

Frodo the Wanderer from the Shire: Self, Elf-Friends, and Community in *The Lord of the Rings*

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Introduction

Wandering is one of the most important themes in J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (1954–55). Indeed, most of the protagonists are wanderers or in exile. For example, Gandalf the wizard, who is called Gandalf the Grey in *The Hobbit* (1937), is a great wanderer, and Aragorn, called Strider when he first meets Frodo Baggins and Samwise Gamgee, is a prominent wanderer in the story, too. In Gandalf's letter, Aragorn is described as "All that is gold does not glitter, Not all those who wander are lost" (170; vol. 1, bk. 1, ch. 10). The phrase can be compared with the reading from a written scroll, "All that glisters is not gold," in William Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* (2.7.65). Both words imply that appearances do not always show the truth. Aragorn may appear to "look foul" from his long wanderings, but as Gandalf's letter shows, "the crownless" and seemingly lost Aragorn again shall be "king" (170). Aragorn himself recites a piece of Rohirrim poetry followed by his translation into Common Speech (Lee, "The Wanderer" 192), reusing some parts from *The Wanderer*, an Old English poem, which survives in a single copy in 'The Exeter Book' (Lee and Solopova 272). The powerful poem details an individual's lonely wanderings as an exile from society while touching on more general themes of loss (272). Furthermore, as Stuart D.

Lee notes in his essay “J. R. R. Tolkien and *The Wanderer*” (179), Tolkien also chose these *ubi sunt* [Where is?] lines from the poem for use at the end of his 1959 Valedictory Address (“Valedictory Address” 239), suggesting that Tolkien attached significance to this poetic passage.

Aragorn as Strider is a prominent wanderer, eventually making his return to Gondor, and yet his wanderings and being crowned again are not central to the story. The most significant wanderer in *The Lord of the Rings*, of course, is Frodo, the hobbit from the Shire, who is determined to undertake the dangerous mission to Mordor in order to destroy the Ring. Roger Sale’s essay “Tolkien and Frodo Baggins” (1973) and John Garth’s essays entitled *Tolkien and the Great War: The Threshold of Middle-earth* (2003) and “Frodo and the Great War” (2006) associate Frodo’s predicaments with Tolkien’s appalling experiences in the Great War [The First World War]. Sale also points to Frodo’s modern heroism, arguing that the bondage between Sméagol [Gollum] and Frodo forms a “community that could destroy the Ring” (252).

Other critical discussions of Frodo in *The Lord of the Rings* include those by Ursula K. Le Guin, Verling Flieger, and Yvette Kisor. In her essay “The Child and the Shadow” (1974), Le Guin even argues that “Frodo and Gollum are not only both hobbits; they are the same person—and Frodo knows it” (64), utilizing the idea of the “shadow” of our psyche (59). In *Splintered Light: Logos and Language in Tolkien’s World* (1983), Flieger also discusses Frodo’s journey into the dark, using what Jung calls the “Shadow” (151) and speaks of Frodo’s transparency in terms of losing his self both physically and inwardly. In her essay “Incorporeality and Transformation in *The Lord of the Rings*,” Kisor argues that the bodily transformation of Frodo is closely related to that of the Ringwraiths and of Gandalf (26). Frodo’s relationship with Gollum/Sméagol and his pity for the creature have received frequent critical scrutiny. For the purposes of this essay, I find Sale’s argument that Frodo and Gollum form a community a compelling one, and I will elaborate on self, others, and

community related to Frodo in *The Lord of the Rings*.

Frodo is neither a fairy-tale hero like Bilbo nor a hero like Aragorn, but a modern hero who suffers a lot and loses his self in the end. His quest is basically different from that of Bilbo in *The Hobbit*. Specifically, as Derek S. Brewer observes in his essay “*The Lord of the Rings* as Romance,” Frodo’s quest contains “a paradoxical twist that amounts to genius”; Frodo already holds “the Ring,” and “his quest is to destroy it” (256). In *The Road to Middle-Earth*, Tom Shippey affirms that “both [Bilbo and Frodo] are leaving Bag End, but the former cheerfully, without the Ring, without responsibility, for Rivendell, the latter with a growing sense of unwished involvement, carrying the Ring and heading in the end for Mordor” (187). As Jane Chance observes in “The Lord of the Rings: *The Mythology of Power*,” “Frodo must give up his quest at the end, and in fact, he does not succeed; Gollum as adversary both subverts and achieves the quest” (16). Yet, as the Ring-bearer, he gradually shows his resilience to the power of the Dark Lord, Sauron, and his rapacious desire for the Ring.

In *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo is repeatedly called an “Elf-friend,” but what may at first seem “a polite form of address, later a complimentary epithet,” can be seen “as the sign of election to a special company” at the Council of Elrond (Flieger, *Green Suns and Faërie* 75), where Frodo is on equal footing with “all the mighty Elf-friends of old, Hador, and Húrin, and Túrin, and Beren (270–71; vol. 1, bk. 2, ch. 2). These Elf-friends, who are described in Tolkien’s mythology *The Silmarillion* [published posthumously by his son Christopher Tolkien in 1977], mostly meet tragic ends. Being called an “Elf-friend” enables Frodo to perform his mission as the Ring-bearer though it is also a factor in his losing his identity as a hobbit, driving him from his own community, and ending up in exile.

