Mythopoeic Society MYTHLORE A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature

Volume 42
Number 1

Article 5

October 2023

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Online MidSummer Seminar 2025
More Perilous and Fair: Women and Gender in Mythopoeic Fantasy
August 2-5, 2024

Via Zoom and Discord

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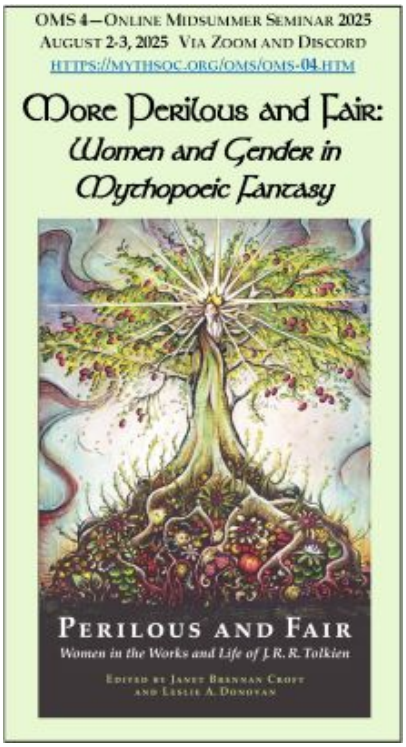

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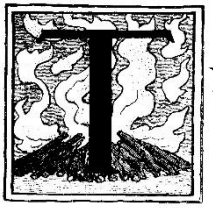
Abstract

Despite being one of the earliest Middle-earth texts and a central component of the legendarium, J.R.R. Tolkien's *Fall of Gondolin* has received far less attention than the tale deserves. Building upon the works of David Greenman, Bruce Alexander, and Austin Freeman and their studies comparing *The Fall of Gondolin* to Virgil's *Aeneid* as well as Tom Shippey's monograph, *The Road to Middle-earth*, this article seeks to expand current scholarship surrounding *The Fall of Gondolin* by the examination of Exodus, as both a Medieval and religious text, as a potential source for the narrative structure, characters, and themes found in Tolkien's *Fall of Gondolin*.

Additional Keywords

Tolkien; Fall of Gondolin; Gondolin; Exodus; Pride; Sin; Christianity; Catholicism; Aeneid; Virgil; Tuor; Turgon; Moses; Bible. Exodus; Exodus (Medieval poem); Moses (Biblical character); Pride; Tolkien, J.R.R.—Characters—Tuor; Tolkien, J.R.R.—Characters—Turgon; Tolkien, J.R.R.—Settings—Gondolin; Tolkien, J.R.R. The Fall of Gondolin; Vergil. Aeneid



Through Fire and Water: The Exodus of the Gondothlim

Ethan Danner

In November of 1916 when J.R.R. Tolkien returned to England from the war in France, he began work on a new project. Haunted by images of death and destruction manufactured by the Battle of the Somme and wracked with grief from the loss of two dear friends, Tolkien departed from the sky myth fantasies of Valinor and the Lonely Isle. He embarked on the exploration of Middle-earth, a project never quite finished nor fully discovered by the time of his passing in 1973. Within his *Book of Lost Tales*, *The Fall of Gondolin*, "the first real story of this imaginary world" (Tolkien, *Letters* 215, #163), Tolkien set the standard for Middle-earth and laid the foundations for the "moral parameters of [his] world, enshrining aspects of good and evil in faëry races and demiurgic beings […] locked in perpetual conflict" (Garth 214). Although it was presented to a relatively small audience in a public reading at the Exeter College Essay Club in early March 1920 (Scull and Hammond, *Chronology* 118-119), fans of Tolkien's wildly popular *Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings* would not see this veiled foundation until Christopher Tolkien's 1977 release of *The Silmarillion*. With *The Silmarillion*, Christopher Tolkien began his four-decade saga as literary executor for his late father's estate, a task which culminated in his final contribution: the 2018 publication of the standalone edition of *The Fall of Gondolin*. Present at the 1917 outset and 2018 conclusion of the century-long literary epoch of the two Tolkiens' journeys through Middle-earth, *The Fall of Gondolin* stands as a central text and foundational pillar to the Middle-earth tales which follow its early inception.

