

Rings Off Their Fingers: Hands in The Lord of the Rings

MARION PERRET

THOUGH the action of *The Lord of the Rings* centers upon a ring and though rings call attention to hands, only one of Tolkien's critics has observed that "hands appear often in the epic."¹ Hands are, in fact, a major source of imagery: because the central symbol of the trilogy is the Ruling Ring,² putting it on or taking it off is a symbolic act as well as an action in the plot, and hands when mentioned in actions other than battle tend to take on special significance. A cursory count reveals that 107 pages of *The Lord of the Rings* contain hand images.

Many, but by no means all, of the hand images are negative because the One Ring is evil and hands, related in thought to that Ring, are stained by association. This is not, however, typical of the trilogy as a whole: both in figurative references and in symbolic gestures hands represent good as well as evil. From one point of view, the hand symbiotically sustains the Ring it wears and thus represents evil; from another viewpoint, the hand struggles to fight off the Ring which would encompass it and thus represents good. In *The Lord of the Rings* hand images illustrate both the forces opposed and the fact of their opposition: references to hands show both the terror which is Sauron's weapon and the stirring of courage against it. Tolkien does not delineate the horror that is Sauron but suggests him to our imagination by *synecdoche*, as the burning Eye or Black Hand, and by the reaction of others to him — fear, pictured in hand images:

Fear seemed to stretch out a vast hand, like a dark cloud rising in the East and looming up to engulf him. (I, 81)³

He clutched the Ring in his hand, as if he saw already dark fingers stretching out to seize it. (I, 83)

[Pippin] thought of the long fingers of that Shadow. (III, 43)

Enormous [the shape of the shadow] reared above the world, and stretched out toward them a vast threatening hand. (III, 279)

Yet hand movements alone present Théoden's change from cowardly acceptance of defeat without battle to courageous challenging of life or death:

He clutched his knees with his wrinkled hands. "Your fingers would remember their old strength better, if they grasped a sword-hilt," said Gandalf. . . . Slowly Théoden stretched forth his hand. As his fingers took the hilt, it seemed to the watchers that firmness and strength returned to his thin arm. (II, 154-55)

Most importantly, the structure of the trilogy opposes the healing hand of the true king to the Black Hand of Sauron; the contrast between the hand that cures and the hand that kills is as effective as it is obvious.

Some critics object that the trilogy presents too simple a vision of good and evil, but though Tolkien follows convention in associating light with good and dark with evil, hand images reflect a morality that is no more black-and-white matter. Both the Black Hand of Sauron and the White Hand of Saruman represent evil, and the hands of the good characters hurt as well as heal — "the healing hand should also bear the sword" (III, 291). In emphasizing the power of good Tolkien skilfully and surprisingly exploits our expectation of negative hand imagery in connection with the Ring: the fact that Frodo and Sam put on the Ruling Ring to avoid facing their enemies makes us notice that when the hobbits do confront their enemies they wield the power of yet another of the Great Rings. Galadriel is revealed as keeper of Nenyá, the Ring of Adamant, when for a moment it seems "as if the Even-star had come down to rest upon her hand" (I, 472); the light of that Even-star is her gift to Frodo, and when he raises the star-glass his hand like hers "sparkle[s] with white fire" (II, 418). Sam is not far

wrong in seeing Galadriel's Great Ring as a star: the glass which like a ring "grace[s] with splendour his faithful brown hobbit-hand" (III, 234) symbolically shares the power of Nenia as it literally holds the starlight.

This exploitation of the predominant association to direct attention to exceptions makes thematic complication possible. Evil in *The Lord of the Rings* expresses itself by distorting nature. The Ring's capacity to corrupt its wearer forces the good characters to behave against natural inclination in order to be true to their moral natures; despite need and temptation they must refuse what could help them in their struggle against evil lest evil means ultimately corrupt good ends. For the good the One Ring must remain functionless until rendered functionless, and in trying to get rid of what so many strive to acquire they find that the basic "unnaturalness" of not putting on the Ring demands further acts not natural to them. Sam, for instance, though afraid of water must swim to his master, though terrified of heights must swing over a cliff. Whoever puts on the Ring becomes a shadow of Sauron, but whoever keeps the Ring off his finger by that unnaturalness grows greater in nature.

