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Steven Brett Carter
The Citadel, SC

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Abstract

After Frodo, Faramir perhaps best represents Tolkien's thinking on war and processing of his World War I experiences. Carter reveals Faramir to be a far more modern warrior than any of his compatriots, particularly in contrast to Aragorn and Boromir, who are representative of much older and rapidly obsolescing models of heroism and methods of warfare.

Additional Keywords

Tolkien, J.R.R.—Characters—Aragorn; Tolkien, J.R.R.—Characters—Boromir; Tolkien, J.R.R.—Characters—Faramir; Tolkien, J.R.R.—Military service—World War I (1914–1918); Tolkien, J.R.R. The Lord of the Rings; War in J.R.R. Tolkien; World War I in J.R.R. Tolkien

FARAMIR AND THE HEROIC IDEAL OF THE
TWENTIETH CENTURY; OR,
HOW ARAGORN DIED AT THE SOMME

STEVEN BRETT CARTER

SCENES OF COMBAT AND THE FOREBODING PRESENCE OF WARFARE constitute many of the most memorable moments of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. Coming as he did from an academic background filled with warrior heroes of ancient cultures, Tolkien's depiction of war in his Middle-earth mythos is grandiose, featuring heroes reminiscent of kings and warriors from throughout history. It is evident that much of Tolkien's work with Middle-earth is in some way affected by his involvement in World War I as particular sections of his work seem to be lifted directly from his war experience. When asked about the subject, Tolkien stated that "My 'Sam Gamgee' is indeed a reflexion of the English soldier, of the privates and batmen I knew in the 1914 war, and recognised as so far superior to myself" (Carpenter 81). However, while Sam may represent what Tolkien saw and admired in the men he met in the trenches, Faramir represents a departure from ancient forms of war and the classical hero as he embodies battle strategies, uniform considerations, and equipment advancements of the twentieth century soldier. Janet Brennan Croft writes that "Faramir has a more modern and thoughtful attitude toward war, and is perhaps a more realistic model to emulate for the twenty-first-century reader" (*War and the Works of J.R.R. Tolkien* [WatW] 101). Furthermore, instead of simply representing the infantrymen of World War I and a modern attitude toward war, Faramir is a much broader illustration of the heroic model itself. Faramir represents the idea that with World War I the nature of the warrior which has been depicted in literature since the *Iliad* as glory-seeking and battle-driven is fundamentally altered. Despite being perhaps one of the most socially and historically relevant characters of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*, Faramir is rarely considered narrowly in criticism, either featured in comparison to other characters or treated cursorily¹. In Tolkien's saga of Middle-earth, Faramir exists

¹ Tom Shippey compares Faramir to Boromir, Éomer, and Sam in *The Road to Middle-earth*. Christopher Tolkien provides a history of the creation of Faramir in the *The War of the Ring*. Paul Edmund Thomas provides an entry on Faramir for the *J.R.R. Tolkien Encyclopedia* in

as a means to establish a new definition of the heroic model for the twentieth century in contrast to the ancient heroic ideals which are dissolved in World War I.

World War I was a conflict that was both psychologically and technologically different from any war that had previously occurred in history. It was with this war that the technological capabilities of man surpassed the standard practices of warfare that had been in existence for as long as there has been organized combat. The introduction of the machine gun, mortars, and chemical weaponry created a type of warfare that demanded a new position on the nature of war and the soldier. In an article for National Geographic Magazine in 1944, Brigadier General W.H. Wilbur wrote that in wars throughout history "soldiers and sailors measure their contribution by four considerations. First, by the degree of their isolation and loneliness; second, by the amount of physical discomfort they endure; third, by the amount of danger they undergo; and last, by the amount of real aggressive fighting that they do" (514). Tolkien and other World War I soldiers who were confined to trenches for extended periods of time, constantly under threat of bombardment and the horrifying effects of gas attacks, and under the expectation to charge hopelessly towards guns capable of out-firing entire units by themselves, demonstrate just how World War I infantrymen are set apart from warriors of the past. This demanding form of combat created a new view of war and with it the necessity for a new heroic model.