As a central text and foundational pillar for Middle-earth, *The Fall of Gondolin* provides readers with a microcosm to view the structure of Middle-earth as well as fuel our understanding of the broader legendarium and the academic interest therein. While plenty of critics have explored the themes, characters, symbols, motifs, and textual interconnections of Tolkien's work, most scholars choose to view Middle-earth through the kaleidoscopic lens of sources upon which this fiction landscape is built: biography, religion, classical and medieval texts, mythology, geography, and history. Few stones have been left unturned in the quest to uncover Tolkien's sources and find their place in the construction of Middle-earth. Yet, one text and its medieval adaptation has

remained rather elusive to Tolkien scholars and fans, pulling double-duty as a religious and medieval source for *The Fall of Gondolin*—Exodus.

In his article "Christian Traditions in the Old English *Exodus*," James W. Earl criticizes E.B. Irving, Jr. 's 1953 edition of the poem, citing Irving's inability to understand the poem and the embedded exegetical history—evidenced by Irving's edits and emendations. However, in a quasi-defense of Irving, Earl does allude to the poem's contentious academic history, noting that "the only critical judgment concerning the Old English *Exodus* which has not been debated is that it is an extraordinarily difficult poem" (541). The Old English *Exodus* (OE *Exodus*), while "easily the most inventive," also remains the most "challenging response" to the biblical book from which it draws its name and material (Godden 217). Composed and compiled in the Junius manuscript sometime near the end of the 10th century, the OE *Exodus* contains 590 lines of alliterative verse retelling the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters (after the tenth plague to the crossing at the Red Sea) of its biblical source in the style of the heroic epic—comparable to *Beowulf*. Rather than portraying them as destitute refugees, the *Exodus* poet shrouds the Israelites in martial imagery as warriors and sea faring voyagers. Earl justifies this stylistic choice with the assertion that "the poet has simply compressed the events of the entire exodus into the episode of the crossing of the sea" (557). By extension, the poem works as a roadmap to trace the allegorical tradition and medieval exegesis of the Old Testament.

Tolkien's Catholic background makes it impossible to pinpoint the moment he became acquainted with the biblical Exodus. However, his first encounter with the OE *Exodus*, a text contemporary with *Beowulf*, likely occurred when he was a student at Oxford, in 1913 (or shortly thereafter), the start to a lifelong relationship with the poem (Scull and Hammond, *Chronology* 46). Lecturing at Oxford, Tolkien taught the text in no less than fifteen terms between October 1926 and April 1957 with his two-part essay "Sigelwara Land" (1932 and 1934) published in the intervening years (*Chronology* 147-552 *passim*). "Sigelwara Land" takes issue with the conventional translation of *sigelwara*, in the OE *Exodus*, but unlike his universally renowned lecture and essay *Beowulf: The Monster and the Critics* (1937), "Sigelwara Land" has failed to achieve the same reputation due in part to its subject-matter and its contentious conclusion. Fortunately, Tom Shippey rescues "Sigelwara Land" from obscurity by using the paper in his own scholarship as the source for several Middle-earth articles discussed in more detail further in this study. Still, in October 1932 Tolkien did express interest in completing his own edition of *Exodus* after a treatment of *Beowulf* (Scull and Hammond, *Reader's Guide* 891); however, the closest Tolkien came to such a publication appeared in a copy of *Exodus* handed out to the January 1957 course students. This copy included his own emendations to the text (Scull and Hammond, *Chronology* 527-528). Like many of his other texts, the

Exodus edition received a posthumous publication in 1982 with former student Joan Turville-Peter as editor. Though filled with invaluable notes from lectures given in the 1930s and 1940s, the limited publication of 3,000 printed copies with no reprints leaves Tolkien's *The Old English Exodus* as an inaccessible text unable to be used for consideration here (Holford). At the end of all things, one question remains: which version of Exodus takes precedence? *The Fall of Gondolin* and the legendarium as a whole borrows much from the larger allegorical traditions in the OE *Exodus*, but the OE *Exodus* fails to cover the substantial ground of the biblical Exodus in detailing Moses's background and development—a source for Tuor's own early development. Therefore, a synthesized approach is most appropriate. One text makes up for the other as both combine to fill the gaps left by three separate works taking an "Aeneidic" approach to the text over three decades—by David Greenman (1992), Alexander M. Bruce (2012), and Austin Freeman (2021)—without contradicting their scholarship.