Measured by the tradition of magic rings, the One Ring itself behaves unnaturally. Controlling rather than fulfilling its master's desire, the Ring makes an instrument of the hand which wears it: the Ring saps strength as it confers invisibility, decreasing its wearer's will power while increasing his will to power. The power within a ring normally is that of the hand which wears it, and hand imagery confirms that the strength of the good characters comes from goodness itself rather than magic rings — though their need is great, neither Elrond nor Gandalf⁴ wears his Ring of Power until the Ruling Ring is destroyed. The Ring has no mastery over Tom Bombadil (I, 348), whose hand first shows his power over others: "Whoa! Whoa! steady there!" cried the old man, holding up one hand, and they stopped short, as if they had been struck stiff" (I, 168).

Among the many tokens of Aragorn's royal descent — banner, brooch, sword, and circlet — we see no ring;⁵ what proves his title is the power within his hands: "*The hands of the king are the hands of a healer. And so the rightful king could ever be known*" (III, 166).

Aragorn's increasing power to heal, which grows as he comes into his birthright, is counterpointed to the Rings' increasing power to torture Frodo, which grows as the Ring approaches its source. When Frodo, wounded by the Ringwraith at Weathertop, loses the use of his hand (I, 266), Aragorn is able only to ease his pain, not cure him; but when Merry, wounded by the Ringwraith before Gondor, loses the use of his hand, Aragorn is able not only to cure him but to call Faramir back from the shadow of death. In the third volume of the trilogy Tolkien emphasizes the contrast between the Black Hand of the Dark Lord and the healing hands of the rightful king because our recognition that true power is shown by giving not grasping makes Frodo's failure to relinquish the Ring seem even more terrible. Had Gollum not completed the Quest for Frodo, in the Fourth Age "the dark lord [would lift] his hand/over dead sea and withered land" (I, 195) instead of Aragorn the king lifting his to restore life and Sam the gardener lifting his to make the withered land bloom.

Aragorn grows in power to heal as he grows in service to others; in claiming the Ring Frodo chooses to rule rather than serve and so loses not only his finger but his power for good or ill: because the Ring to him has become Power, when the Ring is destroyed his hand, like Sauron's, becomes useless. Though to insist from the beginning of the trilogy that right makes might would work against suspense about the ending, hand images suggest that a man's power is in proportion to his service of others rather than self.

Most of the characters in *The Lord of the Rings* can be classified as willing servants or unwilling slaves, and the theme of instrumentality is developed as much through

hands as through the Ring which is the focus of all the action — more, perhaps, in that while only one person can wield the Ring, many join hands that none may wear it. Unmaking the Ring requires not simply an act, but a process: literally, casting it into the Cracks of Doom, but symbolically, submitting the self willingly to a cause larger than self. This task belongs to insignificant hobbits as well as to heroic humans, and because he has no throne at stake Sam is an even better example of selfless service than Aragorn. After the hobbits enter Mordor it is Sam's small hands which get things done, first for his master, then for Middle-earth; able to return to Frodo the Ring he bore for him, Sam takes up the Quest from his master, carrying the Ring as he carries the Ring-bearer. Hand imagery epitomizes Sam's selfless service.

In one of the most moving passages of *The Lord of the Rings* Gollum dares stretch out a trembling hand in love toward Frodo, whom he had earlier tried to kill, only to be rebuffed by Sam who, startled awake, misinterprets his gesture as a threat to his master. What stirs Gollum to this tentative caress is his vision of the sleeping hobbits, whose posture reflects the ordered world of trust and service he lost in lust for the Ring: "In his lap lay Frodo's head, drowned deep in sleep; upon his white forehead lay one of Sam's brown hands, and the other lay softly upon his master's breast. Peace was in both their faces" (II, 411). Sam's hands signify his chosen service: to see Frodo through by defending the Ring which lies at his breast and by soothing the torment of his mind.

As the Quest nears its end hand gestures emphasize that those who refuse to serve the needs of others cannot serve their own desires. Drawn into Mordor by the Ring, Frodo grows increasingly puppetlike, moving almost mechanically: "As if some force were at work other than his own will, he began to hurry, tottering forward, his groping hands held out, his head lolling from side to side" (II, 397). The more Frodo thinks of himself, the more his hand moves

in response to Sauron's will rather than his own: the hobbit's "left hand would often be raised as if to ward off a blow, or to screen his shrinking eyes from a dreadful Eye that sought to look in them. And sometimes his right hand would creep to his breast, clutching, and then slowly, as the will recovered mastery, it would be withdrawn" (III, 261). The movement of Frodo's hands more than his words reveals to others the struggle of wills within him. Tolkien's friend, Charles Williams, notes that hands are "spiritual instruments of intention,"⁶ and the wandering of Frodo's hand traces the wavering of his spirit: "A great power from outside . . . took his hand, and as Frodo watched with his mind . . . moved the hand inch by inch toward the chain upon his neck. Then his own will stirred; slowly it forced the hand back" (II, 401). Theatrical as such gestures are, they quickly make plain the fragmentation and loss of personality which results from acquiescence to evil.