This paper explores the construction of Frodo in *The Lord of the Rings* in order to find the elements of an Elf-friend in him and examine the struggle the hobbit undergoes. It begins with a discussion of the nature of Frodo as an Elf-friend. It then explores Frodo’s role as the Ring-bearer

in the story followed by a comparative survey of Frodo's self in the story and that of Gollum, his darker self, and how the two form a community of their own. The paper concludes with a discussion of the significance of Frodo's wanderings away from his community as he loses his self and finally seeks exile.

I Self and Community

This section focuses on Frodo and the community of hobbits in the Shire. Frodo had distinguished himself from the other hobbits, considering "the [other] inhabitants too stupid and dull for words," and that "an earthquake or an invasion of dragons might be good for them" (62; vol. 1, bk. 1, ch. 2). Yet when he inherits the Ring from his uncle Bilbo, Frodo feels he can no longer be sure of safety in the Shire (62). His sense of estrangement from the inhabitants in his community has changed:

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 fine foothold, even if my feet cannot stand there [the Shire] again. (62)

Over time, Frodo develops a sense of belonging to the Shire and is determined to "save" it (62). Even before embarking on his long journey to destroy the Ring, Frodo recognizes that in his quest to Mordor he will be "wandering" (62), that is, be unhoused, and that he might not return to his homestead. Furthermore, he observes:

Of course, I have sometimes thought of going away, but I imagined that as a kind holiday, a series of adventures like Bilbo's or better, ending in peace. But this would mean exile, a flight from danger into danger, drawing it after me. And I suppose I must go alone, if I am to do that and save the Shire. But I feel very

small, and very uprooted, and well — desperate. The Enemy is so strong and terrible. (62)

Here Frodo already realizes that this journey could mean “exile.” He is terrified of the strong power of the Dark Lord. Although he is fully aware of the peril of his journey, Frodo embraces the idea of following Bilbo:

He did not tell Gandalf, but as he was speaking a great desire to follow Bilbo flamed up in his heart — to follow Bilbo, and even perhaps to find him again. It was so strong that it overcame his fear: he could almost have run out there and then down the road without his hat, as Bilbo had done on a similar morning long ago. (62)

Eager to follow in Bilbo’s footsteps, he is emotionally uplifted. His expectations of finding his uncle overpower those of encountering the dark enemy.

Frodo is repeatedly described as an “Elf-friend,” and it is an essential term to understand him. In *Nomenclature of The Lord of the Rings*, the term is described as a possible creative derivation of “*Ælfwine*,” “the English form of an old Germanic name (represented for instance in the Lombardic *Alboin*), though its analysable meaning was probably not recognized or thought significant by the many recorded bearers of the name *Ælfwine* in OE.” (Scull and Hammond 756). The term distinguishes Frodo from other hobbits, although at the beginning he appears to be a typical hobbit; he is described as “*taller than some and fairer than most*,” and is presented variously as “*a stout little fellow with red cheeks*” or “*perky chap with a bright eye*” and “*a cleft in his chin*” (166; vol. 1, bk. 1, ch. 10). Flieger affirms that “we get a more complete picture of Frodo’s exterior than that of any other hobbit,” except the depiction of Gollum (*Green Suns and Faërie* 283–84).

As an Elf-friend, however, Frodo's significance is foregrounded. Although the term is first used as a kind of greeting, it turns out to hold considerable meaning and even to serve to identify Frodo. Flieger has suggested that "Elf-friend" is both figure and frame, as well as a device to construct a rounded character who plays a central role in the story. She contends that "what seemed at first a polite form of address, later a complimentary epithet, can now be seen as the sign of election to a special company" (75). Early in the story, while still in the Shire, Frodo and other hobbits meet Gildor the Elf, who responds to Frodo's greeting, '*Elen síla lúinenn' omentielvo* [a star shines on the hour of our meeting], with 'Hail, Elf-friend!' (80–81; vol. 1, bk. 1, ch. 3). The Elf introduces himself as an "Exile," "now only tarrying here a while ere returning over the Great Sea" (80). The Elves are "Wandering Companies" (84), as well. After he tells the hobbits about the history of the "Shire" "before the hobbits" started to live there (83), Gildor learns of Frodo's leaving the Shire, and seriously "names" Frodo "Elf-friend" (85). In the house of Tom Bombadil, his wife Goldberry, daughter of the River, says to Frodo that she "sees that he is an Elf-friend"; "the light in his eyes and the ring in his voice tells it" (123–24; vol. 1, bk. 1, ch. 7). The appearance of the cheerful Hobbit gains another dimension of significance. As Flieger affirms, there is "more than politeness involved"; the use of elf-friend confers a "kind of special identity" (*Green Suns and Faërie* 75).

At the Council of Elrond, the term becomes more official. When Elrond Halfelven, Master of Rivendell, finally asks Frodo the will to take the task, he admits it will be a "heavy burden" for the hobbit (270; vol. 1, bk. 2, ch. 2):

So heavy that none could lay it on another. I do not lay it on you. But if you take it freely, I will say that your choice is right; and though all the mighty Elf-friends of old, Hador, and Húrin, and Turin, and Beren himself were assembled together, your seat should be among them. (270–71).

When the hobbit accepts his mission to go to Mount Doom, Elrond numbers Frodo among mighty Elf-friends. Elrond himself can be found among them, as well:

The master of the house [Elrond] was an elf-friend — one of those people whose fathers came into the strange stories before the beginning of History, the wars of the evil goblins and the elves and the first men in the North.... (48)

When Elrond acknowledges Frodo as an Elf-friend, he seems to become both a character in the story and one that transcends its parameters. As Flieger observes:

We know now that Frodo, Aragorn, even Húrin and Túrin and Beren, are only a few out of many Elf-friends. We know as well, that however formally or informally the epithet is bestowed, it is more than a polite term of address. It is at once the name, the description, and the function of one of that history's earliest and most multiform figures, a figure who is both inside and outside the story, who is at once a character in the drama and a frame for the narrative. (*Green Suns and Faërie* 75)

The term Elf-friend thus functions as a framework forming the community where hobbits can be linked with elves, and thus it allows Frodo to be situated in a mediating position between the two.