The primary way in which war was forever changed in the early twentieth century was the transformed battle tactics that were implemented to adapt to the latest technological advancements. The battle formations and tactics of the ancient world were demonstrated to be unusable and even foolish in warfare of the twentieth century. Up to this point, war was largely waged by two opposing forces marching toward each other on an open battlefield. In *A History of Warfare*, John Keegan traces this battle plan back to the ancient Greeks in the phalanx age who "confronted their like-minded enemies face-to-face" (332). With the advent of the machine gun of the twentieth century this form of face-to-face combat significantly declined in importance, making it even less effective and, in many instances, suicidal. In World War I, men such as Tea Club and Barrovian Society member Rob Gilson, while on the British front, demonstrated how this way of fighting became obsolete as he and his regiment "scrambled up ladders from the trenches and into the open, forming up in straight lines as they had

which he discusses his role in the story as well as the character's creation. Faramir's relationship with Éowyn is analyzed in articles from Melissa McCrory Hatcher and Melissa Smith. Faramir's treatment in Peter Jackson's films is discussed in an essay from Anthony S. Burdge and Jessica Burke.

been instructed, and beginning their slow tramp forward" (Carpenter 82). As Gilson approached enemy lines, the opposition fired upon the British troops with their machine guns. What was once the work of an entire army was now within the capability of an individual weapon system. Attempting to use the ancient face-to-face style of warfare made it difficult for the average soldier to even survive a battle, much less win one.

The difference in battle tactics affected the conduct of war all the way from the movement of armies to the psychology of the individual soldier. The role of the individual soldier was altered in World War I from a warrior in control of the battlefield to that of a pawn at its mercy. In "Martial Illusions: War and Disillusionment in Twentieth-Century and Renaissance Military Memoirs," Yuval Noah Harari writes that "in the twentieth century [...] soldiers have become disillusioned with war, and their own image has partly changed from that of heroes to that of victims" (43). Unlike the heroic soldiers of ancient wars, soldiers from World War I were not interested in the dreams of glory and honor that can only be achieved on the battlefield. Instead, they were concerned with mere survival. The ancient heroes became inadequate representations of the hardships faced by the modern soldier. When the war first struck Europe, society still believed in the ancient heroic ideals of long dead warrior societies. John Garth quotes Richard Jenkyns: "as the long prosperous years of the Pax Britannica succeeded one another, the truth about war was forgotten, and in 1914 young officers went into battle with the *Iliad* in their backpacks and the names of Achilles and Hector engraved upon their hearts" (qtd. in *Tolkien and the Great War* [TatGW] 42). Thousands of young men were heading to the front aspiring to win honor and glory in combat like the classical epic heroes.

However, the conditions these soldiers endured in the trenches of France were unlike anything Achilles or Hector had ever faced. In his letters, Gilson wrote of "utter barbarism of war" and how facing "the nightmare of those wet cold trenches" ultimately destroyed for him any notion of honor in war and "shattered the noble hopes and ideals that the war gave us at first" (qtd. in Garth, "Robert Quilter Gilson, T.C.B.S: A Brief Life in Letters" ["RQG"] 83). In this new landscape of warfare, those classical heroic models were useless. Harari writes that "the old heroic rhetoric of war has come to sound increasingly pompous and ridiculous to Western ears, and has consequently been replaced by a new and much more somber war rhetoric" (45). The change in warfare inevitably led to a change in the conception of the nature of war itself. "Nevertheless," continues Garth, "the worn word 'hero' was being reforged in galvanizing fires" and the nature of the heroic warrior was being redefined for a new era of warfare (TatGW 69). Faramir's role in battle and the redefinition of the heroic ideal, as Croft asserts, appears in how he questions "the chivalric ideal of war as a 'high male endeavour'" and "sees war as a means but not an end in itself, and thus finds

another way to confront the ‘disturbing elements’ of being a warrior” (*WatW* 43). While Faramir accepts the role of the warrior, he rejects the idea of the warrior society. With this rejection, Tolkien uses Faramir as a model for the new heroic figure for modern warfare. During World War I, the classical idea of war breaks down and is replaced with both a cynicism and a heroic model that, like Faramir, is grounded more in humility and peace than in glory and combat.