Despite *The Fall of Gondolin*'s status as the groundbreaking Middle-earth text—its moral and structural foundation—and as a component of *The Silmarillion*'s "Great Tales" triumvirate, *The Fall of Gondolin* falls through the cracks as the tale least debated among the critics. Christina Scull and Wayne Hammond's epic bibliographic tome *The J.R.R. Tolkien Companion and Guide* dedications two sections to *The Fall of Gondolin* and its subject matter: "Of Tuor and His Coming to Gondolin" and "Of Tuor and the Fall of Gondolin"—"The Last Version" (LV) and "The Original Tale" (OT) in the 2018 standalone edition of the text. However, unlike the "*Beren and Lúthien*" and "Túrin Turambar" sections, *The Fall of Gondolin* pair contain no subsections dedicated to academic criticism. Likewise, Michael D.C. Drout's *J.R.R. Tolkien Encyclopedia: Scholarship and Critical Assessment*, another bibliographic text of epic proportion, has no entries on Tuor, Turgon, Idril, or Maeglin though it does for Beren, Lúthien, and Túrin. As both resources were published before the 2018 standalone volume (2017 and 2007 respectively), and three of the five articles to be discussed were not published until after 2007, the bibliographic resources suffered not from a lack of care, but from a lack of material.

Of the five individual articles mentioned, these split roughly into two categories: overall significance of the text, and source criticism, this being dominated by the "Aeneidic" approach. In the first category, Lisa Anne Mende's early study "Gondolin, Minas Tirith, and Eucatastrophe" places Gondolin's destruction in a pivotal position as the prequel to Minas Tirith's salvation; thus, *The Lord of the Rings* works as the resolution to *The Silmarillion* (37). As reinforcement to the John Garth quote cited earlier, Michael P. Keaton in "Fairies at War: *The Fall of Gondolin* as Cornerstone of Middle-earth" claims that *The Fall of Gondolin* "[provides] unifying elements for Tolkien's other myths" (25). Keaton also uses the biographic research of Garth and Janet Brennan Croft to

argue for Tolkien's war experience as a source for *The Fall of Gondolin* (25, 40-41). The market for source criticism on *The Fall of Gondolin* was cornered by David Greenman, Alexander M. Bruce, and Austin Freeman, who, in separate articles spanning three decades, looked to Virgil's *Aeneid* as a primary source for the early Middle-earth text. David Greenman leads the way with "Aeneidic and Odysscan Patterns of Escape and Return in Tolkien's *The Fall of Gondolin* and *The Return of the King*" as he piggybacks off of Joseph Campbell and Northrop Frye to compare *The Fall of Gondolin* and *The Aeneid* as archetypal "Escape Quests" (4). In "The Fall of Gondolin and the Fall of Troy: Tolkien and Book II of *The Aeneid*," Alexander M. Bruce picks up Greenman's thread but pulls the camera back to highlight the differences between the two texts as they illuminate the "German" and Christian themes which overlay the Roman narrative (104). Finally, Austin Freeman, in an approach of growing popularity, pushes for a synthesized source reading of *The Fall of Gondolin* with "Pietas and the Fall of the City: A Neglected Virgilian Influence on Middle-earth's Chief Virtue":

> Indeed, *pietas* ('piety') is more consonant with Tolkien's thought than that of the Greek *kleos* ('glory') or the equivalent Northern virtue of the 'indomitable will' *on its own*. In the stories of the attacks on Gondolin and Minas Tirith, Tolkien downplays personal glory for its own sake in favor of glory gained through sacrifices for others, as Virgil does. In fact, Tolkien blends *pietas*, the indomitable will, and Christian *pistis* ('faith/trust') […]. The resulting virtue of *estel* is Tolkien's way of melding all of his influences into one defining virtue, at once Classical, English, and Christian. (131, emphasis in original)

While Freeman's assertions are quite defensible and his synthesized methodology should be an ideal for the Tolkien academic community, he (like Greenman and Bruce) is naturally selective in his use of *The Fall of Gondolin*. As the only section which depicts the siege and destruction of the city, the Aeneidic scholarship relies heavily on the OT version from 1917. The Aeneidic scholarship, while excellent in its own right, does not paint a complete picture of *The Fall of Gondolin* and its sources. These studies leave a gap which can be conveniently filled by the OE *Exodus* and its biblical origin.