II Frodo's Role as the Ring-bearer in *The Lord of the Rings*

Frodo and Sam encounter "Faramir, Captain of Gondor," who helps them in Emyn Muil after they leave the Fellowship (656–58; vol. 2, bk. 4, ch. 4) due to of Boromir's change of heart. Faramir is the younger brother of Boromir, but his character is very different; he is committed to doing his part for the future of Middle-earth. Sale defines "Frodo's heroism" as "modern," arguing that "Frodo's heroism" is "clearly visible

to us so the hobbit can be “our guide” for understanding “Tolkien’s [concept of] heroism” (199). “Tolkien’s imagination responds most fully” to this character: unlike a classical hero like Aragorn, Frodo’s is a “modern” hero like Bilbo, situated close to readers (199). It is he who suffers most from the heavy burden of carrying and destroying the Ring. Frodo needs attendance and support from Aragorn, whose healing power is requisite for Frodo’s injury by the Black Riders along with his fatal bruise from the Witch-king. Although his heroism differs from that of Aragorn, Boromir, and Faramir, Frodo allows us to glimpse the heroism of the hobbit as he assumes the role of the Ring-bearer of his own free will (270; vol. 1, bk. 2 ch. 2). On the other hand, Sale argues that Faramir’s heroism is as “ancient” as that of “Gandalf, Aragorn, Merry, Pippin, and others” because it is a heroism based on the foundational truth that “the prices” “must be paid when one is called upon to pay them,” whereas Frodo’s “modern heroism is and can be: lonely, lost, frightened, loving, willing, and compassionate—to recognize the otherness of others while reaching out to assert our common livingness” (237). Nevertheless, Faramir’s heroism also contains elements of the modern. His ecological idea of pacifism and resilience resonate with Frodo’s solid pacifism demonstrated later in the Shire, when he tells Pippin that “nobody is to be killed at all, if it can be helped” (1006; vol. 3, bk. 6, ch. 8). Faramir is a warrior-hero, but he says to Sam that he does not slay man or beast needlessly, and not gladly even when it is needed (665). Furthermore, he asserts that he seeks peace, and reviving a war-torn city through the cultivation of gardens (672). Faramir does not prize war; he would like to avoid it, if possible. His foremost concern is based on preserving the ecosystem of Middle-earth.

As Sale has argued in his discussion of Frodo’s construction as modern hero, the hobbit’s formation of a “community” with Gollum [Smeágoth] “that could destroy the Ring” (253) creates his heroism” (225). In *The Lord of the Rings*, Gollum has been transformed into an even more wretched

creature than that found in *The Hobbit*. Gollum appears to an eagle as “a tiny figure sprawling on the ground,” looking like “the famished skeleton of some child of Men, bone-white and bone-thin: no flesh worth a peck” (644). Sale observes that Frodo knows “why Gollum is more an object of pity than of scorn or anger” (225) because they are linked as similar creatures and the common bondage of bearing the Ring. Both are outcasts, although for Frodo, this status offers the possibility of creating a different kind of society (225). As hobbits as well as Ring-bearers, Frodo and Gollum form a community of their own, although that community is marked by a power hierarchy as Frodo tames Gollum like the owner of a dog would:

For a moment it appeared to Sam that his master had grown and Gollum had shrunk: a tall stern shadow, a mighty lord who hid his brightness in grey cloud, and at his feet a little whining dog. Yet the two were in some way akin: they could reach one another’s minds.” (618; vol. 1, bk. 4, ch. 1)

It is ironic that this relationship of master and servant between Frodo and Sméagol is witnessed by Frodo’s servant, Sam. Gollum is supposed to guide Frodo and Sam to the dreaded Mordor. Sale observes that as the two are “led by a wretched sniveling wight” into this bleakest of landscapes, “it becomes recognizably modern and every act is heroic”; “the old terms of the struggle of good against evil — courage, loyalty, honor, magnificence, fortitude—are mostly irrelevant now” (227).

Sale further contends that “Frodo’s uniqueness and greatness lie in his way of being returned to himself as he sees a light shine in others” (236). Although “he faces the strongest of temptations to give in” [to the Ring’s power], Frodo shows “the fewest signs of having yielded to that temptation” (236). Rather, “Frodo turns out into the world and so finds a means of self-knowledge” (236). For example, “in his scarred and beautiful relation with Sméagol, he finds himself and lives by the light of

the self he finds” (236) in his darker double. The possible moment of change for Sméagol is depicted as follows:

Gollum looked at them [Frodo and Sam asleep]. A strange expression passed over his lean hungry face. The gleam faded from his eyes, and they went dim and grey, old and tired. A spasm of pain seemed to twist him, and he turned away, peering back up towards the pass, shaking his head, as if engaged in some interior debate. Then he came back, and slowly putting out a trembling hand, very cautiously he touched Frodo’s knee—but almost the touch was a caress. (714; vol. 2, bk. 4, ch. 8)

Sméagol finds Frodo’s caring of him dear at this special moment. Sale affirms that “it suggests the story might go differently” (236). It is inferred that Frodo’s virtues and empathy for others initiate a change in Gollum’s emotions towards him. In other words, Frodo’s heroism can be “lonely, lost, frightened, loving, willing, and compassionate—to recognize the otherness of others while reaching out to assert our common livingness” (237). As such it is a heroic construction crucial to the sense of community found in Tolkien’s text.