Within the reality of *The Lord of the Rings*, the common outlook on war is one that is more closely aligned with ancient epic heroes than with Tolkien’s own personal views. Tolkien’s views on war were problematic; as Garth states, “despite his taste for romance and high diction, [...] Tolkien did not find the war adventurous, dashing, or sacred. He summed up trench life as ‘animal horror’” (*TatGW* 290). Although his opinion of war may have been harsh and unfavorable, this sentiment is not readily evident in *The Lord of the Rings*, which seems to glorify battle as Aragorn and the Fellowship cleave their way through countless hordes of orcs and characters such as Legolas and Gimli turn slaughter into a game, competing with one another by comparing the number of kills. While all combatants in the War of the Ring fight out of necessity and for an undeniably righteous cause, it is easy to differentiate those who follow ancient ideals of the warrior society from those less interested in glory. It is in the humility of characters such as Sam and the honest language of Faramir that Tolkien’s true vision of war and the new heroic model that emerges in World War I is shared.

The character of Faramir initially appears with his group of rangers late in *The Two Towers*; his men reveal an enormous amount of detail and insight into the methods and strategy of their leader. When travelling through the woods in an attempt to find a more covert way of entering Mordor, Sam and Frodo are confronted by a group of Gondorians who come upon the hobbits suddenly and from several directions. Tolkien’s initial description of the rangers includes an inventory of items that reveal exactly how the unit operates by describing their equipment and clothing.

Four tall Men stood there. Two had spears in their hands with broad bright heads. Two had great bows, almost of their own height, and great quivers of long green-feathered arrows. All had swords at their sides, and were clad in green and brown of varied hues, as if the better to walk unseen in the glades of Ithilien. Green gauntlets covered their hands, and their faces were hooded and masked with green, except their eyes, which were very keen and bright. (Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings* [*LotR*] IV.4.657)

The rangers under the command of Faramir are armed with long bows, giving them the capability to wage war over distances greater than most of their foes. This is the same type of warfare deemed cowardly and dishonorable by the chivalric knights, but is far more effective and less perilous than the face-to-face

equivalent, especially when used from cover. A Bowman, such as one of Faramir's unit, could "without any of the long apprenticeship to arms necessary to make a knight, and equally without the moral effort required of a pike-wielding footman, kill either of them from a distance without putting himself in danger" (Keegan 333). The traditional warrior class protested such tactics and the men who used them "on the ground that their weapon was a cowardly one and their behaviour treacherous" (333). This tactic also reveals Faramir to be a conscientious leader, minimizing the risk to his subordinates while maximizing their effectiveness in battle. Faramir was considerate of the risk he put his men to and sacrificed the idea of glorious face-to-face combat in favor of a weapon system that would be less desirable in the eyes of men such as Boromir, but also much more efficient.

The colors worn by Faramir's rangers also set them apart from other combatants in Tolkien's work as well as align them with more modern military forces. Until the twentieth century the British military dressed its men in colorful and dramatic uniforms, most notably with the famous scarlet tunics. With the coming of the twentieth century and World War I, however, the British army implemented a khaki uniform, in order to camouflage the soldiers fighting in the dirt and mud of the trenches. Faramir shows a modern sense of warfare by discarding the shining mail and other bulky garments worn by Boromir and Aragorn in favor of a streamlined uniform with colors to blend in with the environment, giving the rangers the advantage of stealth. Camouflage is also discussed during another notable occasion in *The Lord of the Rings* and is again associated with a grander ideal of heroism. When leaving Lothlórien, each member of the Fellowship received a bundle of gifts from the elves.

