shout they threw their spears from all sides against their sole opponent. All these stuck fast in his outthrust shield and he no less resolutely blocked the bridge with his massive stride. Now they were trying to drive him away by assault.[51]

Horatius makes a heroic stand here alone, after his companions retreat across the few remaining pieces of the bridge. The description of his stride as "massive" (*ingenti*) and positioned around the bridge (*ingenti pontem obtineret gradu*) in the text lends to him an epic flair. In other ways, too, Livy shifts toward poetic language here as his story nears its climax. Variations on the expression *circumferens … truces minaciter oculos* appear in Vergil, Ovid, and Lucan and the de-

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50 A "cloud" of arrows might also recall the famous retort at Hdt. 7.226.2, in which the Spartan Dienekes quips that the multitude of Persian arrows will allow them to fight "in the shade" (ὑπὸ σκιῇ).

51 Liv. 2.10.8–10: *circumferens inde truces minaciter oculos ad proceres Etruscorum nunc singulos provocare, nunc increpare omnes: servitia regum superborum, suae libertatis immemores alienam oppugnatum venire. cunctati aliquamdiu sunt, dum alius alium, ut proelium incipiant, circumspectant; pudor deinde commovit aciem, et clamore sublato undique in unum hostem tela coniciunt. quae cum in obiecto cuncta scuto haesissent, neque ille minus obstinatus ingenti pontem obtineret gradu, iam impetu conabantur detrudere virum.*

scription of Horatius' actions echoes Hector's assault on the gates of the Greek camp.[52] The language here thus heightens the impact of Horatius' final moments on the bridge, where he stands as one against many. As I noted above, Livy hints earlier in his narrative at the variant tradition in which Horatius holds the bridge alone. Here, Horatius makes a significant impact fulfilling the role of the sole defender, allowing Livy's account to present both major ancient variations to the story – the trio of defenders and the lone defender – within a single narrative.

As Horatius makes this solitary stand against the Etruscans, the bridge comes down with a crash and the Roman cheers curb the enemy momentarily.[53] Horatius uses that fleeting pause to leap into the Tiber and away from his attackers: "Then, armed as he was, he jumped down into the Tiber and swam across unharmed and reached his own people, despite all the weapons flying at him from above."[54] Livy emphasizes Horatius' current state of armor (*armatus*), a vital detail to the story that makes his survival of the river even more miraculous and to which other ancient authors consistently draw attention.[55] According to Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Horatius' armor is even featured in the statue that commemorates the deed.[56] While Livy follows the prevailing trend with that detail, he diverges in a significant way here: he claims that Horatius swims across "unharmed" (*incolumis*). In every other account, Horatius either dies or

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52 Ogilvie (1965) 260 discusses the various poetic facets of the language in this scene and gives several examples of verbal parallels to the Homeric passage in question (*Il.* 12.440–471). *circumferens oculos:* Verg. *Aen.* 12.558: acies circumtulit; Ov. *Met.* 6.169 and 15.674: oculos circumtulit; *truces minaciter oculos:* Lucan 7.291: *faciesque truces, oculosque minaces.* Ogilvie notes that the language here may have come to Livy through Ennius.

53 Liv. 2.10.10: *cum simul fragor rupti pontis, simul clamor Romanorum alacritate perfecti operis sublatus, pavore subito impetum sustinuit.* "At that same time, the crash from the breaking of the bridge and the shout of the Romans, which arose due to their joy at completing the task, stopped [the Etruscans'] attack in sudden fear."

54 Liv. 2.10.11: *ita sic armatus in Tiberim desiluit multisque superincidentibus telis incolumis ad suos tranavit.* Horatius also prays to the Tiber before his jump, with language mirrored by Vergil (*Aen.* 8.72–73), which, in turn, Macrobius (6.1.12) says is modelled on Ennius. Ogilvie (1965) 260 draws attention to these parallels and proposes that the Ennius fragment in question (*Ann.* 54V) might have been treating Horatius. Ogilvie also notes the formulaic and ceremonial parallels between Horatius' prayer here and a known prayer offered to the Tiber.

55 Pol. 6.55.3, Dion. Hal. 5.24.3, and Plut. *Poplicola* 16.6.

56 Dion. Hal. 5.25.2. Plin. nat. 34.29 also discusses the statue and claims that Horatius' image and Cloelia's were the first built at public expense in Rome.

receives at least one serious wound before or after leaping into the Tiber.[57] As an explanation of why Horatius appears on the Shield of Aeneas, Servius records that Horatius made much of this wound even long after the battle.[58] The fact that Livy's Horatius exits the river without a wound marks his account as separate from the rest.