Mentioned earlier, Tom Shippey leads the way in regard to the little academic inquiry comparing Tolkien and the OE *Exodus*. With an academic background nearly identical to Tolkien's, the fact that Shippey picks up on the nomenclature drawn from the difficult medieval text comes as no surprise. In his "Look at *Exodus* and *Finn and Hengest*," Shippey notes that "warg," as it first appears in *The Hobbit*, derives from Tolkien's translation of *wyrgdon/wyrgan* as originally found in the OE *Exodus* (*Roots and Branches* 177). *The Road to Middle-earth* explores two more pertinent examples with particular significance to early

Silmarillion texts; "Silmaril" has roots in *sigel/sigil/sigle* as various Old English forms of "sun jewel" while the "Balrogs," "the most dire of all those monsters which Melko devised against Gondolin" (Tolkien, *Fall of Gondolin* 69), are an early manifestation of Tolkien's contention with *sigelwara* (Shippey, *Road to Middle-earth* 42). Without further elucidation, Shippey leaves a tasty crumb at the *Exodus* trailhead he exposed: "Tolkien valued *Exodus* especially as an example of Christian material treated in an old-fashioned heroic style: his own fiction being of a similar mixture but the other way round" (*Road* 344-345).

Though not with the full-bodied study one might hope for, L.J. Swain travels further down the *Exodus* path. In his entry on *Exodus* in Drout's *Encyclopedia*, Swain reiterates the previous Shippey research before the addition of substantial meat to the Tolkien-*Exodus* connection—the shared theme of hopelessness found in *Exodus* and *The Lord of the Rings*. For these instances of hopelessness, Swain establishes a set of shared qualifiers to emphasize the comparison. "Good" armies are caught between a "bad" army and some sort of natural barrier until they are saved by a divine-sent figure, powerful and martial, who opens the way to victory (Swain 181). With the slightest shift in focus on the Tolkien end of Swain's comparison, one can easily see how this checklist could be applied any number of Tolkien's fictional sieges and battles, the sack of Gondolin in particular. Mende's earlier association of Gondolin and Minas Tirith sets the two up as counter points on either end of the Middle-earth chronology. Here, the Gondothlim replace the soldiers of Gondor as the "good" force, Morgoth's orcs for those of Sauron's horde, the Echoriad instead of the White Mountains, and Tuor, envoy of the quasi angel-god Ulmo, appears for Gandalf. Yet here we again fall into the same trap of highlighting the battle sequence of *The Fall of Gondolin* with no account for the prior narrative, in line with the (valid but limited) methodology of Aeneidic comparison. The camera must be pulled back further to have the fullest understanding of Tuor's narrative and *The Fall of Gondolin*.

Greenman argues that *The Fall of Gondolin* and *The Aeneid* follow similar patterns and plot points as "Escape" quests. Greenman's examples are solid, and any attempt to discredit his work would be a fruitless venture. However, his work only focuses on the battle sequence of the Gondolin episode and does not account for the entirety of Tuor's narrative nor the larger context of *The Silmarillion*. Likewise, if we only consider the OE *Exodus* as source for *The Fall of Gondolin*, much material in regard to Moses's backstory and development is lost. Therefore, the biblical Exodus and OE *Exodus* synthetization mentioned before allows one version of the story to cover for the pitfalls of the other. So, if we sideline "Escape" for being too narrow, then naturally, something else should take its place. The easy temptation would be to slot in Joseph Campbell and the Hero's Quest. However, while some of his conclusions will prove useful further

in this study, his general theory is too broad and universally applicable to give a connection between Exodus and *The Fall of Gondolin* any significant weight.