For each [member of the Fellowship] they had provided a hood and cloak, made according to his size, of the light but warm silken stuff that the Galadhrim wove. It was hard to say of what colour they were: grey with the hue of twilight under the trees they seemed to be; and yet if they were moved, or set in another light, they were green as shadowed leaves, or brown as fallow fields by night, dusk-silver as water under the stars. (*LotR* II.8.370)

The elves, Tolkien's most revered race and the wisest group of beings in Middle-earth, gift the Fellowship with cloaks that have the ability to change colors and blend with their surroundings instead of dazzling in gold or silver. By giving the Fellowship garments of camouflage, Tolkien is affirming that the heroic model must be renewed and that the hero must adapt to the new standard of warfare. Since face-to-face warfare and posturing made up such a large part of military life up until World War I, the concept of camouflage was a radical change when implemented by an entire force. Although stealth tactics existed in early wars, it

was in World War I that their use became widespread and absolutely necessary. With Faramir's reliance on camouflage, Tolkien demonstrates a need for adaptability and change with regards to the modern heroic figure.

Instead of the elaborate systems of posturing and face-to-face confrontations preferred by Boromir and the chivalric armies of history, Faramir's men use stealthy tactics to sneak up on their targets and avoid making themselves known until "flight and hiding were no longer possible" (*LotR* IV.4.656). This directly opposes the position of Boromir established during *The Fellowship of the Ring* as he expresses an interest in posturing even when it is unwise. As the Fellowship first sets forth from Rivendell, Boromir "blew a blast [from his horn]. And the echoes leapt from rock to rock, and all that heard that voice in Rivendell sprang to their feet" (*LotR* II.3.279). Elrond warns Boromir against sounding his horn, to which Boromir replies "always I have let my horn cry at setting forth, and though thereafter we may walk in the shadows, I will not go forth as a thief in the night" (II.3.279). Going forth as thieves in the night is exactly how Faramir chooses to conduct war. Instead of making the enemy aware of his presence and facing them in traditional combat, Faramir sets an ambush for the Southron men, taking advantage of the element of surprise and attacking from cover in order to efficiently and systematically eliminate the enemy. As Sam sits and watches the rangers prepare for battle, "he could see [the rangers] stealing up the slopes, singly or in long files, keeping always to the shade of grove or thicket, or crawling, hardly visible in their brown and green raiment, through grass and brake. All were hooded and masked [...]. Before long they had all passed and vanished" (*LotR* IV.4.660). Using camouflage and stealth, the warriors under Faramir's command set themselves apart from all other military units besides the elves in *The Lord of the Rings* and ultimately align themselves more closely with the soldiers of modern warfare than with the ancient heroes prevalent in the work of Tolkien.

The rangers of Ithilien also employ tactics that are less common in Tolkien's work as well as in ancient combat but are more closely aligned with the British strategy of World War I. Croft discusses the theory behind emerging strategy in World War I in "The Hen that Laid the Eggs: Tolkien and the Officers Training Corps," in which she writes that just before World War I, the English decided to draw on the young, educated men of the country and establish them as leaders, creating an "underlying cultural model valuing preparedness" (97). Instead of creating a military of fighters, the English government was concerned with creating an army of thinkers who could lead forces of men to success by means other than simply applying force. Croft gives a number of examples of "the dangers of lapsed vigilance in Middle-earth" (102) including Sauron's reestablishment of Barad-dûr and Saruman's negligence of the ents. Faramir's ability to coordinate several covert ambushes in *The Lord of the Rings* may also

lend itself as an example of good military preparedness as Faramir is able to exploit the weaknesses of Sauron's forces and the classical ideas of conventional warfare. It is when Faramir abandons his own combat strategy in favor of the classical model endorsed by his father Denethor that he loses a battle. Capitalizing on preparedness, just as the English did in World War I, Faramir's rangers dressed efficiently, wearing inconspicuous colors and equipping themselves only with what they could carry. In his article on Gilson, Garth reveals the soldier's "joy of battalion unity, of carrying all one's possessions, and of never staying in one place for more than a night" ("RQG" 89). Faramir stalked the enemy and took advantage of their lack of preparedness by employing camouflage, constant movement, and surprise tactics to aggressively attack Sauron's forces.