Near the end of the Helm's Deep narrative, Aragorn and the rest of the defenders have withdrawn inside the Hornburg (on which retreat, see below). From this final point of refuge, Aragorn looks out and admonishes the enemy:

> 'No enemy has yet taken the Hornburg. Depart, or not one of you will be spared. Not one will be left alive to take back tidings to the North. You do not know your peril.'
>
> So great a power and royalty was revealed in Aragorn, as he stood there alone above the ruined gates before the host of his enemies, that many of the wild men paused, and looked back over their shoulders to the valley, and some looked up doubtfully at the sky. But the Orcs laughed with loud voices; and a hail of darts and arrows whistled over the wall, as Aragorn leaped down.[59]

While Horatius' taunts above focus on the misplaced aims of the Etruscans' actions, Aragorn here voices the threats that Livy's Horatius makes with his eyes. With their appearances and words, both heroes cause at least some of their enemies to stand back and question the attack. For Aragorn, however, it is only the "wild men" of the Dunland who pause their assault. Tolkien is careful to separate the reaction of these humans from that of the Orcs, who merely laugh and continue the attack. As Obertino has argued, Tolkien's Orcs represent the uncivilized "other," in comparison to Greco-Roman *barbaroi,* and thus allow Tolkien to

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57 e.g. Dion. Hal. 5.24.3: τραυμάτων πλῆθος ἐν πολλοῖς μέρεσι τοῦ σώματος ἔχων, μίαν δὲ πληγὴν λόγχης, ἥ…ἐκάκωσεν αὐτὸν ὀδύναις καὶ τὴν βάσιν ἔβλαπτεν. "He had a great number of wounds in many parts of his body and there was one blow of a spear, in particular, which troubled him with pain and was hindering his step." Plut. *Poplicola* 16.6 states that the statue was made "to console him for the lameness caused by his wound with this honor" (τὴν γενομένην ἐκ τοῦ τραύματος τῷ ἀνδρὶ χωλότητα μετὰ τιμῆς παρηγοροῦντες).

58 Serv. *in Aen.* 8.646. Roller (2004) 12–16 and (2018) 38–42 discuss how the wound itself acts a kind of commemorative monument that other authors use to engage with the idea and meaning behind Horatius' exemplary act.

59 *LotR* 540.

question "Sauron's cruel and expansionist imperium."[60] Here, the wild men are shown to have the expected response to Aragorn's majesty while the Orcs are too unaware to be fazed by Aragorn's threats and appearance. As they resume firing, then, their spears and arrows sail around Aragorn as he jumps down from the battlements. The imagery of the hero leaping down with missiles flying around him cleverly echoes Livy's imagery of Horatius' dive into the Tiber. Tolkien carefully focalizes this portion of the narrative from the perspective of the wild men and Orcs, who "looked back … and looked up." Aragorn's jump over the wall would make him disappear from the sight of his enemies, much like Horatius vanishes into the river. Aragorn lands safely among his comrades on his side of the wall, just as Horatius successfully navigates his way through the Tiber.

In the last part of Livy's story, he catalogues the public reaction to and commemoration of Horatius' action.[61] The state puts up a statue of him in the Comitium and gives him a grant of land.[62] Additionally, the people of Rome offer private repayment to Horatius.[63] At Helm's Deep, Éomer makes the following offer to Gimli after the dwarf unexpectedly appears on the causeway to save him: "I shall not find it easy to repay you," to which Gimli replies, "There may be many a chance ere the night is over."[64] Shortly thereafter, the two of them disappear as the defenders retreat back into the Deep after the wall falls. When

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60 Obertino (2006) 119. The article argues that Tacitus' works inspire *The Lord of the Rings* in various ways. I will return to the idea of the representation of Roman imperialism in Tolkien's work and his criticism of such below.

61 Roller (2004) 5 and (2018) 6–8 describe the centrality of the commemoration to the exemplary loop.

62 Liv. 2.10.12: *grata erga tantam virtutem civitas fuit: statua in comitio posita; agri quantum uno die circumaravit datum.* "The state was grateful for his great virtue: a statue was put up in the Comitium and a gift of land was given to him, as much as he could plow in one day." On the statue and the gift see Dion. Hal. 5.25.2, Plin. nat. 34.29, Plut. *Poplicola* 16.7. Ogilvie (1965) 258–260 and Roller (2018) 48–53 each discuss the statue and the evidence for it and its potential placement. Ogilvie additionally describes the precedents for gifts of land of this type.

63 Liv. 2.10.13: *privata quoque inter publicos honores studia eminebant; nam in magna inopia pro domesticis copiis unusquisque ei aliquid, fraudans se ipse victu suo, contulit.* "Private thanks also stood out among the public honors. For, even in this time of great scarcity, each person made some kind of offering to [Horatius] from his own resources, robbing himself of his own provisions."

64 *LotR* 534.

Aragorn inquires into their whereabouts, he is told both were last seen fighting together around the entrance to the Deep.[65] While Tolkien does not tell us what befalls these heroes as they retreat back into the Deep, he makes it clear that they were in the thick of combat. When Gimli later reappears with a battle-weary appearance, he has ultimately passed Legolas' count following the fighting that occurred in the Deep.[66] As both Éomer and Gimli emerge from the Deep alive, if exhausted, despite the fierce resistance they met there, there certainly would have been plenty of opportunities for Éomer to repay his debt to Gimli.

