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Becoming Faramir: Escapism as Responsibility and Hope
through Adaptation and J.R.R. Tolkien's

The Lord of the Rings

Megan Kathryn Myers

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

Becoming Faramir: Escapism as Responsibility and Hope
through Adaptation and J.R.R. Tolkien's
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Master of Arts

When Peter Jackson sought to adapt J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* to film, many fans worried about the changes that could be made to such a beloved story. Though the response to the films was generally positive, all three movies did have their detractors. Many of the complaints centered on his badly adapting the source material, specifically the characters. When Jackson released *The Two Towers*, fans were outraged further by how Jackson had handled Faramir. However, these interpretations of *The Lord of the Rings* and Faramir are a narrow evaluation of the larger problem facing fan and scholarly communities, that being, the devaluation of Escapism and what Tolkien calls, "escapist texts," in today's society.

Tolkien claims that the main purpose of escapist texts is that they allow audiences to recover previous experiences that gave them feelings of happiness or joy. Despite criticism of Escapism, escapist texts don't urge people to abandon their lives and seek something else. Rather, escapist texts encourage audiences to identify with and empathize with the characters represented in these texts, in order to return to their lives and accept responsibility for and connection with other people. When audiences see *The Lord of the Rings* and Faramir (whether in book form or in film form), they identify and connect with these stories and characters and seek responsibility in their own lives, which brings them, and those around them, hope.

Keywords: Escapism, responsibility, hope, *The Lord of the Rings*, adaptation, identification, empathy, Faramir, J.R.R. Tolkien, Peter Jackson, fairy-tale

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE.....	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iv
Becoming Faramir: Escapism as Responsibility and Hope through Adaptation and J.R.R.	
Tolkien’s <i>The Lord of the Rings</i>	1
Escapist Texts: A Definition and a Defense.....	3
Preliminary Analysis: Why Faramir?.....	6
Identification: What Audiences See Characters Do.....	9
The Importance of Stories.....	11
Empathy: A Real-World Approach.....	13
The Critical Conversation Around Escapism.....	15
Romanticism.....	15
Nostalgia.....	16
Faramir: An In-Depth Look.....	17
The Purpose of Adaption.....	21
“Identifying Readers” and Faramir.....	23
Finding Hope.....	25
Works Cited.....	32

Becoming Faramir: Escapism as Responsibility and Hope through Adaptation and J.R.R.

Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*

When Peter Jackson sought to adapt J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* to film, many fans worried about the changes that could be made to such a beloved story. Though the response to the films was generally positive, all three movies did have their detractors. These critiques ranged from generally positive with some negative comments (Ebert, McCarthy) to confused about the purpose of all three films (Rozen) to outright hatred or harsh criticism of specific choices made by Jackson or of the films overall (Bradshaw, Durbin). Among these criticisms came a particularly nasty review from *The Guardian*'s Peter Bradshaw, who said, "[B]ut even here the wilfully clotted, muddled narrative lets it down. The big finish at Helm's Deep is blurred by the action merging with a distracting cataclysm at Saruman's stronghold Orthanc Tower. Couldn't it have been simple, for once? So episode two finishes more or less where it began... leaving behind only the mystery of how some people can, with a straight face, claim that all this represents a serious evocation of good and evil" (Bradshaw). Bradshaw discusses the spectacle of the films as being one of the few things good about the films, whereas the story is derided as having too much going on.

But these were not the only criticisms Jackson's *The Lord of the Rings* received. Many of the complaints centered on his badly adapting the source material, specifically the characters. When Jackson released *The Two Towers*, fans were particularly outraged by how Jackson had handled Faramir, going as far as to say that the film had "[violated] Faramir's gentle nature" and that Jackson's interpretation was "a perversion of Faramir's character" (Watson). Scholarly conversations around *The Lord of the Rings* focused on much the same issues. In the edited collection *From Hobbits to Hollywood: Essays on Peter Jackson's The Lord of the Rings*, both

Jennifer Brayton and Cynthia Fuchs write that Jackson's characterization of Faramir centers on the character being mean or cutthroat and "arguing that Jackson made him seem more angry or nasty compared to the way the books treated him" (Brayton 147). Many analyses of Faramir's adaptation also revolve around his relationship with or to his brother, Boromir. Some scholars (Kisor, Croft) state that Jackson's interpretation makes Faramir appear to be a weaker version of Boromir, or a poor foil to Aragorn. These sentiments about Faramir are summarized by Janet Brennan Croft:

Tampering with the characters muddies these themes... In the text Tolkien deliberately balanced Aragorn's steadfastness with Boromir's hubris on the one hand and Faramir's humility on the other. Jackson eliminates this contrast by making the three characters too similar to each other, not only "angstifying" Aragorn, but at the same time placing an increased emphasis on Boromir's nobility and making Faramir as vulnerable to temptation as his brother. (Croft 65)

It is interesting that Croft makes mention of Aragorn in relation to Faramir in this context because the Faramir of the novels can appear at times as a complementary character to Aragorn's journey. What these scholars discuss for the changes made to Faramir is entirely valid and is beneficial in understanding how audiences see Faramir and what they view as his most important traits. When their interpretations weren't necessarily represented on screen, scholars and critics alike were alarmed and, in some cases, horrified (Watson).

However, these interpretations of Faramir are a narrow evaluation of the larger problem facing fan and scholarly communities and falls into one of two issues. The first issue came from actual fans of Tolkien's work, and often reflect the mindset that Jackson had not been faithful to the great work done by Tolkien. The second issue spawned from audience members and critics

who were not necessarily fans of Tolkien, but more a part of the general movie public. Criticisms from these communities seemed to center on the outrageous nature of the story or on the choice to adapt this material at all because it was “fantasy” or “escapist” literature.

Both sides, though, were unintentionally centered around the same problem. Their expectation of the films and what was represented on screen was different from their perception of what should have been there. For fans, it was the adaptation- Faramir was not the character fans had come to expect from Tolkien’s work, so much so that fans-turned-critics of the film nicknamed Faramir, “Filmamir” and “Farfromthebookamir” (Coker 240). Faramir wasn’t the only target of fan disapproval. Tom Bombadil had been completely omitted from the films. Characterizations of other main characters had been shifted in favor of having the themes of evil and human folly more apparent. Croft goes on in her essay to note that Gandalf’s “harsh treatment of Pippin is disturbing” (75-76). All told, these elements that readers thought were essential to the overall telling of Tolkien’s story were missing and fans found that disconcerting. For regular movie goers, the problem lay in the story itself. Many critics complained that the films made too much of themselves. In her review of *The Two Towers*, *People*’s Leah Rozen noted that “any sort of compelling story gets lost amidst all the spectacle,” with many reviewers noted as feeling the same way.

However, both sides are actually discussing a topic that goes much deeper than *The Lord of the Rings* (though Tolkien’s work is a good example of this issue that audiences’ have). Both sides come from a place of passion about what they see on screens. And all of this falls into the current-day devaluation of escapist literature. The phrase “escapist texts” refers to Tolkien’s description of the functions of literature and captures the essence of what makes many stories so compelling:

I have claimed that Escape is one of the main functions of fairy-stories, and since I do not disapprove of them, it is plain that I do not accept the tone of scorn or pity with which “Escape” is now so often used... In what the misusers are fond of calling Real Life, Escape is evidently as a rule very practical, and may even be heroic. (“On Fairy Stories” 69)

The issues that audiences face today are very real and these problems and sorrows are what Tolkien discusses when he mentions the “misusers” and their fondness for “Real Life.” Escapism and escapist texts are not some way for audiences to leave their troubles behind. Rather, escapist texts are a practical guide toward happiness- both in the worlds of the books we read, but also in the way we feel about life upon returning from our adventures in these texts. Tolkien claims that the main purpose of escapist texts is that they allow audiences to recover previous experiences that gave them feelings of happiness or joy. In this same section, Tolkien connects escape to “consolation” (69)- the feeling needed to comfort audiences after their losses and enable them to move on after disappointments. Escapist texts don’t encourage people to abandon their lives and seek something else, which is the oft-used explanation for what Escapism does and is, in general, the reason escapist texts are derided by critics. Rather, they demand increased engagement in life.