"In nothing is the power of the Dark Lord more clearly shown than in the estrangement that divides" (I, 451): in *The Lord of the Rings* the disintegration caused by evil is shown not only on the large scale of disaffection between Sauron and Saruman and of constant dissent among the orcs, but on the smaller scale of individual dissociation as well — Gollum is split into the two personalities Sam dubs Slinker and Stinker, and Frodo is torn between the calls of conquest and Quest. Hands illustrate the overarching theme and basic structural contrast of the trilogy, that love unites to serve while evil divides to conquer; on the slopes of Doom the hobbits' hands epitomize the challenge of love's integrating power to the disjunctive force of evil. When Frodo can finally control neither his own body nor his will to power, he still has the saving grace to acknowledge dependence rather than assert mastery: "'Help me, Sam! Help me, Sam! Hold my hand! I can't stop it.' Sam took his master's hands and laid them together, palm to palm, and kissed them; and then he held them gently

between his own" (III, 270). Limited strength but limitless love oppose the appeal of absolute tyrannical power as Sam molds Frodo's hands into a gesture of prayer and offers what service he can.

This symbolic hand action dramatizes an irony in the theme of evil as divisive of the individual. For here where Sauron once divided his power to pour most of his strength into the Ring, personality is reforged. No longer fragmented, Gollum has destroyed his better self, Sméagol, to become one creature focused in lust for his "Precious," and Frodo has almost lost himself to the Ring. But as his master moves toward imitation of Gollum, Sam becomes Frodo's "Sméagol." Because of Sam the Ring-bearer goes to the Cracks of Doom potentially a whole person, capable of good as well as evil.

Hands to Tolkien are expressive: their voluntary actions embody morality, their involuntary actions betray emotion. Trembling hands reveal Boromir's desire for the Ring to Frodo (I, 516), Eowyn's love to Aragorn (II, 162), and Gandalf's fear to Pippin (III, 102). The true nature of fair-seeming Saruman, once greatest of the wise but now tool and would-be rival to Sauron, is revealed not by words or gestures but by hand symbols. Because of the enchanting power of Saruman's voice, even Gandalf does not recognize him as an enemy until almost too late, when one small detail suggests his hidden evil: "He wore a ring on his finger" (I, 338). Théoden, warned by Gandalf, resists Saruman's spell and names the fallen wizard for what he is: "You hold out your hand to me, and I perceive only a finger of the claw of Mordor" (II, 237). Gandalf exposes Saruman and his symbols with him. Before him, Saruman's Pillar of the White Hand gives up its true colors: "Gandalf rode to the great pillar of the Hand, and passed it. . . . The Hand appeared no longer white. It was stained as with dried blood; and looking closer they perceived that its nails were red" (II, 205). The emblem of Saruman, a small white hand in the centre of a black field (II, 20),

ironically suggests to us the limitations of his challenge to the Black Hand whose darkness encircles him.

Even more interestingly, Frodo's hands symbolically confirm his spiritual degeneration under the Ring's influence, not just because he loses the Ring finger, but because he changes the Ring finger. Though rings are worn on other fingers, they most commonly appear on the third finger of the left hand, partly because this is a fairly protected position and partly because the ancients believed that this finger contained a vein coming directly from the heart. When Frodo first puts on the Ring at Weathertop, he naturally puts it on his left hand (I, 263); when Sam puts on the Ring at Cirith Ungol, he also wears it on his left hand (II, 436). But when Frodo finally claims the Ruling Ring for himself, he puts it on the right hand (III, 282), which signifies power, independence, and authority, rather than on the left, which signifies dependence or subjection to authority.⁷ For Frodo the Quest begins as he thinks more of the needs of others than of his own helplessness; for him it ends as he thinks less of the needs of others than of power for himself.

