

# Too Deeply Hurt: Understanding Frodo's Decision to Depart

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"To encounter radical evil is to make one forever different from the trusting, 'normal' person who wraps the rightness of the social order around himself snugly, like a cloak of safety." – Jonathan Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam*

## Introduction

On the surface, the answer to the question "Why did Frodo leave Middle-earth?" seems simple: he was "wounded with knife, sting, and tooth, and a long burden" (Tolkien, 1993, p. 1026), which together had inflicted supernatural wounds beyond any power in Middle-earth to wholly remove. But perhaps supernatural wounds might find a cure in the supernatural realm. Such was the hope of Arwen, Elrond, and Gandalf; and so Frodo was offered passage to the Elvenhome in the West, beyond the sea:

If your hurts grieve you still and the memory of your burden is heavy, then you *may* pass into the West, until all your wounds and weariness are healed.

(Tolkien, 1993, pp. 1010-11, my emphasis.)

Yet it is important to note that even if his wounds continued to grieve him, Frodo also had the option of staying. The gift of passage over the sea was his "*if you then desire it*" (Tolkien, 1993, p. 1010, my emphases), an allowance, not a mandate. In focusing on the objective, supernatural nature of Frodo's wounds it is easy to overlook that his *response* to being irreparably wounded was very natural and very human, and a major source of his anguish. How he responded to his woundedness, rather than the wounds themselves, determined his fate. In this article I will consider the natural effects of traumatization upon Frodo and how the resultant progression of disheartenment led him to depart from Middle-earth.

## The Aftermath of Trauma: Memory, Pain, Discouragement

According to the American Psychiatric Association, an event (or series of events) is considered traumatic

to the person experiencing or witnessing it if it involves "actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others" and if "the person's response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror." (APA, 1994, pp. 427-28). In the wake of the trauma, the survivor typically experiences symptoms of intrusive recollections, numbing and dissociation, and hyperarousal that together comprise what was called "shell shock" in Tolkien's day (Herman, 1992, p. 20) and is now termed post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Frodo's post-Quest life followed a typical course for the aftermath of trauma: Initial surprise and relief at simply surviving are followed by the recurring intrusion of memories, emotions, even physical pains, associated with the trauma. The hope of returning to life as usual is replaced with the realization that one has been permanently changed by the trauma, that "there is no real going back" (Tolkien, 1993, p. 1026) to the old life, indeed, to the old self. (Matsakis, 1992, pp. 232, 235; Shay, 1994, p. 185.) This is particularly true of people who, like Frodo, have suffered repeated, chronic trauma: "Long after their liberation, people who have been subjected to coercive control bear the psychological scars of captivity." (Herman, 1992, p. 95.) Upon this realization that one has been deeply damaged in ways that will not simply go away, discouragement and depression set in.

We can see this pattern in Frodo's own experience. His first response to awakening when he had thought himself dead was to assure Sam with a laugh, "Yes, I am all right otherwise." (Tolkien, 1993, p. 988.) But in the weeks and months that followed the memories of his ordeals resurfaced and persisted, and Frodo grew increasingly troubled by them. (Tolkien, 1981, p. 327.)

## Anniversary Illnesses

Frodo's disquiet was intensified by anniversary illnesses in which he would mentally, emotionally, and physically relive the most traumatic experiences of his Quest. This phenomenon of recurring pain and

intrusive memory, often triggered by significant dates or other reminders of the traumatic event, is a central characteristic of post-traumatic distress. (APA, 1994, p. 428; Herman, 1992, p. 37.)

On each anniversary of his woundings at Weathertop and in Cirith Ungol, Frodo slipped into dissociative states in which “his eyes appeared not to see . . . things about him” (Tolkien, 1993, p. 1026) and “seemed to see things far away” (Tolkien, 1993, p. 1063). To Farmer Cotton, chancing upon Frodo during his first March thirteenth illness, Frodo “seemed half in a dream” as he lay on his bed clutching the white gem from Arwen. (Tolkien, 1993, p. 1062.)

These mental agonies were accompanied by the recurrence of physical pain in his wounds. “It is my shoulder,” explained Frodo in reply to Gandalf’s solicitous inquiry on the first October sixth after the Quest. “The wound aches, and the memory of darkness is heavy on me.” (Tolkien, 1993, p. 1026.) Even during the Quest, the pain of Frodo’s knife wound would be triggered whenever Ringwraiths were near: During the boat ride down the Anduin River, when one of the Wraiths flew overhead, “there was a deadly cold, like the memory of an old wound, in [Frodo’s] shoulder” (Tolkien, 1993, p. 407), and likewise at Minas Morgul, “The old wound throbbed with pain and a great chill spread towards Frodo’s heart.” (Tolkien, 1993, p. 733.)