In the middle of the Battle of Helm's Deep, Tolkien incorporates a separate narrative of one of his heroes holding a passageway. After an explosion destroys the culvert and the last defenses of the wall fail, Aragorn defends the stairway that leads from the outer defenses into the Hornburg:

> A broad stairway climbed from the Deep up to the Rock and the rear-gate of the Hornburg. Near the bottom stood Aragorn. In his hand still Andúril gleamed, and the terror of the sword for a while held back the enemy, as one by one all who could gain the stair passed up towards the gate. Behind on the upper steps knelt Legolas. His bow was bent, but one gleaned arrow was all that he had left, and he peered out now, ready to shoot the first Orc that should dare to approach the stair.
>
> 'All who can have now got safe within, Aragorn,' he called. 'Come back!'
>
> Aragorn turned and sped up the stair; but as he ran he stumbled in his weariness. At once his enemies leapt forward. Up came the Orcs, yelling, with their long arms stretched out to seize him. The foremost fell with Legolas' last arrow in his throat. but the rest sprang over him. Then a great boulder, cast from the outer wall above, crashed down upon the stair, and hurled them back into the Deep. Aragorn gained the door, and swiftly it clanged to behind him.[67]

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65 *LotR* 538: "I last saw [Éomer] gathering men about him and fighting in the mouth of the Deep. Gamling was with him, and the dwarf; but I could not come to them."

66 *LotR* 543: "There came Gamling the Old, and Éomer son of Éomund, and beside them walked Gimli the dwarf. He had no helm, and about his head was a linen band stained with blood; but his voice was loud and strong. 'Forty two, Master Legolas!' he cried. 'Alas! My axe is notched: the forty-second had an iron collar on his neck. How is it with you?' 'You have passed my score by one,' answered Legolas." This count, of course, is the one mentioned in the quote at the start of the paper.

67 *LotR* 537–538.

There is much here that corresponds to Livy's account of Horatius. Tolkien first notes the description of the stairway, including the access it provides to the innermost defenses. Then the terror the Orcs feel at seeing Andúril holds them back for a time, while the remaining defenders make their way up the stair towards the gate. Legolas calls to Aragorn that it is time to retreat, just as Livy's Romans warn Horatius and his companions that the time has arrived to pull back across the Pons Sublicius. Aragorn stumbles and is attacked, but Legolas' last arrow saves him from the Orc closest to him and he reaches the safety within the Hornburg. Aragorn's stumble hints at Horatius' dive into the Tiber. The boulder that falls onto the stairway "crashes," which suggests the noise made by the final crash of the bridge (*fragor rupti pontis*) in Livy. However, Aragorn makes this final stand on the passageway alone. While Livy's narrative, as I argued above, hints near its beginning at the story of Horatius standing on the bridge alone, the hero is ultimately joined by Larcius and Herminius. Only after these two depart from the bridge does Horatius stand truly alone in Livy's account. As Tolkien adds the tale of the lone defender here to what happened earlier at the causeway, he separates these two accounts from one another, both narratively and geographically. Since the story here with Aragorn standing alone contains many of the narrative elements of Livy's account of Horatius at the bridge, Tolkien effectively doubles the tale of Horatius in his account of the Battle of Helm's Deep and, in so doing, incorporates both major versions of the story into his text.

In the section above, I have laid out the narratives of Livy and Tolkien and described the series of correspondences which tie the two accounts together. To help the reader visualize the parallels between the two stories, including how Tolkien doubles and reorders the narrative at times, here is a numbered list of each of the major elements of Livy's versions of Horatius:

1) Existential threat for Rome
2) Plebs and country people enter the defensible parts of the city; a description of defenses and garrison
3) Description of the Pons Sublicius
4) Horatius Cocles rallies the defending troops
5) Horatius orders the bridge to be destroyed
6) Horatius' bold stand terrifies the enemy
7) Two named companions join him to hold back the storm of battle
8) The companions retire and Horatius stands alone
9) Horatius taunts the enemy, and they stop their advance

10) The enemy attack with spears and by assault
11) When the bridge falls, Horatius leaps into the river, swimming to safety with spears still flying around him
12) Public and private honors given to Horatius

And here is a layout of Tolkien's account of Helm's Deep, numbered to match the order of the episode in Livy and, where an element of the story is split or repeated in Tolkien, lettered "a" and "b":

1) Existential threat for Rohan
2) People of the Westfold enter Hornburg; a description of the defenses and garrison
3) Descriptions of the causeway leading to the gates and staircase leading to the Hornburg
4) Aragorn and Éomer rally some swordsmen and sortie out to the causeway
6a+7a) Aragorn and Éomer's bold attack startles the enemy, who flee
5a) Aragorn and Éomer consider the status of the gates and order them to be reinforced
7b) Gimli makes a surprising appearance to defend Éomer and Aragorn
12a) Éomer offers private repayment to Gimli
5b) Gimli and Gamling repair and block the culvert
6b+8) As the rest fall back within the Hornburg, Aragorn stands alone to defend the stairway
9) Aragorn looks out over the wall and taunts the enemy
6c) Aragorn's power and royalty cause the wild men to stop their advance
10+11) The Orcs attack with "a hail of darts and arrows" as Aragorn jumps down
12b) Éomer's repayment of the debt owed to Gimli is suggested in their appearance after emerging from the Deep

The lists exhibit the totality of Tolkien's treatment of the Horatius Cocles story in his narrative of Helm's Deep, wherein each of the major elements of Livy's version appear. However, Tolkien's adaptation of the story goes further in repeating the narrative of a hero or set of heroes holding the narrow passageway twice: once with Aragorn, Éomer, and Gimli and a second time with Aragorn alone. As noted above, Tolkien's familiarity with "Horatius" from *The Lays of Ancient Rome,* which opens with an introductory essay discussing the variations in the

ancient accounts, demonstrates his awareness of both traditions.[68] Aragorn's actions and doubled defenses of the passageway allow Tolkien to include both variants of the story within his text.