Faramir, who embraces lofty ideas concerning warcraft and craftsmanship, recognizes Frodo as a special identity that straddles communities. He is a hobbit but also has ‘an Elvish air’:

[W]hatever befell on the North March, you, Frodo, I doubt no longer. If hard days have made me any judge of Men’s words and faces, then I may make a guess at Halflings [hobbits]! Though, there is something strange about you, Frodo, an Elvish air, maybe. (668)

This is significant because Faramir’s choices will decide the future of Middle-earth. Although he has suffered a lot due to his father Denethor II, Faramir is the one who will nurture the land of Gondor. Frodo almost “yielded to his desire for help and counsel,” to tell Faramir, “whose words

seemed so wise and fair, all that was in his mind,” but “something held him back” (672):

His heart was heavy with fear and sorrow: if he and Sam were indeed, as seemed likely, all that was now left of the Nine Walkers, then he was in sole command of the secret of their errand. Better mistrust undeserved than rash words. (672)

Being separated from the fellow company, Frodo is afraid that he might be left alone in his engagement with his task. Moreover, Faramir is much like his brother Boromir:

And the memory of Boromir, of the dreadful change that the lure of the Ring had worked in him, was very present to his mind, where he looked at Faramir and listened to his voice: unlike they were, and yet also much akin. (672)

Seeing “the mad fierce face of Boromir” brings Frodo “terror and grief” (400; vol. 1, bk. 2, ch. 10). Faramir’s physical resemblance to his brother brings back the memory of Boromir’s sudden change surrendering the evil power of the Ring at Amon Hen, which has made Frodo’s “will” to destroy the Ring “firm” and solid (397–401). Frodo is forced to pull out the Ring and slip it on his finger when Boromir suddenly tries to take it (399). Although he has good qualities, Boromir reveals his weakness for the evil Ring which convinces Frodo even more of the destructive power of the Ring. Faramir, however, demonstrates resistance to the Ring. When Sam uncovers that Boromir “wanted the Emeny’s Ring” without knowing it, Faramir proves to be trustworthy (680–81; vol. 2, bk. 4, ch. 5).

Frodo’s resilience as the Ring-bearer in *The Lord of the Rings* is also deeply associated with elements of being an Elf-friend. After his decision at the Council of Elrond to “take the Ring” (270; vol. 1, bk. 2; ch. 2), Frodo remains staunchly determined, showing his resilience to endure the task of fighting against the Dark Lord. At the same time, he heartily

misses being home with his uncle. Just as Bilbo in *The Hobbit* repeatedly thinks of his hobbit-hole during his quest with the dwarves, Frodo on his mission thinks back to his place in the Shire. On his way south, “his thoughts are carried away from the dark Mines, to Rivendell, to Bilbo, and to Bag End” (318; vol. 1, bk. 2, ch.3) when Bilbo was there:

He [Frodo] wished with all his heart that he was back there [Bag End], and in those days, mowing the lawn, or pottering among the flowers, and that he had never heard of Moria, or *mithril*— or the Ring. (318)

Nevertheless, his mission to destroy the Ring transforms his way of living completely, and when Frodo returns to the Shire, he can find no way to settle, and winds up boarding a ship to the West (1029–30; vol. 3, bk. 6; ch. 9).

In *The Fellowship of the Ring* of *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo is not forced to be the Ring-bearer; he takes on this role without prompting from anybody. At the Council of Elrond, the resolution to “take a hard road, a road unforeseen,” or to “walk into peril to Mordor” in order to “send the Ring to the Fire” is made by Elrond (267; vol. 1, bk. 2; ch. 2), who remarks:

This quest may be attempted by the weak with as much as the strong. Yet such is of 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. (269; vol. 1, bk. 2, ch. 2)

“The weak” refers specifically to Frodo, but the hobbit is well able to tackle this seemingly impossible task. More significantly, Elrond says that he would not lay the burden on Frodo, but that if Frodo takes it freely, the hobbit’s choice will be the right one. That is, although Frodo has been formally chosen as the Ring-bearer by the Council of Elrond, he is free to

choose whether to accept this responsibility or not. Frodo says, ‘I will take the Ring, though I do not know the way’ (270). Tolkien makes it clear that Frodo’s quest succeeds in the end, despite his own failure to put the Ring into the Fire, because it was undertaken out of the hobbit’s own free will, with humility, and out of love for the world he knew (“To Mrs. Eileen Elgar.” Sept. 1963. Letter 246 of *Letters* 346).

In an earlier phase of the quest, Frodo demonstrated unexpected strength when he was attacked by the Black Riders and stricken dumb by the leader sent by the Dark Lord of the Land of Mordor. Frodo, with a last effort, lifts up his sword and cries, ‘By Elbereth and Lúthien the Fair, you shall have neither the Ring nor me!’ (214; vol. 1, bk. 1; ch. 12). As Strider [Aragorn] remarks to Sam Gamgee:

‘Your Frodo is made of sterner stuff than I had guessed, though Gandalf hinted that it might prove so. He is not slain, and I think he will resist the evil power of the wound longer than his enemies expect. I will do all I can to help and heal him....’ (198)

Later, Gandalf also observes that Frodo has “some strength in him” (219; vol. 1, bk. 2; ch. 1). The hobbit is shown to have considerable inner fortitude which will allow him to be able to “resist the evil power” (198). In other words, one of Frodo’s prime features is a remarkable resilience. Moreover, Sale contends that “Frodo’s uniqueness and greatness lie in his way of being returned to himself as he sees a light shine in others” (236). Although “he faces the strongest of temptation to given in,” “of all the characters he shows fewest signs of having yielded o that temptation” (236). Sale observes that “Frodo turns out into the world and so finds a means of self-knowledge” (236). For example, “in his scarred and beautiful relation with Sméagol, he finds himself and lives by the light of the self he finds” (236).