Likewise, and also typical for a trauma survivor, other reminders of his past trials caused Frodo great discomfort. On top of the illness triggered by the anniversary date of his stabbing, simply approaching the Ford of Bruinen, where Frodo had narrowly escaped the pursuit of the Ringwraiths, disturbed Frodo enough that he “seemed loth to ride into the stream.” (Tolkien, 1993, p. 1026.) And when the company passed Weathertop some days later,

Frodo begged them to hasten, and he would not look towards the hill, but rode through its shadow with head bowed and cloak drawn close about him.

(Tolkien, 1993, p. 1026.)

### **Discouragement**

Apart from the anguish of physical and psychological pain, these illnesses disheartened Frodo, shadowing his expectation to simply get on with his life and put the past horrors behind him. (Tolkien, 1981, p. 329.) He found it more and more difficult to take heart in the fact that the dark days did pass, shifting his focus

instead to the fact that the dark days seemed determined to recur.

After his first anniversary illness, on October sixth, Shire Reckoning 1419,

the pain and unease had passed, and Frodo was merry again, as merry as if he did not remember the blackness of the day before.

(Tolkien, 1993, p. 1026.)

Yet an undercurrent of depression lingered; when he and his companions approached the Shire, Frodo remarked that going home felt “more like falling asleep again” (Tolkien, 1993, p. 1034), which suggests that doubt about his future had begun to settle into his heart. Still, there was the hope that the illness would not return.

That hope was dashed on March 20, 1420. From that point on, Frodo became increasingly withdrawn. Though “the fit passed” and Frodo “had recovered” (Tolkien, 1993, p. 1062), Frodo subsequently “took to a quiet life,” “dropp[ing] quietly out of all the doings of the Shire,” and habitually fingered the jewel which Arwen had given him to help alleviate the grief of his memories. (Tolkien, 1993, pp. 1063.) He seems to have given up on life that summer, yet his despondent moan to Sam in October 1420 that “I am wounded, wounded; it will never really heal” (Tolkien, 1993, p. 1063) reveals that even then, with his mind all but made up to depart, he had still been clinging to a thread of hope that the pain and memory would cease to return. Even so, it is again pointed out that Frodo recovered and “was quite himself the next day.” (Tolkien, 1993, p. 1063.) But by Frodo’s fourth illness, on March 13, 1421, the emphasis has shifted from the passing of the illness to its agony while it lasted; we are told that it was only “with a great effort” that Frodo concealed it from Sam (Tolkien, 1993, pp. 1063-64) and no mention is made of the recovery that followed.

As is typical of a trauma survivor (Hybels-Steer, 1995, p. 105; Matsakis, 1992, p. 136), the repeated assaults of traumatic memory and remembered pain caused Frodo to despair that he would ever “really heal.” (Tolkien, 1993, p. 1063.)

### **Saruman’s Last Stab**

Frodo’s distress was undoubtedly exacerbated by the memory of Saruman’s parting shot:

But do not expect me to wish you health and long life. You will have neither. But that is not my doing. I merely foretell.

(Tolkien, 1993, p. 1057.)

On the surface, this seems to have been but a foretelling that was borne out by later events. However, a closer analysis strongly suggests that it was actually Saruman's last act of vengeance, an attempt to destroy Frodo by planting seeds of doubt that would grow and choke off what little hope Frodo yet clung to.

Saruman was a deceiver. His powers of persuasion were most dramatically demonstrated in Gandalf's confrontation with him at Orthanc (Tolkien, 1993, pp. 601-607); but even after Gandalf had broken his staff, stripping him of power and position, Saruman's smooth speech remained a snare to the unwary. En route from Minas Tirith to Rivendell, when Gandalf learned that Treebeard, thinking him rendered harmless, had freed Saruman, Gandalf expressed his fear that

this snake had still one tooth left, I think. He had the poison of his voice, and I guess that he persuaded you, even you Treebeard, knowing the soft spot in your heart.

(Tolkien, 1993, p. 1016.)