For purposes of this study, a more specific and particular archetype might be a better foundation for the Exodus/*Fall of Gondolin* connection: the Irish sea-based heroic quests to the "otherworld"—steeped in medieval exegesis tradition—called Immram. In her study of Tolkien's usage of the Immram in *Roverandom*, Kris Swank provides a basic outline which these quest types follow: a crime which results in exile must be redeemed on a voyage sanctioned by a magical figure (76-77). The greatest opponent to such a reading is the persistence of the sea element and obvious voyage. Fortunately, Earl comes to the rescue again with his snapshot mentions of medieval exegetical tradition and its role in the composition of the OE *Exodus*. The use of ships and sailor imagery in the OE *Exodus* is explained away as an allegorical construction. Built on interpretation of Noah's ark, the allegorical tradition states that ships and boats represent the church (561-562); therefore, a ship on a voyage in an Immram quest may represent the needed redemption of a people as well as an individual "representative" character. Still, those who would view the placement of the Immram in this study as a usurpation of Greenman and the well-established Virgilian connection might be pacified by the knowledge that, beyond its clear connection to the medieval tradition, the Immram could potentially have roots in Virgil's *Aeneid* (Eldevik 1) (although this theory is hotly debated). Regardless, Swank's outline supplies much of the structure for this study going forward.

In the case of Moses, the crime which results in his exile is (in theory) easy to identify. One day he witnesses an Egyptian overseer abusing his Israelite charges, so Moses "looked this way and that, and seeing no one, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand" (Exodus 2.12).[1] Unfortunately, Moses overestimates his discretion, and "When Pharaoh heard of [the murder], he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from Pharaoh and stayed in the land of Midian" (Exodus 2.15). The equation is simple: Moses commits the crime of murder and, as punishment, lives in exile in Midian. Tuor, on the other hand, does not make things so straight-forward. In his corresponding action, "Tuor's heart was kindled with the fire of battle, and he would not flee, but boy as he was he wielded the ax as his father before him, and for long he stood his ground and slew many that assailed him" until the Orcs and Easterlings captured him, and he becomes their thrall (Tolkien, *The Fall of Gondolin* 148). Upon his escape, Tuor "came back at last to the caves of Androth and dwelt there alone. And for four years he was an outlaw in the land of his fathers, grim and solitary" (149). For Tuor, the solitude in the empty lands of the kingdom which had once been, is certainly an exile, yet few few would call Tuor's "heroic" act of defiance and

[1] The *English Standard Version* will be used for Bible quotations.

defense a crime. To adequately justify the inclusion of Tuor, we must go beyond the actions and look to the motives, and we must also perform the minor substitution of sin for crime: moral law for civil law. Now, the core fault of Tuor and Moses can be laid bare and exposed for dissection: pride.

Tolkien's work, Jonathan Evans notes, "explores the tragic irony of noble characters' self-defeat through errors of judgment attributable to pride; characters in his fiction exemplify the theme of pride as excessive confidence, often accompanied by rash or self-centered behavior, usually with tragic consequences" (543). Pride is a central error in Tolkien's legendarium, as important to the history of Middle-earth as it is to biblical history. The major falls of both texts come from pride—Morgoth and Lucifer followed by the Noldor and Man. Perhaps more germane to our discussion is a side-effect of pride: presumption. Tuor refuses to flee from insurmountable odds in a heated bout of excessive confidence and finds himself captured. He fights a foolhardy battle for none other than himself and the memory of a kingdom long lost and beyond his right to rule. Yet, Tuor is fortunate that his self-centered actions cost only time. In light of the replacement of sin for crime and the deeper look at pride as motivation, Moses, and his murder of the Egyptian, must be reexamined. Like Tuor, Moses professes to have a power which is never given to him. In murder, Moses proclaims himself some sort of God-king, master of life and death, deliverer of justice. But, when he approaches the Israelites, they rebuke him and reveal his vacuous title: "Who made you a prince and judge over us?" (Exodus 2.14). Thus, for their sins, Tuor and Moses are subject to exile. However, this time in exile cannot be seen as merely wasted years and punishment. Tuor and Moses, once loud, proud figures, are stripped down to nothing—blank canvases to be repainted. They become inverted images of the men they once were—from extreme pride to extreme humility. In this time, "it is a common theme […] for the hero to spend some time away from civilization and their fellow men. This is known as the period of withdrawal, a time when the hero builds his inner strength, prior to undertaking the great quest" (Harvey 127). The changed state of Tuor and Moses, though a change for the better, becomes the first obstacle they must overcome on their "sanctioned voyage."