Frodo's initial success and ultimate failure in actively opposing the Shadow are presented in terms of hands. Sinister hand images prepare for the encounter with the Barrow-wight. Tom Bombadil tells the hobbits, who do not fully comprehend the evil they must face, of a time when "a shadow came out of dark places far away, and . . . Barrow-wights walked in the hollow places with a clink of rings on cold fingers" (I, 181). His warning to avoid the Barrow-downs is reinforced upon their arrival by a single standing stone "shapeless and yet significant: like a landmark, or a guarding finger, or more like a warning" (I, 190). To the frightened hobbits the Barrow-wight appears only a dark shadowy shape, eyes that seem to come from a distance, and a grip stronger than iron, cold as death (I, 193). Though his icy hand hurts Frodo less seriously than the "dart of poisoned ice" from another of the Undead at

Weather-top, to resist the Barrow-wight's incantation requires courage:

Cold be hand and heart and bone,
and cold be sleep under stone . . .
till the dark lord lift his hand
over dead sea and withered land. (I, 195)

Under pressure, Frodo shows himself fitted for the Quest he has yet to accept fully by making two important decisions: not to abandon his friends by putting on the Ring to escape invisible among the shadows, and to fight. He overcomes first himself, then all of his enemy that is finally made visible — “a long arm [that] was groping, walking on its fingers toward Sam” (I, 195). Frodo severs his enemy's hand.

Frodo's final encounter with evil at the Cracks of Doom is in many ways a reversal of this encounter on the Barrow-downs. The hobbit who has crawled through the ash heaps of Mordor and the Mere of Dead Faces has learned fully how great is the need to oppose Sauron; he also knows fully the temptation of the Ring and the value of his faithful Sam. Yet he no longer fights temptation, no longer puts friend before himself, but puts on the Ring. Frodo is defeated by his enemies: himself, the Black Hand, and Gollum. His enemy severs the Ring finger from his hand. After Morgoth there was Sauron; after Sauron there might have been Frodo, had it not been for Gollum.

Tolkien uses hand images to place Frodo's achievement as Ring-bearer and Ring-wearer into historical perspective. As Feanor put the light of the Two Trees of Valinor into the Silmarilli in the First Age, so Sauron put his power into the One Ring in the Second Age;⁸ as Morgoth captured the Silmarilli, so Sauron brought the Rings of Power under his control. Beren, with Luthien's help, wrested a Silmaril from Morgoth, breaking the power of Thangorodrim; Frodo, with Sam's help, kept the Ring from Sauron, breaking the power of Mordor. Tolkien reinforces the parallel by having Sam point out that since the light in their star-glass comes

from that very Silmaril, the hobbits "are in the same tale still" (II, 408) and by having Sam associate maimed Frodo with maimed Beren: "What a tale we have been in, Mr. Frodo. . . . I wish I could hear it told! Do you think they'll say: *Now comes the story of Nine-fingered Frodo and the Ring of Doom?* And then everyone will hush, like we did, when . . . they told us the tale of Beren One-hand and the Great Jewel" (III, 281).

The Great Jewel and the Ruling Ring are roughly analogous, but how similar are Beren and Frodo? Though Beren battled a spider such as Shelob (II, 422), and though his hand was cut off sometime during his fight against the Enemy, we do not know how he came to be maimed. Because he was for a time captive in the dungeons of Sauron (I, 260) and because Sauron tortured the hands of Gollum when he was prisoner in Morder (I, 91; II, 282), we may infer that Beren lost his hand in the struggle against Sauron. If so, Beren and Frodo are unlike as well as like, for Beren was maimed because he resisted pressure, Frodo because he gave in to it. Frodo's wound itself makes us think of Sauron⁹ rather than of Beren: there are also only four fingers on the Black Hand (II, 315), for Isildur cut off the finger of the Enemy to obtain the Ring which became his bane. Hand images remind us that as Ring-bearer, Frodo like Beren represents what we should choose to be; as Ring-wearer, Frodo like Sauron represents what we must not choose to be.

Gollum in the Third Age performs the service of Isildur in the Second, but the repetitiveness of history conceals some cause for hope. At the end of the Second Age Isildur claims the Ring instead of destroying it, taking it as were-gild though it burns his hand with a pain that will not leave. Later, when orcs beset him near the Anduin, he puts on the Ring and plunges into the river in a desperate attempt to escape; the Ring treacherously slides off his finger as he swims, exposing him to the orcs. In the Third Age, when orcs seeking the Ring-bearer beset the hobbits near the

Anduin, Frodo likewise put on the Ring to slip away. But where Isildur puts the Ring on to save his own life, Frodo does so in order to spare his friends the death awaiting them if they accompany him into Mordor. Proof of this purpose comes almost at once: despite his desire to escape all company, Frodo will not steal away at the cost of Sam's life.