Faramir's relationship with his subordinates is also peculiar in comparison to other military units and relates to the new model of heroism that arose during World War I. In *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Paul Fussell writes that "a standard experience during the war was the company officer's discovery that his attitude toward his men [...] had turned into something close to devotion. [...] The men trusted their officer not just to safeguard their lives if he could but to deal with them decently when out of danger. They responded with wry admiration and affection, as to an odd twenty-year-old 'father'" (164). Although Faramir maintains a level of authority over his men suitable to his rank, he is more commonly depicted as well-respected and often loved by his fellow Gondorians. One of the primary ways in which Faramir is able to break down the class barriers between himself and his subordinates is by wearing the same uniform as his men. When fully uniformed with mask and hood, Faramir is indistinguishable from any of the men under his command. A level of affection also follows Faramir which does not seem to exist between other higher ranking men and the soldiers. The character of Beregond especially illustrates the love between the rangers and their commander. As Beregond shows Pippin around Minas Tirith, he gives the hobbit a description of Faramir's strengths as a leader, comparing him to Boromir.

He is bold, more bold than many deem; for in these days men are slow to believe that a captain can be wise and learned in the scrolls of lore and song, as he is, and yet a man of hardihood and swift judgment in the field. But such is Faramir. Less reckless and eager than Boromir, but not less resolute. (*LotR* V.1.766)

In this passage, Beregond not only demonstrates his respect for Faramir but places him higher than Boromir, who is the more traditional hero in the story. By saying that men are slow to believe in his wisdom, Beregond implies that, though it is a desirable quality, such wisdom is not typical of higher ranking

soldiers. Referring to Faramir as less reckless and eager than Boromir leaves the impression that these are actually negative traits in Boromir's character. As Croft describes Faramir, she writes that "he is as beloved and charismatic a leader as Aragorn and as effective and skilled in battle; he has the same leadership style and characteristics, but thinks (or at least speaks) more deeply about why he fights" (*WatW* 101). Faramir is just as efficient a leader as either Boromir or Aragorn, and because of his sympathetic and morally conflicted character he is perhaps even more qualified to represent the heroic model of the twentieth century.

Tolkien would be familiar with the sense of camaraderie and closeness between officers and their subordinates. Garth writes that although Tolkien's experience in the army "enshrined old social boundaries, it also chipped away at the class divide by throwing men from all walks of life into a desperate situation together" (*TatGW* 94). The desperate situation of Tolkien and the lower ranking soldiers is mirrored in Faramir's journey through Ithilien and his attempt to defend Osgiliath. Faramir travelled with his men through the wilderness on the outskirts of his realm, brushing shoulders with Mordor as they attempted to interfere with any soldiers attempting to join with Sauron's forces. When later asked to ride to Osgiliath in anticipation of the Battle of Pelennor Fields, a futile and almost suicidal mission, Faramir does not ride alone, revealing that he has formed an intense bond with his men, who are willing to follow him to their deaths. In his letters, Tolkien writes that he had "a deep sympathy and feeling for the 'tommy,' especially the plain soldier from agricultural counties" (Tolkien, *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien [Letters]* 54). This level of respect is exhibited only rarely within military hierarchies of Middle-earth, revealing that the new heroic figure leads with sympathy as well as with discipline.

Faramir not only sets himself apart from other leaders in Middle-earth with his use of modern military strategy, but embodies the characteristics that are necessary for military success in modern warfare. Fussell identifies the two major causes of the allied failure at the Somme as the lack of both imagination and surprise. He writes that the British staff had little confidence for the rapidly trained army and "it was felt that the troops would become confused by more subtle tactics like rushing from cover to cover, or assault-firing, or following close upon a continuous creeping barrage" (13). Faramir, however, demonstrates himself as being both confident in his subordinates and a capable tactician within *The Lord of the Rings*, setting himself apart from the imperfect leadership that created the disaster that Tolkien witnessed first-hand.