Seen in this light, Saruman's claim to be "merely foretelling" seems distinctly disingenuous: Far more likely is that he perceived Frodo's unspoken fears and griefs as a point of weakness and shaped his deception accordingly.

Ironically it was Frodo himself who warned his fellow Hobbits against the power of Saruman's voice: "Do not believe him! *He has lost all power, save his voice* that can still daunt you and deceive you, if you let it." (Tolkien, 1993, p. 1056, my emphasis.) And yet what Frodo could see clearly with regard to others he was blind to regarding himself. Saruman, having failed to stab Frodo with his knife, resorted to stabbing with words that could not help but insinuate themselves into Frodo's vulnerable mind, haunting him and magnifying every memory and every pain into a portent of doom.

#### **"Unreasoning Self-reproach"**

For another torment was at work beneath the obvious burden of horrific memories and bodily pains. Tolkien wrote that Frodo suffered from "unreasoning self-reproach" for having claimed the Ring on Mount Doom: "he saw himself and all that he [had] done as a broken failure." (Tolkien, 1981, p. 328.) This phenomenon of "survivor guilt" is another symptom typical – "practically universal" (Herman, 1992, p. 53) – among trauma survivors.

His self-reproach would have been compounded when Frodo realized he had been permanently scarred with a temptation to desire the Ring and regret its destruction. "It is gone for ever," said Frodo in his March thirteenth delirium, "and now all is dark and empty." (Tolkien, 1993, p. 1062; 1981, p. 328.) Upon recovering from his illness Frodo was undoubtedly horrified with himself and, since this illness was pivotal to his ultimate decision to sail (Tolkien, 1981, p. 329), considered himself condemned: He had claimed the Ring and so had forfeited all hope of ever being free of the desire of it and, like Gollum, of ever finding peace in life again.

Yet the true judgment upon Frodo was one of grace, not condemnation. (Tolkien, 1981, p. 327.) Both Gandalf and Frodo expected that taking the Ring by force would break Frodo's mind and drive him mad (Tolkien, 1993, pp. 74, 972), but when the Ring *was* taken from him, quite forcibly at that, Frodo was "himself again; and in his eyes there was peace now, neither strain of will, nor madness, nor any fear. His burden was taken away." (Tolkien, 1993, p. 982.)

It is true that Frodo did not give up the Ring of his own accord, and because of this the part of him that was capable of desiring it remained unconquered, hence his temptation to yet desire it. (Tolkien, 1981, p. 328.) On the other hand, neither did Frodo fully will to yield to the Ring's power; a part of him, overpowered but apparently not destroyed by the Ring, still wanted to destroy it. Because his true will, beneath the overbearing force of the Ring, was to be rid of it, the destruction of the Ring was as the releasing of a burden to him. Of the Ring itself and its power Frodo was set free; but the scars which the Ring inflicted upon him remained, perhaps irrevocably. He was deeply scarred, but he would live.

In addition to his "failure" to cast away the Ring, Frodo also had to live with his "failure" to salvage Gollum's good side. As trauma specialist Judith Lewis Herman observes, witnessing any death, let alone the death of someone in whom one is emotionally invested, can provoke "especially severe" guilt feelings in a survivor. "To be spared oneself, in the knowledge that others have met a worse fate, creates a severe burden of conscience. Survivors of disaster and war are haunted by images of the dying whom they could not rescue." (Herman, 1992, 54.)

So rather than taking comfort in the fact that he had survived, Frodo quite probably felt that he did not deserve that grace: Not only had he been unable to “rescue” Gollum, his own survival had been bought at the price of Gollum’s fall and death. Furthermore, had Frodo immediately cast the Ring into the fire, Gollum might have been spared, perhaps to another chance to be turned to the good. Gollum died because Frodo failed. Such, at least, would be the reasoning of a mind tormented by self-recrimination.

### “Not For Me”

Yet another area in which Frodo appears to have felt the burden of unreasonable guilt was regarding his “failure” to preserve the Shire from harm. Frodo accepted the burden of bearing the Ring because he wanted to save the Shire:

I should like to save the Shire, if I could . . . I feel that as long as the Shire lies behind, safe and comfortable, I shall find wandering more bearable: I shall know that somewhere there is a firm foothold, even if my feet cannot stand there again.

(Tolkien, 1993, pp. 75-76.)