Guessing Frodo's plan, Sam seeks to join his master; when he sees an apparently empty boat slide from shore he struggles to swim to it — and goes under. The deep, swift water takes him, but “just in time” Frodo grasps Sam by the hair. Frodo dares not miss his catch: he would naturally use his right hand to reach for Sam, so the hand he extends to pull his friend aboard would be his left, since he does not let go of Sam's hair (I, 525). The Ring, which has a will of its own, because it wanted to get back to its master (I, 87) betrayed Isildur by slipping from his hand, but whatever its wish, the Ring has no chance to slip from Frodo's fingers as it did from Isildur's;¹⁰ Sam holds his master's hand far too tightly, saving the Ring for Frodo and saving Frodo from the Ring by bringing out the best in him. Frodo does not remove the Ring till they regain the shore, yet the terrible pressure of evil felt only minutes earlier when he put on the Ring at Amon Hen does not trouble him while his mind is too full of concern for his friend to admit fear. Frodo's unseen hand literally saves Sam's life, but symbolically Sam, by holding on to hope for which there is no visible evidence, serves his master as he does throughout the Quest. In such actions Tolkien shows us possibilities for hope in the Fourth Age: good will be served not only by the hands of the great, but also by small hands doing small services which matter greatly. In saying that “such is oft the course of deeds that move the wheels of the world: small hands do them because they must, while the eyes of the great are elsewhere” (I, 353), Elrond uses hands as *synecdoche*. Tolkien turns a figure of speech into fact.

One of Tolkien's critics complains that "imagery [of spiritual power] sometimes substitutes for demonstration of that power,"¹¹ but in *The Lord of the Rings* that imagery of hands is most often the action of hands — description is demonstration. In the trilogy as a whole the Ring focuses the action; in the individual scenes hands focus attention. Tolkien's literary technique is somewhat cinematic. As though using a camera to compose his scenes, Tolkien at moments of emotional intensity zooms in for a close-up of a revealing movement, frequently of the hand. Gollum's hand for example, acts out the conflict within him: "Each time that the second thought spoke, Gollum's long hand crept out slowly, pawing towards Frodo, and then was drawn back with a jerk as Smeagol spoke again. Finally both arms, with long fingers flexed and twitching, clawed towards his neck" (II, 305). Hands tell us what the character feels, but, curiously, the feeling is more the character's emotion than his sense of touch: our impression is usually *of* hands rather than *through* them. Tolkien uses gesture as a kind of visual shorthand.

Concentration on hands enables Tolkien to condense what nevertheless remains a long work. The close-up technique permits him to substitute significant detail for elaboration of an emotional state; repetition of that significant detail abbreviates even more. Two basic gestures appear frequently: Frodo's hand moving toward and away from the Ring, and Sam's hand comforting Frodo. As the power of the Ring over Frodo increases, his torment and need for comfort increase correspondingly; thus with each repetition the import of the gesture grows. Such repetition is usefully discreet, sparing us increasingly embarrassing descriptions of the constant love and growing concern Sam expresses again and again by taking Frodo's hand, but for incremental repetition to be effective rather than monotonous¹² the reader must contribute his awareness of added import to his consciousness of repetition. Tolkien prefers to suggest rather than spell out: he invites his readers to participate

in the imaginative act of sub-creation by his use of representative actions as well as by his use of generalized language.¹³

This demand for creative reading tends to make Tolkien's use of hand images seem less impressive than it really is. Many readers, feeling that images to be significant must be poetic rather than pictorial, look for metaphors and overlook gestures, though actions which we visualize are as much a part of the symbolic pattern of the trilogy as metaphors and similes which we apprehend intellectually. The significance of an image, however, does not depend upon its being visually striking. Though the image of Denethor's hands withering in flame (III, 159) is considerably more vivid than the image of Gandalf's upturned hands "filled with light as a cup is with water" (II, 132), the latter is more suggestive: the vision of Denethor's tormented hands merely epitomizes our awareness, but the vision of Gandalf's hands in repose expands our consciousness — that Gandalf cups sunlight in his palms as Galadriel catches starlight in her basin invites us to compare the nature and extent of their powers and, incidentally, hints that Gandalf too possesses one of the Great Rings. The gestures which convey Frodo's conflict and Sam's concern because they are repeated so often become less striking but more significant. Tolkien uses both poetic and pictorial imagery, and the reader who can respond creatively to both will find that hand images have many uses: to differentiate characters, to further plot, to provide information, to betray emotion, to establish mood, to embody morality, to universalize.