While categorical distinctions of Ulmo and God as "magical figures" are debatable, I would instead like to turn to the justification and incorporation of the "voyage" qualifier. Here, like with the issue of Tuor's "crime," the cover of the issue must be removed to examine the gears and levers which power the machine. The concept of the voyage in the Immram tale is a byproduct of the shift in Old Testament exegesis from a historical reading of the Old Testament to an allegorical reading as theologians found themselves concerned about the impact on Christianized Vikings. The voyage and ship in the Immram quests are merely a continuation of the medieval tradition, a vessel for the theme of the

text: redemption. As stories of redemption and recovery, the narratives of Tuor and Moses fall in line with the Immram even if their gears and levers are hidden by a different cover.

More relevant to the comparison of *The Fall of Gondolin* and Exodus, to the comparison of Tuor and Moses, is the understanding of their changed states which occur during their time in exile. They are changed characters before their call to action; however, these changed statuses are not pressed or tested until their encounter with the "magical figure." Initially rejecting the call, Tuor and Moses are "bound in by the walls of childhood; the father and mother stand as threshold guardians, and the timorous soul, fearful of some punishment, fails to make the passage through the door and come to birth in the world without" (Campbell 52). Tuor and Moses are haunted by their past and cannot press forward. For both men, their expected childhood was stolen from them—Tuor as a young prince among men and Moses an Israelite subject under the lash of Pharaoh. So, when these two men fall, they revert back to an infantile state where all things are wonderfully new yet utterly terrifying. In their pride, they fail to live up to the expectations placed upon them and are punished with isolation and reflection. Fearful of further punishment, Tuor and Moses can do nothing but refuse the summons, and rather than become immediate heroes, they "[lose] the power of significant affirmative action and [become victims] to be saved" (Campbell 49). Only by shows of ultimate power do Ulmo and God convince their charges to step forward toward their destiny and rescue them from their inaction. Their road to redemption from a prideful fall begins with a step toward humility.

In the Immram tradition, the redemption of the hero is the center of the entire text, the foundation upon which the narrative is constructed. Likewise in *The Fall of Gondolin* and Exodus, though buried under style and metaphor, redemption is no less important, no less central than in the Irish archetype. In his essay on redemption in Tolkien, Joseph Pearce notes that "Tolkien shows the effect of redeeming grace through the development of his characters. Those who cooperate with the grace grow in virtue, becoming Christ-like; those who refuse to cooperate with the grace wither into pathetic parodies of the people they were meant to be" (562). Through their isolation in exile and their actions in the face of the awesome power of Turgon and Pharaoh, Tuor and Moses are able to find redemption for themselves. They become the true versions of the leaders they thought they were and pretended to be when their deviant pride led them to their fall, and their change is emphasized by the fall of those close to them. In his legendarium, "Tolkien has a pattern of created matched, parallel, or double individuals, a pattern that allows him not only to emphasize certain personality traits but also to suggest internal splits or negative potentially within his characters" (Burns 127). Opposed to Tuor and Moses stand Turgon and

Pharaoh, two men in established roles of leadership cemented by time and tradition who, despite the dire warnings of Ulmo and God (via Tuor and Moses), cannot overcome their own pride and thus fall, their destruction ultimate and final. Turgon and Pharaoh represent the men Tuor and Moses might have become without their redemption. Turgon and Pharaoh give us a glance into what would have become of these protagonists should their quests fail at the hands of their personal failure of character. Turgon and Pharaoh "deny the gift and defy the call to heroic self-sacrifice [and] diminish into grotesque shadows of their former selves" (Pearce 562). Caught in the collapse of a burning spire and crushed beneath the waves of a raging sea, Turgon and Pharaoh fail to sacrifice their power, to relinquish the perfect facade they thought they knew. They fail to let go of all they have built. They cling to a dying system and collapse with their system, choosing a final fate rather than let the power fall from their grasp. Turgon/Pharaoh and their power is rendered to nothing while Tuor and Moses lead their people forward to a new dawn, becoming the leaders they were born to be. Yet in their fall and redemption and subsequent rise to ultimate glory, we can see the grander scale and broader scene in which their stories are placed.