The fact that Faramir is considered wise and learned reveals another aspect of Tolkien's definition of the heroic figure. The atmosphere of society during the early twentieth century was not focused solely on battle and glory, but instead emphasized wisdom and academic success. Fussell writes that the

intellectual landscape of the twentieth century military was unique as, perhaps for the first time in history, "it was possible for soldiers to be not merely literate but vigorously literary," creating a more thoughtful and introspective soldier, much like Tolkien's Faramir (157). The men in the trenches were not necessarily interested in military careers, but instead called upon to fight for their country in a time of need though their true passions lied elsewhere. Tolkien's own passions were found in his academic achievements, which were greatly respected within his community. The English school results, issued just before Tolkien's entry into the ranks of the English armed forces, revealed that he had earned First Class Honors. After the publication of his achievement, Tolkien received a letter of congratulations telling him that the honors were "one of the highest distinctions an Englishman can obtain" (qtd. in *TatGW* 83). This sense of accomplishment felt by Tolkien and his peers reveals the appreciation for academic success within Tolkien's society. Honor and glory could be accomplished through scholarly pursuits as well and were not reserved for the brave and valorous warriors such as in other, more ancient societies. Garth writes that "Faramir, of course, is an officer but also a scholar, with a reverence for the old histories and sacred values that helps him through a bitter war" (*TatGW* 310). Like Tolkien, who was more interested in studies than in war, Faramir longs for a time of peace when he can set aside his sword and instead take up a book. Tolkien and the T.C.B.S. were forced to put their studies on hold with the coming war and Tolkien "was facing the relinquishment of long-cherished hopes" (78). Faramir embodies this new wise and learned heroic model since his best qualities, as interpreted by himself and his men, do not lie in his strength as a soldier, but in his gentle wisdom and interest in glory away from the battlefield.

Another major scene featuring Faramir in *The Lord of the Rings* that reveals much of the warrior's moral code and value system is his conversation with Frodo concerning the One Ring, which mirrors many of the ideals present in the infantrymen of World War I and Tolkien himself. After taking Frodo and Sam captive, Faramir has a long discussion with the hobbits concerning the fate of his brother and the nature of Isildur's bane. Tolkien writes in a letter that it is during this scene that Faramir offers "some very sound reflections no doubt on martial glory and true glory," and it is in these first few pages of his appearance that Faramir reveals much of his character (*Letters* 79). In another letter, Tolkien writes that Faramir "had been accustomed to giving way and not giving his own opinions air, while retaining a power of command among men, such as a man may obtain who is evidently personally courageous and decisive, but also modest, fair-minded and scrupulously just, and very merciful" (323). Faramir demonstrates this honesty and mercy during his first meeting with Frodo when he announced that he "would not snare even an orc with a falsehood" (*LotR* IV.5.664) and when he states that he will "not slay man or beast needlessly, and

not gladly even when it is needed" (IV.5.665). In this passage, Faramir is portrayed as a compassionate warrior who refuses to kill recklessly or without reason, even possessing the capacity to look at an orc with sympathy. This compassion strays from the heroic model established by Aragorn and Éomer, who kill indiscriminately during wartime.

It is also during this scene that Faramir encounters the temptation of the One Ring, which previously led to the downfall of his older brother, Boromir. In the Appendix to *The Lord of the Rings*, Tolkien describes Faramir as able to "read the hearts of men as shrewdly as his father, but what he read moved him sooner to pity than to scorn" (*LotR* App.A.1056). This kingly intuition leads Faramir to the revelation that Frodo carries the One Ring, but he does not use this knowledge to try and gain power, and instead sympathizes with his burden. During this scene, Faramir describes himself as "wise enough to know that there are some perils from which a man must flee" (IV.5.681). In this moment, Faramir conveys an understanding as to how Boromir could have been tempted by the One Ring. Since Boromir represents the ancient heroic tradition of warriors that pursued glory and honor to their death, he would selfishly be drawn to the Ring. Even though he could claim to want the Ring for good intentions, knowing the evil power of the One Ring should make Boromir fearful of taking it. Instead, he is driven by his pride and longing for glory to take the Ring. "True-hearted Men," as Boromir calls himself and his people, "will not be corrupted. [...] We do not desire the power of wizard-lords, only strength to defend ourselves, strength in a just cause" (II.10.398). However, to use the Ring is fundamentally evil in itself, and it crosses a line that Faramir refuses to consider breaching. When discussing the One Ring with Frodo, Faramir says "Fear not! I do not wish to see it, or touch it, or know more of it than I know (which is enough), lest peril perchance waylay me and I fall lower in the test than Frodo son of Drogo" (IV.5.681). Unlike Boromir, whose pride and honor deceive him into believing he could take the power of the Ring for himself, in his humility Faramir knows that the Ring's power is beyond him. Boromir wishes to use the Ring to bring the fight to the enemy while Faramir would avoid warfare unless absolutely necessary.