Seeing that the Shire had suffered harm in spite of his sacrifices would have been a terrible blow to Frodo, made worse by learning how his own insistence upon seeing Bilbo first, “whatever happens” (Tolkien, 1993, p. 1021), allowed Saruman opportunity to turn toward the Shire, get there ahead of the Rivendell-bound companions, and top Lotho’s petty tyranny with the worst of the destruction. (Tolkien, 1993, pp. 1050; 1056; 1132.)

Most telling are Frodo’s words to Sam in the Woody End. When Sam protested, “But I thought you were going to enjoy the Shire, too, for years and years,” Frodo replied, “So I thought too, once. But I have been too deeply hurt, Sam.” (Tolkien, 1993, p. 1067.) Too deeply hurt to keep living in the Shire? No. Too deeply hurt – as Frodo perceived it – to *enjoy* living in the Shire. “For the preservation of the Shire he has sacrificed himself, even in health, and *has no heart to enjoy it.*” (Tolkien, 1992, p. 129, my emphasis.)

But it was not only living with unhealed wounds and recurring illness that disheartened him. Frodo’s next words to Sam reveal another dimension to his diminished enjoyment: “*I tried* to save the Shire, and *it has been saved*, but not for me.” (Tolkien, 1993, p. 1067, my emphases.) It is no coincidence that Frodo

spoke of the actual saving of the Shire in the passive voice. As he saw it, he tried, but failed, to protect the Shire from harm, and the Shire was saved not because of him but in spite of him.

Note how, despite his growing disquiet and the aftershock of his first anniversary illness on October sixth, Frodo still managed to speak lightly and with his characteristically sharp, ironic wit when he entered the Shire with his friends. But as they rode through the Shire and the extent of the damage unfolded before their eyes, Frodo grew “silent and looked rather sad and thoughtful” (Tolkien, 1993, p. 1040) while the other three companions chatted on merrily.

From this point on Frodo is shown with a consistently subdued and humourless disposition. Every utterance is sober, even remote, and no trace of levity or wit remains. Clearly the sight of the Shire’s violation contributed significantly to the depression that eventually drove Frodo to give up hope for finding a happy life there.

### Exile and Atonement

It also seems likely that Frodo, burdened by a sense of failure, believed that he did not *deserve* to ever again enjoy life in the Shire. Over the course of the Ring Quest Frodo gradually lost his longing for home and resigned himself to a doom of self-sacrifice for the saving of the Shire. By the time he reached Mordor, he expected to die. After the Ring was destroyed and he and Sam lay amidst the destruction on Mount Doom, Frodo felt a sense of restored peace only because he believed that he was about to die. (Tolkien, 1981, p. 327.) By sacrificing his life for the sake of the Quest, he had paid for his “failure” in claiming the Ring.

Except that he did not die. And gradually, once the initial euphoria at finding himself alive wore off, the disturbing memories and the sense of guilt crept back into his awareness and began to haunt him. (Tolkien, 1981, p. 327-28.) It was in connection with this guilt-born depression that Arwen made the offer of the sea passage to Frodo. It is not hard to see how Frodo, in this state of mind, might have come to see the Elvenhome as not only a hope for healing but also as a last chance to redeem himself as a hero: Passing over the sea was an alternative way by which he could sacrifice his life, an exile which he could (perhaps even should) impose upon himself in atonement for claiming the Ring.

### Seeking Safety

To an objective observer, these feelings of self-reproach may indeed seem to be “unreasoning.” But on a subconscious, emotional level, survivor guilt is actually the trauma victim’s attempt to regain a sense of safety and order in a life shattered by danger and chaos. “To imagine that one could have done better may be more tolerable than to face the reality of utter helplessness.” (Herman, 1992, p. 54.)

Restoring a sense of safety is the first and most fundamental challenge in the process of recovery from trauma. (Herman, 1992, pp. 155, 159.) And herein lay a positive appeal of the Elvenhome over the sea: It was utterly safe, the ultimate escape from all evil and distress. As Frodo said to Sam in Cirith Ungol, “Only Elves can escape. Away, away out of Middle-earth, far away over the Sea.” (Tolkien, 1993, p. 946.)

In contrast, the breached Shire was no longer a haven for Frodo, a safe place where he could retreat into forgetfulness of the evil he had seen in the wider world.

“I knew that danger lay ahead, of course,” Frodo had said to Gildor Inglorion at the outset of the Quest, “but I did not expect to meet it in our own Shire. Can’t a hobbit walk from the Water to the River in peace?” To which Gildor had replied, “The wide world is all about you: you can fence yourselves in, but you cannot for ever fence it out.”