While the exodus story is a significant narrative, undoubtedly a central text in the history of Christianity on its own, the depths of the narrative cannot be fully understood unless viewed in its entire biblical context. In discussing the historical readings of Exodus and its corresponding exegetical tradition, Earl notes that "even the most general symbolic interpretations of the exodus story involves the idea of salvation […]. From earliest times, the exodus story has been interpreted as an allegory of man's journey from this world to the next, from the earthly 'land of bondage' to the Promised Land, from a state of sin to the salvation of heaven" (544). While Exodus is an essential piece in its own right, as a part of the larger tradition it is not *the* central text. Exodus works as both a foreshadowing prequel to the Gospel and as an allegory for its message. All of this tradition and history and allegorical significance is compressed into the 590 lines of the OE *Exodus*. Moses represents the common man who finds salvation through obedience where Pharaoh and the wicked come to ruin through disobedience. Likewise, in the reversed order, as Tuor submits to the will of the Valar vicariously through Ulmo he becomes lordlier and more central to the leadership of the Gondothlim while Turgon's lack of adherence leads to irrelevance, the destruction of his city, and the consumption of his power by Morgoth. Tuor's narrative in *The Fall of Gondolin* can be read as an allegory for the salvation of Noldor who, after their own prideful fall and banishment from Valinor, do not find the salvation they seek until Eärendil's sacrifice when he delivers the captured Silmaril to the Valar. Thus, the entire *Silmarillion*, with its thousands of years of history and war may be viewed as a second exodus story,

its own salvation an allegory to salvation of the Gospel. However, to argue that Tolkien's work is meant to be allegoric of essentially the entire biblical corpus and exegetic history goes beyond the scope of this study which merely seeks to establish Exodus (biblical and medieval) as an undeniable source for at least the narrative of Tuor and *The Fall of Gondolin* texts.

Trapped in a purgatory of uncertainty, his health in danger and the war which had already claimed the lives of two of his dearest friends still raging, the twenty-five-year-old Lieutenant J.R.R. Tolkien began construction on his fantasy world, Middle-earth, a land of mythic proportion in scope and scale. As its foundation, Tolkien placed *The Fall of Gondolin*, a rich amalgamation of his experience at the Somme, his Christian upbringing, and bountiful education in classical literature. As a text of medieval and religious significance, Exodus should not be considered least in importance to the formation of *The Fall of Gondolin* and its tale of Tuor and Turgon. Unfortunately, like the rest of *The Silmarillion*, *The Fall of Gondolin* is an incomplete account with its fullest rendering being the original text from 1917. The Tuor of 1951, more than thirty years later, never passes through the gates of Gondolin. Yet, though it is never given a proper "full" telling by a wiser Tolkien, *The Fall of Gondolin*, in comparison to the other "Great Tales" of *Beren and Lúthien* and *Túrin Turambar*, remained one of the most consistent through the years of editing and revision and rewriting—a significant fact for the niggling professor. With so few studies dedicated to readings of *The Fall of Gondolin*, this earliest narrative of Middle-earth remains a rich vein for exploration and study, much yet to be discovered and debated over. Likewise, the OE *Exodus* is another vein far from being fully tapped as it waits for a scholar to dig past the nomenclature of Shippey and Swain's theory of shared themes. However, as we delve deeper, we must remain vigilant lest we become antagonists to the spirit of J.R.R. Tolkien.

In his 1936 lecture on *Beowulf* to the British academy, Tolkien lambasted the critics for their failure to recognize the Old English epic poem as a work of art, something more than the mere history and language which formed its construction. His most effective attack comes from what is simply referred to as the "Tower Allegory" where he judges those who would tear down the tower to examine its stones to discover their origin without consideration for the view offered at the top ("*Beowulf*" 7-8). As scholars, fans, passing appreciators, or even opponents to the imaginative world of J.R.R. Tolkien, we substitute Middle-earth, its *Lord of the Rings* and *Silmarillion*, for *Beowulf* to build a tower of Tolkien and Middle-earth. Carefully, we take down the stones and examine each side, wondering which part of the earth it came from and its integrity to the tower. Decades of fighting over the location of the quarry from which they were mined have left many in the same place as the original scholars of *Beowulf*, failing to appreciate the view of the sea it offered.

The stone, which is *The Fall of Gondolin*, is a faceted piece with informants from classical, medieval, and religious texts. However, its view must not be forgotten: the story of a man seeking redemption and a city come to ruin.

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