In thinking back over *The Lord of the Rings* we find that Tolkien has given many of the good characters some recurrent hand gesture which suggests their part in the action: we remember Frodo as reaching toward and away from the Ring, Sam as comforting Frodo, Aragorn as healing, Gandalf as raising his staff, Legolas as bending his bow, Fimli as brandishing his axe. We may not remember any hand gestures repeated by the "bad" characters except

Gollum's fingers twitching toward his Precious: though Sauron and Saruman are both symbolized by hand images, since they choose to rule rather than serve we see less of their hands working than of their minds at work directing the hands of others; hand images with them tend to be emblems rather than actions. The recurrent gestures of the three hobbits who determine the destiny of Middle-earth recall not only their previous actions but those of other characters faced with the same choice. Frodo's characteristic gesture, which reveals his inner struggle between selfishness and unselfishness, calls to mind the struggle of Gandalf, Aragorn, Galadriel, and Faramir, who also must refuse the temptation to take the Ring. Sam's characteristic gesture, which reveals his loving selflessness, calls to mind the selflessness of Gandalf, Aragorn, Merry, and Pippin, who also choose to serve others. Gollum's characteristic gesture, which reveals the Ring's power to corrode the spirit, calls to mind the desire to possess the Ring of those whose good we see corrupted, like Boromir and Saruman, and of those we have never seen as good, like Sauron and his servants. Hands, the instruments of body and spirit, by *synecdoche* suggest the whole person; the action of hands by a larger *synecdoche* suggests the action of the whole trilogy.

NOTES

- ¹Gracia Fay Ellwood, *Good News from Tolkien's Middle Earth* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W. B. Eerdmans, 1970), p. 123. Ellwood does not explore this, however, but merely lists four examples, in all of which hands have negative associations.
- ²For a discussion of the symbolism of the Ring see Robley Evans, *J. R. R. Tolkien, Writers for the Seventies* (New York: Paper Back Library, 1972), pp. 48-56.
- ³All references to *The Lord of the Rings* will be given by volume and page number of the Ballantine edition (New York, 1965). Volume I is *The Fellowship of the Ring*; Volume II, *The Two Towers*; and Volume III, *The Return of the King*.
- ⁴At the siege of Gondor Gandalf is described as riding with "a light starting from his upraised hand" (III, 114), but whether the light is from his hand itself, a staff or sword he carries, or Narya, the Ring of Fire, is not clear.

- ⁵The appendix tells us that the ring of Barahir, heirloom of House of Isildur (III, 400-401), was given by Elrond to Aragorn when he became twenty (III, 421), but this ring is never mentioned in the account of the War of the Ring.
- ⁶Charles Williams, *The Greater Trumps* (New York: Farrar and Straus, 1962), p. 231.
- ⁷William Jones, *Finger-Ring Lore* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1877), p. 291.
- ⁸For an excellent discussion of the pattern of history in *The Lord of the Rings* see David M. Miller, "The Moral Universe of J. R. R. Tolkien," *Mankato State College Studies*, II (February 1967), 51-62.
- ⁹Tracing Christ images throughout the trilogy, Elwood finds the wounded hand strongest of all, but to say that a missing finger is equivalent to Christ's wounds and that "Sauron and Frodo share the stigmata" (p. 127) is perversely to confuse stigma and stigmata — Sauron is scarcely a Christ figure.
- ¹⁰Even if Frodo had tried to snatch Sam from the current with his left hand, the Ring still would have small opportunity to slip off, since Frodo's grip remains locked on Sam's curls.
- ¹¹Patricia Meyer Spacks, "Power and Meaning in *The Lord of the Rings*," in *Tolkien and the Critics*, eds. Neil D. Isaacs and Rose A. Zimbaro (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), p. 98.
- ¹²Mark Roberts ("Adventure in English," *Essays in Criticism*, VI, 1956, 456), though referring to verbal tags rather than repeated gestures, objects to such stylization: "A certain kind of subject is being dealt with; the writing is therefore directed toward the evocation of a specific 'stock response' with a mechanical insistence and lack of subtlety that is embarrassing." But see also Burton Raffell, "The Lord of the Rings as Literature," in *Tolkien and the Critics*, pp. 219-28.
- ¹³Literature is "at once more universal and more poignantly particular. If it speaks of *bread* or *wine* or *stone* or *tree*, it appeals to the whole of these things, to their ideas; yet each hearer will give to them a particular personal embodiment in his imagination." "Tree and Leaf," in *The Tolkien Reader* (New York: Ballantine, 1966), p. 80.