Like the intellectual soldiers of World War I such as Gilson, who would admit in his letters to having a "late-night conversation about the ethics of war with his closest friend in the battalion," Faramir and Sam, as representatives of the twentieth century heroic figure, are also capable of such discussions ("RQG" 88). During his long conversation with Frodo and Sam, Faramir reveals his thoughts about war and his moral code. "For myself," says Faramir, "I would see the White Tree in flower again in the courts of the kings, and the Silver Crown return, and Minas Tirith in peace" (*LotR* IV.5.671). In these lines, Faramir reveals that he has no ambition for power. Although he is next in line for the

stewardship of Gondor, he would prefer that the king return to rule Minas Tirith and the realm of men. Like Gilson, who thought that to survive the war would “cast a rosy glow over everything [thereafter]” (“RQG” 90) Faramir too enjoys the idea of the reestablishment of a peaceful government after the war. However, Faramir does recognize the necessity of war, stating that “War must be, while we defend our lives against a destroyer who would devour all; but I do not love the bright sword for its sharpness, nor the arrow for its swiftness, nor the warrior for his glory” (*LotR* IV.5.672). Faramir reveals in these lines that he does not have the same drive for glory that his brother and other heroes of *The Lord of the Rings* possess. The role of the warrior that defined heroes since the poetry of Homer is cast aside in favor of a heroic model that prefers peace and only fights when his way of life is threatened and there is no alternative.

As he reveals in his letters, Tolkien shares the view that war is at times necessary for a society to defend itself. In a letter to his son Christopher, who was serving in the Royal Air Force during World War II, Tolkien writes that “the utter stupid waste of war, not only material but moral and spiritual, is so staggering to those who have to endure it. And always was (despite the poets), and always will be (despite the propagandists)—not of course that it has not is and will be necessary to face it in an evil world” (*Letters* 75). In this statement, Tolkien condemns the destructive effect of war on society as well as its glorification in popular culture. However, he ends the passage by stating, like Faramir, that there are moments when force is necessary in order to combat evil. Croft writes that “Tolkien may have hated war as only a veteran could, but he also felt that sometimes it was necessary to take up arms” (*WatW* 8). This understanding of the nature of war while not idealizing it is one quality that is perfectly shared by Tolkien and Faramir.

Faramir’s decision to ride to Osgiliath to land the initial blow of the Battle of Pelennor Fields, even though it essentially amounts to a suicide mission, shares some similarities with the plight of Tolkien and his friends during the first years of World War I. A characteristic of Tolkien’s generation that was unlike previous generations was the obligation of all citizens to join the war effort whether or not each man was interested in the pursuit of warrior ideals. In his study on the history of warfare, John Keegan writes about some of the changes that took place during World War I.

By 1914 an entirely unprecedented cultural mood was dominating European society, one which accepted the right of the state to demand and the duty of every fit, male individual to render military service, which perceived in the performance of military service a necessary training in civic virtue and which rejected the age-old social distinction between the warrior—as a man set apart whether by rank or no rank at all—and the rest, as an outdated prejudice. (355)

Tolkien felt an immense anxiety about finishing his undergraduate work and being forced into joining the war effort, just as many other young men were uninterested in going to war. Tolkien and his friends “felt that they were all being pitched into maturity” with the coming war (*TatGW* 87). While willing to leave in order to serve their country, Tolkien and his friends always looked forward to reuniting in the T.C.B.S. Faramir acknowledges Denethor’s command and accepts his orders, just as Tolkien followed the call of King George V. Like Faramir, Tolkien and countless other British citizens fulfilled their duty to their country, but only in the capacity of a duty. They did not live for battle the way men such as Boromir and Éomer did. Garth writes that “Now they felt that, for [Tolkien and the T.C.B.S.], the war was only the preparation for the task that lay in store. It was a ‘travail underground’ from which they would emerge enriched” (*TatGW* 137). To Tolkien, Faramir, and the average young man swept up into World War I, war was a brief interruption in their life and a learning experience, but never the central purpose.