Frodo’s burden as the Ring-bearer turns out to be intolerable. Like

“Victor Frankenstein and his monster” in *Frankenstein*, Frodo and Gollum exemplify “the self and the other” found in “psychology,” “that is, the overt personality and its opposite, the light and dark sides of one’s nature”; “Jung calls this other side of mankind the “shadow” as contrasted with the overt and recognized “ego”” (Flieger, *Green Suns and Faërie* 156). Flieger argues that Gollum is Frodo’s “dark side,” “the embodiment of his growing, overpowering desire for the Ring, the desire which at last becomes all-consuming and sweeps away (if only for a moment) the Frodo who has endured so much to destroy the Ring” (156). More significantly, she affirms that Gollum represents precisely that “disruptive force of darkness and inner conflict” which must be shown to the reader “outside the heroic characters” (Thomson 51–52; Flieger 156). Gollum is “what Frodo must fight within himself as the Ring increases its hold” (Flieger 156). Frodo is not fighting against the monster so much as the growing evil in his own nature. He is “fighting his great battle not against darkness without but against darkness within” (Flieger 157). The burden of holding the Ring and increasing pressure of it is eroding Frodo’s self.

Frodo and Gollum may look different, but they are connected to each other. In her 1979 book *The Language of the Night: Essay on Fantasy and Science Fiction*, Le Guin argues this from the perspective of Jungian psychology:

Frodo and Gollum are not only both hobbits; they are the same person-and Frodo knows it. Frodo and Sam are the bright side, Sméagol-Gollum the shadow side. In the end Sam and Sméagol, the lesser figures, drop away, and all that is left is Frodo and Gollum, at the end of the long quest. And it is Frodo the good who fails, who at the last moment claims the Ring of Power for himself, and it is Gollum the evil who achieves the quest, destroying the Ring, and himself with it. (64)

Le Guin maintains that Frodo and Gollum constitute the bright and dark side of the same person. This may be true, but dark Gollum is also a

character as developed in his own right as Frodo is in the story. Instead of serving Frodo, he ultimately chooses to “worship” Shelob, “an evil thing in spider-form” (723; vo. 2, bk. 4, ch. 9). Gollum grows more malevolent under the dark influence of the female monster:

Already, years before, Gollum had beheld her, Sméagol who pried into all dark hole, and in past days he [Sméagol] had bowed and worshipped her [Shelob], and the darkness of her evil will walked through all the ways of his weariness beside him, cutting him off from light and from regret. And he had promised to bring her food. (723)

In the Prologue of *The Lord of the Rings*, Gandalf tells Frodo that Gollum is related to “hobbit-kind; akin to the fathers of the fathers of the Stoors” (52; vol. 1, bk. 1; ch. 2). Frodo staunchly disagrees with the notion of Gollum being “connected” to the riverside hobbit people (54). Indeed, John D. Rateliff points out that “Gollum is clearly not a hobbit in the original,” affirming that “all the details of Tolkien’s depiction of Gollum argue against Gollum’s being of hobbit-skin” (166). Even in the revised version of *The Hobbit*, Gollum is depicted “as dark as darkness, except for two big round pale eyes in his thin face” (68; ch. 5). Furthermore, in the revised edition, the expression of “a small slimy creature” is added to the sentence, “Deep down here by the dark water lived old Gollum” (68). In *The Lord of the Rings*, Gollum’s background is more detailed, and the role Gollum plays becomes more significant because it is the wickedness of the wretched creature that projects the inner darkness of Frodo. Gollum needs to be related to a hobbit people though distantly.

Frodo’s relation to Sauron, the creator of the Ring to bind them all, needs to be addressed, as well. At the Council of Elrond the secret of Sauron and the Rings of Power is revealed by Elrond; he tells of “the Elven-smiths of Eregion and their friendship with Moria, and their eagerness for knowledge, by which Sauron ensnared them” (242–45; vol. 2,

bk. 1; ch. 2):

For at that time [the Second Age] he [Sauron] was not yet evil to behold, and they received his aid and grew mighty in craft, whereas he learned all their secrets, and betrayed them, and forged secretly in the Mountain of Fire the One Ring to be their master. (242)

Sauron is not evil from the first. How the Ring comes into Gollum's hand needs another long discussion, but Frodo, Bilbo's heir, now holds it. Sauron's desire for power means he cannot think otherwise, whereas Frodo is flexible, and even the creature like Gollum can develop a certain attachment for him. Yet Frodo mirrors Sauron's obsession at a crucial time. At the Crack of Doom, Frodo says:

I have come. But I do not choose now to do what I came to do. I will not do this deed. The Ring is mine! And suddenly, as he set it on his finger, he vanished from Sam's sight. (945; vol. 3, bk. 3; ch. 3)

At this crucial moment, the desire for the Ring consumes the hobbit. In *J. R. R. Tolkien* (1981), Katharyn F. Crabbe argues that "the Ring succeeds in making Frodo a hobbit Sauron"; "he claims the Ring, and it is taken from him as it was taken from Sauron at the end of the Second Age, by the severing of his finger" (87). As Crabbe observes, Frodo "becomes the enemy he has offered his life to defeat" (87). This suggests that the physical construction of the monster is not a requirement for being monstrous; Frodo becomes Sauron's supplement and the hobbit would transform into a monster.