While the parallels between these two narratives are many, there are several key differences that build upon Tolkien's engagement with the classical tradition in other ways in his writings. Ford has argued that the story of Gondor in *The Lord of the Rings* and elsewhere constitutes a creative reimagining of the relationship between the Germanic peoples and the Roman Empire.[69] In this schema, the people of Gondor represent the Romans, as viewed from a late antique or medieval perspective. As Gondor struggles to survive the assault of Sauron and then recapture its old glory under Aragorn's kingship in *The Return of the King* and Tolkien's later universe-expanding writings, the people of Rohan come to their assistance. In Ford's analogy, the Rohirrim, along with other free peoples of Middle Earth, represent the Germanic peoples of northern Europe. The story of the cavalry of Rohan riding to save Minis Tirith is, as Ford terms it, "a constructed memory of Rome saved by the Germanic peoples from a final collapse from internal weakness and an attack from the east."[70] For the future King of Gondor to be intricately involved with the preservation of Rohan at the Battle of Helm's Deep complicates the narrative of the renaissance of Gondor, qua Rome, later in the story. The differences between Tolkien's and Livy's versions of the Horatius mythos, however, are revealing here. While the original Roman story, in all accounts, has the bridge broken down behind Horatius, Tolkien's heroes reinforce the gates and repair the culvert, in effect reversing the action undertaken by the Romans. It is the Orcs who inflict destruction upon the world, as they bring the culvert and the gates crashing down with the fire of Orthanc. Another reversal in the story is shown in the arrow flying by Aragorn in his final retreat from the stairway: Legolas' final shot protects the hero, while the Etruscan arrows and spears in Livy attack Horatius. Tolkien's adaptation of the account of Horatius at the bridge therefore reverses key elements of Livy's narrative: the free peoples of Middle Earth succeed through cooperation, not merely individual excellence, and they represent the civilizing act of build-

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68 n. 18 above.

69 Ford (2005).

70 Ford (2005) 58.

ing rather than tearing down.[71] As Aragorn survives the Battle of Helm's Deep due to the cooperation of various peoples – the Rohirrim, an Elf, and a Dwarf – he learns the power of mutual assistance and reconstruction and thereafter uses these lessons as he later restores the glory of Gondor during his reign.

MACAULAY'S "HORATIUS"

The "Horatius" lay of Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay contains many elements similar to Livy's version of the story. The people of the countryside flee to Rome before the approach of Porsenna's troops (xiii–xv), Horatius prepares to make his stand along with two companions, while others plan to break apart the bridge (xxvii–xxxiv), Horatius' companions dart back as the bridge falls (liii–lv), Horatius prays to the Tiber and leaps into the river (lix–lxi), he escapes the torrent alive (lxiv), and is then celebrated and commemorated by the people of Rome (lxv–lxx). However, there are also significant differences between the two accounts. For instance, the poem has a surprising focus on Porsenna, with the first twelve stanzas devoted to him and the gathering of his forces (i–xii).[72] The decision to dismantle the bridge comes not from Horatius, but from the Consul, who is notably absent from Livy's account (xviii–xix). As Horatius and his companions face off against the Etruscans, each fights with named heroes from the other side, in an echo of Homeric duels (xxxvii–xl).[73] Macaulay keeps all of the fighting at the bridge contained to the portion where the three Roman heroes stand together.[74] After Larcius and Herminius leap back over the last few planks of the bridge, Horatius stands on his own for just a moment and fights

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71 Obertino (2006) 128 shows other ways in which Tolkien emphasizes the cooperation seen between the various peoples of Middle Earth.

72 Martin (2015) 355–356 describes the impact of the poem's opening focus on Porsenna.

73 McKelvy (2000) places Macaulay's *Lays* within its Victorian context and, significantly, discusses a contemporary reaction that Macaulay was trying to be "the Homer of Ancient Rome." Macaulay mentions Homer as an inspiration several times in his introductory remarks.

74 Martin (2015) 357–359 shows how the structure of the poem is built around multiples of three throughout the section where Horatius is joined by his companions. The structural and metrical focus on threes helps reiterate the version of Horatius's story in which he is joined by both companions for the bulk of the battle, as he is in Macaulay.

no one in this solitary state before the bridge falls and he leaps into the Tiber (liv–lix).[75] In fact, the taunting that Livy's Horatius hurls toward the Etruscans is conspicuously absent as Macaulay keeps his hero silent in the face of his enemy by repeating the idea "naught spake he" across two lines.[76] So, although Macaulay demonstrates an awareness of the ancient variant traditions surrounding Horatius Cocles in his introductory essay, as noted above, the *Lay* itself presents little indication of these variations and does not constitute a direct adaptation of Livy's version of the story. Where Tolkien has so many details that do correspond to Livy's account of Horatius, then, these cannot have come from Macaulay's *Lay* and instead must have arisen from Tolkien's engagement with Livy himself.