“I know,” answered Frodo, “and yet [the Shire] has always seemed so safe and familiar.” (Tolkien, 1993, p. 97.)

What Frodo really wanted to do, in the wake of the Quest, was to regain his lost innocence, to recapture the old sense of safety and security that he had once known in his homeland. As Tolkien wrote in one of his letters (1981, p. 329), Frodo wanted “just ‘to be himself’ again and get back to the old familiar life that had been interrupted.” But on his way home, as Frodo was weighed down with his first recurrence of pain on October sixth, it struck him:

There is no real going back. Though I may come to the Shire, it will not seem the same; for I shall not be the same.

(Tolkien, 1993, p. 1026)

And, as it turned out, neither would the Shire itself be the same.

### Obstacles to Reintegration

“No going back.” What, then, about going forward? Once the trauma survivor has recognized and

acknowledged the fact of irrevocable change, and mourned what has been lost, he or she is faced with the challenge of reintegration, of putting the pieces of life back together and carrying on with that rebuilt yet permanently altered life. (Baures, 1994, pp. 203-205; Hybels-Steer, 1995, pp. 105, 107; Herman, 1992, p. 196; Shay, 1994, p. 55.) It is this process of rebuilding oneself and reintegrating into the community that constitutes “healing” for the survivor of trauma.

Apart from whatever role the supernatural side of Frodo’s wounding may have played, several wholly natural psychological and social factors hindered him from achieving reintegration: his own isolation and silence about his suffering, his lack of honour from his own community, and his strong attachment to Bilbo.

In order for inner healing to occur, it is imperative for the trauma survivor to “tell the story,” not merely as a dry recitation of facts but allowing others to know and share the burden of the trauma’s emotional impact upon oneself. (Shay, 1994, p. 189.) Frodo, however, did quite the opposite: Although he privately set down a narrative of the War of the Ring, about the effects of the War upon himself he kept silent, going out of his way to hide his suffering from others. During his first illness it was not until Gandalf specifically asked, “Are you in pain, Frodo?” that Frodo reluctantly admitted that yes, he was. (Tolkien, 1993, p. 1026.) About his second illness Frodo “said nothing about himself” (Tolkien, 1993, p. 1062) to Sam, who had been away at the time Frodo was ill. The manner in which Sam finds Frodo secluded in his study the following October sixth suggests that Frodo was probably attempting again to conceal his illness; a frank admission that he was wounded and suffering was immediately followed by brushing the matter aside: “But then he got up, and the turn seemed to pass, and he was quite himself the next day.” (Tolkien, 1993, p. 1063.) And again, when Frodo was ill the following March, “with a great effort he concealed it, for Sam had other things to think about.” (Tolkien, 1993, p. 1064.)

It may have been the way of Hobbits to make light of their troubles (Tolkien, 1993, pp. 480, 904), but from the standpoint of current research on trauma and recovery, saying nothing of himself was the worst possible course for someone who had endured traumas of such magnitude as Frodo had experienced. Frodo’s silence and withdrawal hindered his ability to

recover from even the natural effects of having been wounded.

Intensifying Frodo's sense of isolation was the lack of recognition he received from the people of his own land. "Sam was pained to notice how little honour [Frodo] had in his own country." (Tolkien, 1993, p. 1063.) As Judith Lewis Herman observes (1992, p. 70), veterans have always been acutely sensitive to how they are received upon their return home; whether or not a veteran's sacrifices are recognized and remembered by the people at home is crucial to whether or not that veteran succeeds in healing from the wounds of war and finding a place again in the community.

True, Frodo was honoured on the Field of Cormallen with an impressive ceremony, yet this type of formal ceremony "rarely satisf[ies] the combat veteran's longing for recognition" (Herman, 1992, p. 70). The type of recognition that heals is personal, empathic, attentive listening to not only the veteran's experiences but the emotional impact of those experiences upon the veteran. (Shay, 1994, p. 189.) But even had Frodo been willing to talk, "few people [in the Shire] knew or wanted to know about his deeds and adventures." (Tolkien, 1993, p. 1063.) Communalization of the trauma, essential to reintegration, was thus hindered not only by Frodo's silence but by his community's lack of interest in listening to what he had been through.