III Frodo's Wanderings

So far, Frodo as an Elf-friend and the Ring-bearer have been discussed.

Now his wanderings into the darkness will be examined. Again, Frodo's darker double Gollum requires discussion to clarify the nature of Frodo's wanderings.

Like Frodo, Gollum is a wanderer. He was first "expelled" by "his grandmother," "desiring peace," and banished from his family (54; vol. 1, bk. 1, ch. 2). "Turned out of his grandmother's hole," Gollum "wandered in loneliness," "journeying by night" and "worming his way like a maggot into the heart of the hills" [of Misty Mountains] so that he would be able to shun the daylight (54). When he loses his precious Ring, however, he is forced to wander out of the roots of the mountains. Just as Sauron was not entirely evil at the onset, Gollum was "not wholly ruined" (55). Gandalf, who sees "something else in it [Gollum]" (54-55), says to Frodo:

He [Gollum] had proved tougher than even one of the Wise would have guessed — as a hobbit might. There was a little corner of his mind that was still his own, and light came through it, as through a chink in the dark: light out of the past. It was actually pleasant, I think, to hear a kindly voice again, bringing up memories of wind, and trees, and sun on the grass, and such forgotten things.

But that, of course, would only make the evil part of him angrier in the end — unless it could be conquered. Unless it could be cured. (55)

There might be only a little hope for him. Intriguingly, Gandalf observes that when Sauron "was awake once more and sending out his dark thought from Mirkwood, the Ring abandoned Gollum, only to be picked up by the most unlikely person imaginable: Bilbo from the Shire" (56). Gandalf further remarks that it is "not Gollum, Frodo, but the Ring itself that decides things" (55). More significantly, the wizard surmises:

I have not much hope that Gollum can be cured before he dies, but there is a chance of it. And he is bound up with the fate of the Ring. My heart tells me that he has some part to play yet, for good or ill, before the end; and when that comes,

the pity of Bilbo may rule the fate of many — yours not least. (59)

Gandalf's supposition turns out to be true as Gollum does his part in the end. When "Frodo puts on the Ring," Gollum is "driven to seize it"; "in doing so, he saves Frodo and destroys the Ring" (945–47; vol. 3, bk. 6, ch. 3; Fliieger, *Green Suns and Faërie* 157). It is ironic that the quest to throw the Ring into the Cracks of Doom is completed by Gollum.

Such is the power of the Ring that Frodo, who tries his best to destroy it, succumbs to its power at the climax. As stated beforehand, his challenge in doing so is destined to be "exile," wandering from the Shire (62; vol. 1, bk. 1, ch. 2).

When he goes in Lothlórien with other fellowship, Frodo "stands awhile lost in wonder" in that timeless world (350; vol. 1, bk. 2, ch. 6):

It seemed to him [Frodo] that he had stepped through a high window that looked on a vanished world. A light was upon it for which his language had no name. All that he had been first conceived and drawn at the uncovering of his eyes, and ancient as they had endured for ever. He saw no colour but those he knew, gold and white and blue and green, but they were fresh and poignant, as if he had at that moment first perceived them and made for them names new and wonderful. (350)

Frodo's wonder to see Lórien for the first time is depicted. For him everything is new, and he seems to be contented with each of it. "Cerin Amroth, Amroth's Mound" (Scull and Hammond 309), especially attracts him:

Though he walked and breathed, and about him living leaves and flowers were stirred by the same cool wind as fanned his face, Frodo felt that he was in a timeless land that did not fade or change or fall into forgetfulness. When he had gone and passed again into the outer world, still Frodo the wanderer from the Shire would walk there, upon the grass among *elanor* and *niprbredil* in fair Lothlórien. (351)

Here Frodo, lucidly articulated as “the wanderer from the Shire,” is thrilled by the wonderful atmosphere of an unfading world. For the moment the fantastic environment of Lórien enables him to forget the darkness of Mordor and strain of his burden.

After his time in Lothlórien, however, “the Fellowship of the Ring” end when Boromir’s assault at the foot of Amon Hen breaks up the Company. Before the incident, Frodo is asked by Aragorn which way to take:

“The day has come at last, the day of choice which we have long delayed. What shall now become of our Company that has travelled so far in fellowship? Shall we turn west with Boromir and go to the wars of Gondor; or turn east to the Fear and Shadow; or shall we break our fellowship and go this way and that as each may choose? Whatever we do must be done soon....” (396; vol. 1, bk. 2, ch. 10)

With the breakup of the fellowship coming near, Frodo has to choose which way to go, but he does not answer at once, and instead “wanders aimlessly” “in the wood” (396). Boromir chases the hobbit, and then “his hair and pleasant face is hideously changed” (399) as he tries to take the Ring; Frodo “slips it on his finger” (399) as he runs away. At “the summit of Amon Hen,” Frodo “feels the Eye” [of Sauron] (400-01). Boromir’s assault and seeing the Eye of the Dark Lord make Frodo decide to “do what he must”; he is determined to leave the Company and go alone (401). Sam later catches up with him and goes with him, but Frodo’s decision to leave the fellowship is firm. Separated from them, Frodo wanders into the darkness.