However, there are a few elements of Macaulay's "Horatius" that likely did influence Tolkien's narrative of Helm's Deep. While each of these elements that I examine below – the fleeing inhabitants, the distant fires glowing in the darkness, and the trumpet blasts – occur in many war narratives in the ancient, biblical, and medieval traditions, the correspondences between these and the various Horatian elements of Tolkien's larger Helm's Deep narrative suggest that the *Lays* are a likely origin of this imagery. After Macaulay sets up the character of Porsenna, as noted above, he finally turns to the Romans to describe them fleeing toward the city as follows:

> For aged folks on crutches,
>   And women great with child,
> And mothers sobbing over babes
>   That clung to them and smiled,
> And sick men borne in litters
>   High on the necks of slaves,
> And troops of sun-burned husbandmen
>   With reaping-hooks and staves,

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75 Following Ogilvie's (1965) 259 suggestion in his commentary on Liv. 2.10.6, Larcius is the appropriate spelling of the *gens*.

76 Macaulay, "Horatius" lviii: "Round turned he, as not deigning / those craven ranks to see; / Naught spake he to Lars Porsena, / To Sextus naught spake he."

And droves of mules and asses
    Laden with skins of wine,
And endless flocks of goats and sheep,
    And endless herds of kine,
And endless trains of wagons
    That creaked beneath the weight
Of corn-sacks and of household goods,
    Choked every roaring gate.[77]

This procession from the Roman countryside recalls Gamling's description of the people of the Westfold as they take refuge in the keep at Helm's Deep:

'Behind us in the caves of the Deep are three parts of the folk of Westfold, old and young, children and women,' said Gamling. 'But great store of food, and many beasts and their fodder, have also been gathered there.'[78]

In both Macaulay's and Tolkien's accounts, individuals of all ages are accompanied by their livestock and other supplies as they advance toward the safety of the city and the keep, respectively. Tolkien almost directly mirrors the order with which the list is presented in Macaulay. Macaulay's "aged folks … women great with child, and mothers sobbing over babes" become Tolkien's "old and young, children and women." The "great store of food, and many beasts and their fodder" encapsulates in brief the second of Macaulay's stanzas above.

The next stanza of Macaulay's *Lay* also contains an image that is echoed in Tolkien's narrative. As the Romans look toward the Etruscan advance from the Tarpeian Rock, to which Tolkien's Hornrock may be an analogue, Macaulay describes their view:

Now, from the rock Tarpeian,
    Could the wan burghers spy
The line of blazing villages
    Red in the midnight sky.

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77 Macaulay, "Horatius" xiv–xv

78 *LotR* 531.

> The Fathers of the City,
> They sat all night and day,
> For every hour some horseman come
> With tidings of dismay.[79]

Macaulay's Romans see in the distance a line of fires caused by the destruction of the approaching Etruscans, much as the defenders at Helm's noted the approach of Saruman's army as they saw the fires blaze along the horizon:

> They had climbed far up into the Deeping-coomb when they looked back. Then they saw torches, countless points of fiery light upon the black fields behind, scattered like red flowers, or winding up from the lowlands in long flickering lines. Here and there a larger blaze leapt up.[80]

In each narrative the destruction is focalized by a crowd behind the defenses looking out from a high place. In each instance the fires form a line in the distance ("the line of blazing villages"; "long flickering lines") that represents the oncoming destruction. Red and black are contrasted directly ("Red in the midnight sky"; "upon the black fields … like red flowers"). Tolkien's fires approach with the progressive participles "winding" and "flickering" to animate their actions and heighten the sense of their continuous advance. In both texts, fires leap out of the darkness at a distance and signify both the destruction that has already occurred and that which hangs over the viewers at the hands of the oncoming enemy.

Lastly, the many horns and trumpet blasts that feature in Tolkien's account of Helm's Deep, including the blowing of the eponymous horn within the Hornburg, correspond to a repetition of such sounds in Macaulay's *Lay.* Five trumpet-blasts sound in Macaulay's "Horatius," with the first four corresponding to the advance of the Etruscan forces.[81] The last peal, "the trumpet-blast that cries to them," calls to the Romans to attack, only after Horatius has successfully curbed

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79 Macaulay, "Horatius" xvi.

80 *LotR* 530.

81 Macaulay, "Horatius" ii: "the trumpet's blast"; xxi: "the trumpet's war-note proud"; xxxv: "four hundred trumpets sounded"; l: "the victorious trumpet-peal dies fitfully away."

the advance of Porsenna.[82] In this way, Macaulay's Horatius effectively steals the war-note of the Etruscans and the Romans now use it to their own ends. Similarly, the armies of Saruman advance upon Helm's Deep to the blaring of trumpets: "Brazen trumpets sounded. The enemy surged forward," "Again trumpets rang," "there came a blare of trumpets."[83] At the end of the siege of Helm's Deep, however, Théoden and his forces ride out against the attacking Orcs to the blast of the great horn of the keep: "the sound of the great horn of Helm rang out," "back from the Deep the echoes came, blast upon blast, as if on every cliff and hill a mighty herald stood," "ever the horn-blasts wound on among the hills."[84] As Gandalf and Erkenbrand appear at the top of the valley to bring the final destruction to the attackers, "horns were sounding" and Erkenbrand "set to his lips a great black horn and blew a ringing blast."[85] Much like Macaulay's Romans appropriate the Etruscan trumpets with their victory, the blaring of the horns of the forces of Rohan signal their final triumph over Saruman's forces at Helm's Deep. And just as Tolkien doubles the trope of Horatius at the bridge that he adapts from Livy's version, here Tolkien doubles the eventual victors' horns in their movement to appropriate their enemies' war-note.

