

### Tom Hillman

#### Gollum's Blighted Repentance and What Bilbo Saw

In “a fleeting moment” upon the Stairs at Cirith Ungol, as Frodo and Sam slept, Gollum returned from Shelob’s Lair, looked upon his two companions and nearly repented of his plan to betray them. Sam, however, awakes unexpectedly, sees Gollum as “pawing” at Frodo rather than “caressing” him, and harshly rebukes him despite his soft answer. Stung by Sam’s pitiless distrust, Gollum withdraws into his evil self, and his last chance for redemption is gone “beyond recall.” (TT 4.viii.714). This paper will examine this scene, which Tolkien called “the most tragic moment of the Tale” (Letters, letter 246, p. 330), from two linked perspectives.

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