Now let us consider what Frodo’s wanderings imply. Frodo’s wanderings from the Shire are a kind of exile. Flieger points out that one of Tolkien’s early writings entitled “Sea-Bell” indicates Frodo’s “wandering madness” adding that it is “worth examining as a gauge of Tolkien’s feelings about Frodo’s eventual end” (*Splintered Light* 162). The speaker in

the poem, who may be Frodo himself, or a “wandering hobbit” (162), “hears the call of a sea-bell” and “finds a “boat” which he boards (“The Sea-Bell” 103). On land he can find gold and jewels but is unable to find anyone to speak to (105–06). He says:

‘Bent though I be, I must find the sea!
I have lost myself, and I know not the way,
But let me be gone!’ (106)

The situation of the speaker resembles that of Frodo back in the Shire. The end of the poem is more sorrowful than the beginning;

Houses were shuttered, wind round them muttered,
roads were empty. I sat by a door,
and where drizzling rain poured down a drain
I cast away all that I bore:
In my clutching hand some grains of sand,
And a sea-bell silent and dead. (108)

The sea-bell’s death may hint at the speaker’s own end. He can still find no men to talk to (108). Frodo cannot find the other hobbits evaluate his great deeds in the Shire. After returning home, Sam finds all is “going well,” and “nothing for him mars that whole year,” “except for some vague anxiety about his master” [Frodo] (1025; vo. 3, bk. 6, ch. 9):

Sam was pained to notice how little honour he [Frodo] had in his own country. Few people knew or wanted to know about his deeds and adventures; their admiration and respect were given mostly to Mr. Meriadoc and Mr Peregrin and (if Sam had known it) to himself. (1025)

To his regret, Frodo’s life-risking mission to save the Shire is not fully

justified by the local people. Far from that, Sam finds his master “looking very strange” (1025). Frodo replied to Sam that he is “wounded”; “it will never really heal” (1025). After a while, when Sam says to his master, ‘I thought you were going to enjoy the Shire, too, for years and years, after all you have done’ (1029). Frodo replies to him:

‘So I thought too, once. But I have been too deeply hurt, Sam. I tried to save the Shire, and it has been saved, but not for me. It must often be so, Sam, when things are in danger: some one has to give them up, lose them, so that others may keep them. But you are my heir: all that I had and might have had I leave to you...
(1029)

Frodo is destined to leave the Shire because of his deathly wound. He is fully aware that he sacrifices his life to save his homeland, and that he gives up his future in the Shire. It would be better for Frodo to go to the West together with Bilbo whom he loves most. The future of the Shire is left to Sam and his family.

Conclusion

This essay has explored Frodo’s wanderings in *The Lord of the Rings*. He is destined to undertake a mission, heading into Mordor in order to destroy the Ring. Although he wishes to return to the Shire, Frodo is supposed to be in exile to the West because of his deep wound.

In *The Lord of the Rings*, Frodo is repeatedly called an “Elf-friend.” His being called so has a deep meaning because he is the Ring-bearer. This paper has investigated the reason for Frodo’s being called an Elf-friend and discussed his role as the Ring-bearer. Both contribute to his losing his identity as a hobbit, and driving him from his community, ending up in exile. Although Frodo chooses freely to be the Ring-bearer, the burden of it proves too heavy on him, eventually destroying his self. Frodo appears

to be restored when he is back home, but his wound and suffering as the bearer is worse than expected.

Frodo and Sam meet Boromir's younger brother Faramir, Captain of Gondor, who helps them in Eryn Muil after they leave the Company. Faramir's heroism is as modern as that of Frodo's, and his ecological pacifism and resilience also align with that of the hobbit. Although Frodo is destined to leave the Shire, Faramir remains in Gondor to preserve the lands of Middle-earth.

In terms of Frodo's resilience in the story, this paper drew comparisons with Gollum in *The Lord of the Rings*. Both are hobbits distracted from the homestead. Gollum represents Frodo's dark double and Frodo recognizes this. Gollum might have been restored some of his former 'hobbitness' had it not been for his passion for the precious Ring and his admiration for the evil Shelob.

In the end Frodo is transformed into a Sauron hobbit. His resilience against the evil power allows him to persevere with his task. Yet the burden of being the Ring-bearer is too much for him and he ends up in exile in the West. Ultimately it is Gollum, greatly transformed in *The Lord of the Rings*, and not Frodo, who completes the mission to destroy the Ring, doing his part.

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Synopsis

Frodo the Wanderer from the Shire: Self and Community in *The Lord of the Rings*

Yasuko Hatano

In his 1959 Valedictory Address, J. R. R. Tolkien chose to read the famous *ubi sumi* lines from the Old English poem *The Wanderer* (“Valedictory Address” 239) as Stuart D. Lee notes in his essay “J. R. R. Tolkien and *The Wanderer*” (179). *The Wanderer*, an Old English poem, survives in a single copy in ‘The Exeter Book’ (Lee and Solopova 272). The powerful poem details an individual’s lonely wanderings as an exile from society while touching on more general themes of loss (272). Wanderings have been one of the thematic subjects that Tolkien seeks after, and his fantasy books, *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*, contain such wanderers in the stories. Most of the protagonists in *The Lord of the Rings* are wanderers, or in exile. When he first meets Frodo Baggins and Samwise Gamgee, Aragorn, being called Strider then, is a prominent wanderer. In Gandalf’s letter, Aragorn is described as “All that is gold does not glitter, Not all those who wander are lost” (170; vol. 1, bk. 1, ch. 10). The phrase can be compared with the reading from a written scroll, “All that glisters is not gold,” in William Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice* (2.7.65). Both words imply that the appearance do not always show the truth. Aragorn may appear to “look foul” from his long wanderings (171), but as Gandalf’s letter shows, “the crownless” and seemingly lost Aragorn again shall be “king” (170). As the letter shows, Aragorn, then “the crownless” again shall be “king” (170). Although he has been “wandering in the Wild” for years, he is made of sterner stuff, and will be king again in the end (171). More convincingly, Aragorn himself recites a piece of Rohirrim poetry followed by his translation into Common Speech (Lee, “*The Wanderer*” 192), reusing some parts from *The Wanderer*, an Old English poem, which survives in a single copy in ‘The Exeter Book’ (Lee and Solopova 272).