While Macaulay's *Lay* cannot account for all the Horatian details found in the narrative of Helm's Deep, a few vivid images resonate in both texts. To this end, the discrepancies and correspondences between their various accounts, as I have argued above, suggest that Tolkien adapts the Livian story of Horatius and hangs upon its structure various elements of descriptive imagery appropriated from Macaulay. Tolkien weaves together various components of Livy's and Macaulay's narratives into his own engaging and moving story.

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82 Macaulay, "Horatius" lxvii.

83 *LotR* 533 and 537.

84 *LotR* 540.

85 *LotR* 541.

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GANDALF AND ARAGORN AT KHAZAD-DÛM

There is, of course, another famous moment in *The Lord of the Rings* that contains the image of a heroic figure holding a bridge against an overpowering enemy: Gandalf at the bridge of Khazad-dûm in the *Fellowship of the Ring:*

> 'Over the bridge!' cried Gandalf, recalling his strength. 'Fly! This is a foe beyond any of you. I must hold the narrow way. Fly!' Aragorn and Boromir did not heed the command, but still held their ground, side by side, behind Gandalf at the far end of the bridge. The others halted just within the doorway at the hall's end, and turned, unable to leave their leader to face the enemy alone. ...
>
> There was a ringing clash and stab of white fire. The Balrog fell back, and its sword flew up in molten fragments. The wizard swayed on the bridge, stepped back a pace, and then again stood still. 'You cannot pass!' he said.
>
> With a bound the Balrog leaped full upon the bridge. Its whip whirled and hissed.
>
> 'He cannot stand alone!' cried Aragorn suddenly and ran back along the bridge. 'Elendil!' he shouted. 'I am with you, Gandalf!'
>
> 'Gondor!' cried Boromir and leaped after him.
>
> At that moment Gandalf lifted his staff, and crying aloud he smote the bridge before him. The staff broke asunder and fell from his hand. A blinding sheet of white flame sprang up. The bridge cracked. Right at the Balrog's feet it broke, and the stone upon which it stood crashed into the gulf, while the rest remained, poised, quivering like a tongue of rock thrust out into emptiness.
>
> With a terrible cry the Balrog fell forward, and its shadow plunged down and vanished. But even as it swung its whip, and the thongs lashed and curled about the wizard's knees, dragging him to the brink. He staggered and fell, grasped vainly at the stone, and slid into the abyss. 'Fly, you fools!' he cried, and was gone.[86]

There is much in this story that corresponds to the narrative of Horatius Cocles: Gandalf recognizes the need to "hold the narrow way." The bridge needs to be blocked and destroyed to save the hero's companions from a dangerous enemy ("a foe beyond any of you"). Two companions (Aragorn and Boromir) stand "side by side" behind Gandalf in an attempt to come to his aid, just as Larcius and Herminius come up from behind to assist Horatius. The imagery of clanging metal, fire, and lightning all resound here ("ringing clash ... white fire ... molten frag-

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86 *LotR* 330–331.

ments … white flame … cracked … crashed"), as they did in Livy and do later in Tolkien's Helm's Deep. Several key differences, however, separate the bridge at Khazad-dûm from Livy's Horatius: At Khazad-dûm Gandalf breaks the bridge himself with his staff, as opposed to having the others break it down behind him. Aragorn and Boromir do not reach him in time to help. The Balrog falls into the depths in a way that is not mirrored by the Etruscans in Livy's text who are instead shielded from the broken portion of the bridge by the defiance of Horatius. And, as I will discuss below, Gandalf's fall into the abyss separates itself from Livy's account.

Aside from the narrative parallels between Gandalf and Aragorn holding their respected passageways, Tolkien draws a verbal parallel between these two accounts. As Gimli jumps out to save Éomer on the causeway, he shouts *"Baruk Khazâd! Khazâd ai-mênu!"*[87] This is the first appearance of his war cry in *The Lord of the Rings* and he shouts it twice more during the Battle of Helm's Deep. Khazad is the Dwarfish word for themselves, and thus it is a fitting part of their war cry.[88] However, a portion of the cry (*"Khazâd ai-m…"*) nearly echoes the name Khazad-dûm. This verbal mirroring, and its repetition by Gimli, brings the bridge at Khazad-dûm to mind for Tolkien's audience, thereby encouraging them to consider what parallels there might be between these two accounts.

Gandalf's stand in Moria has been taken as an analogue for the heroics of Byrhtnoth in the Anglo-Saxon poem *The Battle of Maldon.* In the remnants of this Old English epyllion, a trio of Saxons hold off the Viking advance across a narrow bridge. Despite these heroes' ability to secure the bridge, the Saxons lose the battle after Byrhtnoth, the ealdorman, allows the Vikings to cross safely and draw up for a traditional battle, a fight which leaves Byrhtnoth dead.[89] Tolkien himself wrote an adaptation of *The Battle of Maldon* and an accompanying essay in which he explains the background of the battle.[90] Bruce argues that Tolkien

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87 *LotR* 534.