In the indifference of the Shirefolk Frodo found reinforcement of his image of himself as insignificant, merely "a broken failure." In contrast, as Frodo rode to the Grey Havens "the Elves *delighted* to honour" him and the other Ring-bearers (Tolkien, 1993, p. 1067, my emphasis). Presumably further honour awaited him in the Elvenhome; yet Frodo's charge to Sam to

read things out of the Red Book . . . so that people will remember the Great Danger and so love their beloved land all the more  
(Tolkien, 1993, p. 1067)

reveals an unassuaged desire for his *own* people to recognize and appreciate the hardships he had endured on their behalf.

### Following Bilbo

Finally, Frodo's strong attachment to Bilbo provided added incentive for him to sail. Bilbo was the person Frodo loved most (Tolkien, 1981, p. 328), and Frodo's remark that "the Ring-bearers should go together" (Tolkien, 1993, p. 1067) may have

reflected Frodo's reluctance to part with Bilbo, as well as a distorted perception of himself as doomed to sail, rather than a true requirement of a former Ring-bearer.

A neglected but, I believe, significant wound of Frodo's was the loss of his parents in a tragic accident when Frodo was going on twelve. (Tolkien, 1993, pp. 34-35; 1136, 1138.) At a very tender age, particularly for a Hobbit, Frodo experienced one of the deepest losses possible. Some years later Bilbo took Frodo under his wing and became a surrogate parent to whom Frodo bonded very strongly, only to lose him when he left the Shire upon Frodo's coming of age. For the next seventeen years, though Frodo "was quite happy" (Tolkien, 1993, p. 56), he also missed Bilbo and became increasingly restless as the years passed.

Still, Frodo harboured a secret hope that he might someday find Bilbo again. In knowing Bilbo in his days when he possessed the Ring, Frodo had experienced an illusory cheating of time and decay. Bilbo was seventy-eight years older than Frodo, yet looked like a Hobbit in the prime of his life. Hence Frodo apparently had no difficulty believing, long after reason would have suggested otherwise, that Bilbo was still alive (Tolkien, 1993, pp. 55, 76), waiting for Frodo to follow after him and find him someday.

But when Frodo did find Bilbo at Rivendell, the old Hobbit was no longer untouched by time. Seeing Bilbo showing his true age and frailty, hovering on the edge of death, certainly had to have been a shock to Frodo. For the first time Frodo was confronted with the reality that someday Bilbo would be gone for good, beyond the hope of eventual "finding."

When Frodo yearned during his Quest to be back in the Shire, his memories turned to the days in which he lived with Bilbo at Bag End. (Tolkien, 1993, pp. 335-36.) But those days, Frodo gradually saw, would never return. And in a way, the Shire without Bilbo, without even the prospect of being able to visit Bilbo at will, was not really *the* Shire that Frodo loved.

Tolkien wrote (1981, p. 328) that the mortals who passed over the sea would eventually have to die, but it is not clear whether Frodo himself understood this. Even if not a full escape from death, at the least the sea passage was a postponement of final separation from Bilbo. Perhaps in the Blessed Realm time and death could be cheated a while longer and Frodo could recapture a semblance of the idyllic days of memory, dwelling contentedly at Bilbo's side in the

one place where the promise of paradise remained: “‘Arda Unmarred,’ the Earth unspoiled by evil.” (Tolkien, 1981, p. 328.)

### Conclusion

Wounded, weary, torn with doubt and self-condemnation, Frodo based his decision upon only two options: Either his wounds would go away (“really heal”), in which case Frodo, absolved, could stay, or his wounds would not wholly go away, in which case Frodo, condemned, would have to leave.

Ironically, then, Frodo chose the sea not because he “desired” it but because he believed he had no other choice. Because he could not recover the “old familiar life,” or more precisely the old, innocent

state of mind in which he had enjoyed it, Frodo concluded that he could never again enjoy any sort of life in the Shire.

Frodo’s deepest wounding, in the end, lay precisely in his *sense* of woundedness, in his realization that in Middle-earth he would never again be what he once had been. It was a knowledge that he could not bear to live with.

“I explain,” wrote trauma specialist Mary Baures (1994, pp. 18-19), “that by healing I don’t mean that the loss doesn’t still hurt or that it disappears, but that there is a way that people can find some meaning in a catastrophe so they can go on with their lives.”

“Being healed,” replied Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel, “is when the wound is no longer there.”

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