Aragorn as Strider is a prominent wanderer, eventually making his return to Gondor, and yet his wanderings and being crowned again are not central to the story. The most significant wanderer in *The Lord of the Rings*, of course, is Frodo the hobbit from the Shire, who is determined to undertake the dangerous mission to Mordor in order to destroy the Ring. Although he wishes to return to the Shire, Frodo is supposed to be in exile to the West. His wandering is destined because of his wounds both in his body and soul. Roger Sale's essay "Tolkien and Frodo Baggins" (1973) and John Garth's essays entitled *Tolkien and the Great War: The Threshold of Middle-earth* (2003) and "Frodo and the Great War" (2006) associate Frodo's predicaments with Tolkien's appalling experiences in the Great War [The First World War].

Frodo has been repeatedly called an "Elf-friend," and what seemed at first "a polite form of address, later a complimentary epithet," can be seen "as the sign of election to a special company" at the Council of Elrond (Flieger, *Green Suns and Faërie* 75); he is equally ranked with "all the mighty Elf-friends of old, Hador, and Húrin, and Túrin, and Beren (270–71; vol. 1, bk. 2, ch. 2). They are described in Tolkien's mythology entitled *The Silmarillion* [published posthumously by his son Christopher Tolkien in 1977]. The term Elf-friend functions as a framework forming the community where the hobbits can be linked with the elves, and thus it gets Frodo to develop his special identity situating him in a unique position between the hobbits and the elves.

Sale affirms that Frodo's forming "the community with Gollum" [Sméagol] "that could destroy the Ring" (252) is to "create his heroism" (225). In *The Lord of the Rings*, Gollum has been transformed as a more wretched creature than that of *The Hobbit*. Gollum's appearance is delineated in the story. Gollum may appear to an eagle to be "a tiny figure sprawling on the ground," and "there perhaps lay the famished skeleton of some child of Men, its ragged garment still clinging to it, its long arms and legs almost bone-white and bone-thin," so "no flesh worth a peck" (644; vol. 2, bk. 4, ch. 3). Sale argues that Frodo knows "why Gollum is more an

object of pity than of scorn or anger” (225). He maintains that “the natural kinship of similar creatures [hobbits] and the common bondage of those who bear the Ring become one,” and that because they are “outcast,” “Frodo can create the possibility of society” (225). As a hobbit as well as the Ring-bearer, Frodo and Gollum are able to form the community of their own. It is inferred that Frodo’s virtues and empathy for others initiate a change in Gollum’s emotions towards him. In other words, Frodo’s modern heroism can be “lonely, lost, frightened, loving, willing, and compassionate-to recognize the otherness of others while reaching out to assert our common livingness” (237). As such it is a heroic construction crucial to the sense of community found in Tolkien’s text.

Frodo’s wanderings as the Ring-bearer are not usual ones because he does not seek the object, but destroy it. As Jane Chance observes, Frodo must give up his quest at the end and, in fact, he does not succeed; Gollum as adversary both subverts and achieves the quest (16). Frodo, Bilbo’s heir, is the modern hero of *The Lord of the Rings*, whose trip to Mordor as the Ring-bearer brings him nothing but suffering. It is blessed that Frodo and Sam meet Boromir’s younger brother Faramir, Captain of Gondor, who helps them in Eryn Muil after they leave the Company (656–58; vol. 2, bk. 4, ch. 4). Faramir’s heroism is as modern as that of Frodo’s, and his ecological pacifism and resilience also align with those of the hobbit. Although Frodo is destined to leave the Shire, Faramir remains in Gondor to preserve the lands of Middle-earth.

Frodo being called an “Elf-friend” enables him to perform his mission as the Ring-bearer though it also is a factor in his losing his identity as a hobbit, driving him from his community, and ending up in exile. As a hobbit as well as the Ring-bearer, Frodo and Gollum are able to form the community of their own that could destroy the Ring. In the end Frodo is transformed into a Sauron hobbit. His resilience against the evil power allows him to persevere with his task. Yet the burden of being the Ring-bearer is too much for him and into a tully developed character he ends up in exile in the

West. Ultimately it is Gollum, greatly transformed in *The Lord of the Rings*, and not Frodo, who completes the mission to destroy the Ring, doing his part.

This paper explores the construction of Frodo in *The Lord of the Rings* in order to find the elements of an Elf-friend in him and examine the struggle the hobbit undergoes. It begins with a discussion of the nature of Frodo as an Elf-friend. It next explores Frodo's role as the Ring-bearer in the story. The paper then proceeds to a survey of Frodo's self in the story by comparing him with Gollum, the miserable creature made more monstrous in *The Lord of the Rings*. The two eventually form the community of their own. The final section discusses the significance of Frodo's wanderings away from his community as he loses his self and finally seeks exile.