88 On the word Khazad, *LR* 305.

89 A translation of the poem is available as part of the Old English Poetry Project maintained by Prof. Hostetter at Rutgers University: https://oldenglishpoetry.camden.rutgers.edu/battle-of-maldon/ (accessed 19 January 2022). For the portion of the poem described here see lines 62–105 and 159–184.

90 Tolkien (1953). Shippey (1991) argues that Tolkien's writing on Byrhtnoth is, in part, to oppose what Tolkien saw as a resurgence of Nordic attitudes in Nazi Germany. See also Nelson (2008).

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adapts the story of Byrhtnoth for the narrative of Gandalf at Khazad-dûm in order to present a more straightforward depiction of heroism in his heroes in *The Lord of the Rings* than that found in *The Battle of Maldon.*[91] Gandalf stops the advance of the Balrog and protects his companions before falling into the chasm after the monster, whereas Byrhtnoth foolishly (in the poem, "due to his *ofermod,*" line 89) puts his soldiers at risk by allowing the Vikings to cross.[92]

The Battle of Maldon itself has also been compared to the mythos of Horatius.[93] The similarities between the defenses of Khazad-dûm, Helm's Deep, Maldon, and the Pons Sublicius warrant their comparison and encourage further examination of their various differences. The fate of each hero stands as a significant point of disagreement separating the various stories. Byrhtnoth dies and Gandalf's fall into the chasm leaves the rest of the fellowship assuming that he is dead until his surprising return in the next book.[94] Aragorn and the rest of the fellowship grieve at the loss of their companion.[95] Aragorn, much like Livy's Horatius, comes away from both of his bold defenses at Helm's Deep unharmed.[96] While Livy's version of Horatius Cocles survives his leap into the Tiber, the ancient tradition is not unanimous in his survival. Other accounts from antiquity have their Horatii die or at least hint at the possibility of death. The earliest extant version, found in Polybius' *Histories,* finds the story's moral in the way Horatius

91 Bruce (2007). On some of the perceived problems with Byrhtnoth's actions see Mills (1966).

92 See Bruce (2007) 153–157 on the term *ofermod* and Tolkien's reaction to it, both in his adaptation of *Maldon* and in his account of Gandalf at Khazad-dûm.

93 Williams (1992) 35–36 has noted that the legendary qualities to the story of Byrhtnoth recall the general myth of Horatius Cocles as well as the Viking at the Battle of Stamford Bridge.

94 Gandalf returns in "The White Rider" (*TT* iii.5). Before that, however, the fellowship mourns him as if he were dead.

95 Tolkien shows the desperation of Aragorn after the group successfully exits the mines by having the hero cry out: "'What hope have we without you?' [Aragorn] turned to the company. 'We must do without hope,' he said." (*LotR* 333).

96 While Aragorn is never described as "unharmed," he is also never said to receive a wound and he is shown in the subsequent chapter (*TT* iii.8) to heal Gimli, the most heavily wounded member of the fellowship after Helm's Deep.

willingly sacrifices his life to save the state.[97] As discussed above, each of the non-Livian accounts have Horatius receive at least one not insignificant wound. In Dionysius' version, although Horatius survives, the expectation of his death hangs over the narrative: "all the people at home were rushing out, hoping to catch a last sight of Horatius, while he was still alive, for it seemed that he was not far from death because of his wounds."[98] Valerius Maximus includes two mentions of Horatius Cocles in his work. As he tells the story the first time, Horatius is only saved by the grace of the gods despite the narrator listing all the various ways he should have died:

> The immortal gods, admiring his bravery, answered for his safety and security: for he was neither shaken by the height of the fall, nor pressed by the weight of his arms, nor driven by some circling whirlpool, nor even struck by any of the weapons which were heaping up all around, but his swim had a safe outcome.[99]

Valerius gives his reader every reason to have expected Horatius' death without the gods' assistance. In a later discussion on friendship (iv.7.2), Valerius leaves Horatius' fate less clear by making a surprising, though geographically appropriate, comparison. Valerius describes Laetorius' death on the Pons Sublicius as an effort to save the life of Gaius Gracchus. After describing Laetorius blocking the bridge and committing suicide as he leapt into the Tiber, Valerius equates his death with Horatius Cocles' defiant stand on the same bridge: "That love

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97 Pol. 6.55.3: διασπασθείσης δὲ τῆς γεφύρας, οἱ μὲν πολέμιοι τῆς ὁρμῆς ἐκωλύθησαν, ὁ δὲ Κόκλης ῥίψας ἑαυτὸν εἰς τὸν ποταμὸν ἐν τοῖς ὅπλοις κατὰ προαίρεσιν μετήλλαξε τὸν βίον, περὶ πλείονος ποιησάμενος τὴν τῆς πατρίδος ἀσφάλειαν καὶ τὴν ἐσομένην μετὰ ταῦτα περὶ αὐτὸν εὔκλειαν τῆς παρούσης ζωῆς καὶ τοῦ καταλειπομένου βίου. "After the bridge was broken up, the enemy were barred from the attack and Cocles threw himself into the river still in his armor and willingly exchanged his life, considering the safety of his country and the glory that would come to him after this as more important than his current existence and what was left of his life."