Near the conclusion of *Tolkien and the Great War*, Garth argues that “Middle-earth contradicts the prevalent view of literary history that the Great War finished off the epic and heroic traditions in any serious form” (287). However, though Tolkien celebrates the ancient heroic model by recalling figures such as Beowulf and Beorhtnoth in valiant characters like Aragorn, he also uses *The Lord of the Rings* to show that these heroic ideals no longer have a place in modern society and in warfare after World War I. Fussell writes that while “the war was relying on inherited myth, it was generating new myth, and that myth is part of the fiber of our own lives” (ix). Many works of literature written on war can be drawn back to this idea of the reliance on myth while simultaneously establishing new myth. Writings such as Tennyson’s “Charge of the Light Brigade” attempt to celebrate classical ideas of heroic glory in battle and others, such as Remarque’s *All Quiet on the Western Front*², endeavor to dismiss such ideas entirely. Tolkien, however, does something much more ambitious with *The Lord of the Rings* as he replaces an antiquated and impossible mythology with a current set of ideals for the twentieth century. As Garth describes in “Tolkien, Exeter College and the Great War,” Tolkien was extremely interested in the idea of “a national myth, the embodiment in poetic language of one cohesive culture’s imagination and values” (44). Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*, which records the success and nobility of a more thoughtful and reluctant soldier, demonstrates the qualities necessary in the twentieth century and beyond.

² In the film version of the novel, lines from Homer’s *Odyssey* can even be seen on the blackboard behind the jingoist schoolteacher who encourages his students to enlist, further emphasizing the irrelevance of classical ideas of martial glory in modern society.

Through the character of Faramir, as well as the implementation of other, more subtle elements, Tolkien shows the impossibility of the ancient heroic model in twentieth-century warfare. Faramir embodies a redefined form of the heroic model that is more representative of the modern warrior by accepting war as a necessary part of western civilization, but preferring peace. Instead of longing for combat and the possibility of gaining honor and glory like his brother and others, Faramir does his duty to his state without becoming absorbed by these ancient ideals. Though characters such as Aragorn and Boromir are not necessarily as glory-driven as their classical counterparts, Aragorn's eagerness to reclaim the throne of Gondor and Boromir's desire to take the fight to the enemy set their heroic figures apart from the distinctly more reserved Faramir. The humility and wisdom of Faramir is evident in men such as Tolkien and the T.C.B.S. who went into service with caution and awareness, not selfish dreams of decorations and promotion. In Carpenter's biography of Tolkien, he notes that Faramir was an accidental addition to *The Lord of the Rings* whom he had not previously conceived until his arrival in Ithilien. "A new character has come on the scene," reveals Tolkien. "I am sure I did not invent him, I did not even want him, though I like him" (Carpenter 198). Later Tolkien writes that "as far as any character is 'like me' it is Faramir—except that I lack what all my characters possess [...] *Courage*" (*Letters* 232). With his accidental arrival and embodiment of some of Tolkien's own viewpoints, Faramir was constructed by Tolkien as a way to correct what he saw as flawed in the classical heroic tradition, especially when applied to what he had experienced at the Somme. In *The Lord of the Rings*, Faramir is certainly set apart from other, more classically traditional heroes such as Aragorn and Boromir and is ultimately revealed to be a critical component of Tolkien's version of the national myth as a character that embodies the heroic ideal of the twentieth century.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

STEVEN BRETT CARTER studied English and art history at the University of Alabama before receiving an M.A. in English from The Citadel. In addition to the works of Tolkien, his areas of interest include counterculture literature, visual media, and popular culture studies, particularly the relationship between cultures and mythology. Recently, he has given presentations on the counterculture movement of the 1960s including a paper on the early hippie subculture and its appropriation of comic book superheroes as a modern mythology.