98 Dion. Hal. 5.25.1: πᾶς ὁ κατοικίδιος ὄχλος ἐξεχεῖτο ποθῶν αὐτόν, ἕως ἔτι περιῆν, θεάσασθαι τὴν τελευταίαν πρόσοψιν: ἐδόκει γὰρ ὑπὸ τῶν τραυμάτων οὐκ εἰς μακρὰν διαφθαρήσεσθαι.

99 Val. Max. 3.2.1: *cuius fortitudinem di immortales admirati incolumitatem sinceram ei praestiterunt: nam neque altitudine deiectus quassatus nec pondere armorum pressus nec ullo verticis circuitu actus, ne telis quidem, quae undique congerebantur, laesus tutum natandi eventum habuit.*

which Horatius Cocles showed for his whole country on that bridge, [Laetorius], with his voluntary death, applied to his friendship with one man."[100] The self-sacrificing leap into the Tiber echoes the Polybian version of Horatius, where the hero also knowingly jumps to his death.[101] Gandalf's assumed (on the part of his companions) death and Aragorn's survival combine the various traditions concerning Horatius found in antiquity. Tolkien thereby incorporates elements of the mythos of Horatius as well as the ancient dialogue about his stand at the bridge into his narratives of Khazad-dûm and Helm's Deep.

Tolkien's various means of linking Khazad-dûm and Helm's Deep suggest that the stories should be interpreted in light of each other. Aragorn's actions at both Moria and Helm's Deep engage with the concept of exemplarity in Livy. Tolkien, like Livy, stresses the presence of the audience in each of these accounts. Aragorn and Boromir serve as both analogues for Larcius and Herminius in the Horatius episode and as spectators of Gandalf's fall in Moria. The rest of the fellowship provides an additional audience for Gandalf's exemplary act, as Tolkien notes their view of his plummet into darkness.[102] The presence of an audience is stressed in both of Aragorn's defensive stands at Helm's Deep. Gimli tells Éomer and Aragorn that he was sitting beside "to see your sword-play" as they began their defense of the causeway and Legolas "peers out" as Aragorn holds the stairway.[103] As Aragorn defends Helm's deep, he follows the example set by the wizard at Khazad-dûm and thereby completes the Livian exemplary loop. Unlike Gandalf, however, Aragorn has learned to avoid the need for his companions to feel despair at his loss. He takes efforts to withdraw to safety once the chance presents itself and he comes away unscathed, just as did Livy's Horatius, who alone among the ancient versions of the hero remains unharmed. With a prospective view toward the final element of Livian exemplarity, the encouragement toward future actions in the vein of the *exemplum,* the audiences that view Aragorn's heroics at Helm's Deep will ensure subsequent actions are performed

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100 Val. Max. 4.7.2: *quamque in eo ponte caritatem toti patriae Horatius Cocles exhibuerat, unius amicitiae adiecta voluntaria morte praestitit.*

101 Roller (2018) 57–59 contrasts Valerius' two mentions of Horatius and how the story of Laetorius does and does not fit the typical pattern. He also notes the Polybian echo at p. 58 n. 60.

102 *LotR* 331: "The Company stood rooted with horror staring into the pit."

103 *LotR* 534 and 537.

by the other free peoples of Middle Earth. Through this closure of the exemplary loop, the idea of Aragorn holding the passageway to save Rohan can resonate and repeat across the subsequent history of Middle Earth.

CONCLUSIONS

Tolkien incorporates various versions of the Horatius myth across his epic tale. Aragorn's defense of Helm's Deep contains the narrative elements of Livy's version of Horatius Cocles, but Tolkien doubles the story across two separate actions, both to allude to the variations in the ancient traditions of Horatius and to demonstrate his hero's superiority to Livy's. Gandalf's stand at Khazad-dûm, too, echoes Livy's Horatius in various ways while still engaging with other ancient and medieval forms of the story. Rather than merely imitate or transfer the story of Horatius Cocles into one part of *The Lord of the Rings,* Tolkien carefully weaves into his saga a complicated tapestry of the various narratives of the heroic stand and the entire "Horatius at the Bridge" mythos, spanning from Livy and his predecessors to Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome.*

While the heroes of *The Lord of the Rings* take actions that mirror their Roman and medieval counterparts, Tolkien's narrative ensures that they outperform them in various ways. Tolkien's heroes build and reinforce their defenses, whereas the Romans destroy their bridge. The exchange of constructing civilization in place of its destruction thereby develops further the author's criticisms of Roman imperialism as evident elsewhere in his text. While Gandalf shows his superiority to Byrhtnoth in his actions at Khazad-dûm by saving his companions rather than allowing the enemy to cross, Aragorn demonstrates how he, in turn, learns from Gandalf's earlier fall. He performs two heroic stands to defend a narrow passageway and he pulls back when the danger is kept in check to avoid the need to abandon his comrades to their grief. Throughout his various narratives that engage with the Horatius mythos, Tolkien demonstrates how his heroes outstrip their Roman analogues, providing an additional perspective to the power that his work can have as an adaptation and reinterpretation of classical and medieval history.

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