The purpose of escapist texts and the concept of Escapism are greatly needed in today’s world. Escapism has often been devalued as being merely entertainment or entirely irrational: Indulgence in such entertainment [Escapism] helps us avoid, temporarily, unpleasant truths that we must live with, and it is this escape from unpleasant reality that gives us the terms “escapist” and “escapism”... So a diabetic may not deny his disease when he thinks about it, but nonetheless manage to forget it much of the time, to such an extent that he

neglects to inject his insulin or stick to his diet. At this pitch, escapism borders on the neurotic, and is generally regarded as irrational. (Longeway 1)

The derision aimed at escapist texts, as John Longeway exemplifies here, often states that escapist texts and Escapism in general have no value because they give people ways of shirking their responsibilities. In essence, they believe that Escapism is about abandonment- that Tolkien and his works advocate for running away. This could not be further from the truth. Escapism and escapist texts are about reconnection, about recovering the feelings of worth or fulfillment that we need to grow as human beings. Because escapist texts can embody the connections to life and to other people that audiences need, escapist stories are not mere entertainment, but vessels for responsibility and finding hope.

Escapist texts function as separate spaces that readers/viewers can visit and recover the connections and feelings they've lost through the natural course of life. When fans of Tolkien's work read or watch *The Lord of the Rings*, the experience potentially fulfills something in them that they've lost. After the last page is turned or when the movie ends, they return to their lives in a different way than they were living before. They find the strength to keep going or the determination to live up to the examples of characters they've just witnessed. This strength is responsibility. And working toward this responsibility and continually connecting to the stories that matter to them gives audiences confidence. More than anything, Escapism and escapist texts are valuable because they give people hope.

This hope is best exemplified when audiences of both the books and the films see Faramir. The previously established criticism that Faramir's character in the movies is different from his character in the books isn't entirely incorrect- Faramir has been interpreted in a different way. But the idea that this change is wrong is problematic because the function that

Faramir's character serves is the same. Faramir in both the books and the films is considered a good and honorable character (both in the redemption he provides for the house of the Steward of Gondor, but also in the aid and care he gives to Frodo and Sam on their journey to destroy the Ring). This doesn't change in adaptation. Rather, it is Faramir's purpose that has changed, along with the time it took for him to become this character. Having both versions of Faramir represented can reach out to more people (some people like books, some people like movies; having multiple representations of Faramir can speak to all people, rather than just to one side). Though film-Faramir is different from what fans had envisioned, he eventually realizes his potential, which is something many fans feel as they grow and take on responsibilities as well. Representing this journey in both the books and the films can aid more people in seeking responsibility and push more people toward finding hope.

The characterization of Faramir, in relation to his brother, Boromir, and his father, Denethor, as well as Faramir's journey toward reconciliation or redemption depends upon the text. In the books, Faramir is not tempted by the Ring and he delivers Frodo on his journey onward without so much as an attempt to take the Ring. Faramir is wiser, calmer, and far more discerning than his brother or his father, as Frodo notes in the book, "Yet he felt in his heart that Faramir, though he was much like his brother in looks, was a man less self-regarding, both sterner and wiser" (Tolkien 650). Prior to this observation, Faramir had dispatched a few of his guards to protect the Halflings from the dangers in the area and didn't immediately execute them, contrary to the command of his father. The Faramir of the books needs no redemption because he has done nothing that needs redeeming.

But book-Faramir does need reconciliation with the proper order of the house of Steward. Faramir's father, Denethor, is corrupt, desiring power and being frightened by the future

destruction he has seen in the Palantir. But Faramir fears no such future because he is wiser and more prudent than his father in the face of great evil. He battles nobly in the pursuit of protecting Gondor and is ultimately exalted by Aragorn. In *The Return of the King*, Aragorn returns to Gondor upon their victory and comes to meet Faramir and the city in order to be crowned. As the city will now have a king, and having seen the destruction brought to the city by the House of Steward, Faramir requests that his office be dissolved. But Aragorn has other plans:

Faramir met Aragorn in the midst of those there assembled, and he knelt, and said; 'The last steward of Gondor begs leave to surrender his office.' And he held out a white rod; but Aragorn took the rod and gave it back, saying: 'That office is not ended, and it shall be thine and thy heirs' as long as my line shall last. Do now thy office!' Then Faramir stood up and spoke in a clear voice: 'Men of Gondor, hear now the Steward of this Realm! (Tolkien 945)

The Faramir of the books is not bitter about the love that Denethor gave Boromir but denied Faramir. He is not concerned with taking power, nor does he desire to rule over the people as his father did. The Faramir of the books seeks to protect the city and remain faithful to Aragorn.

In the films, Faramir tries to do what is right by Gondor, but is tempted by the Ring because of his father's great desire for power. This shift from the source material not only impacts Faramir's character, but that of Denethor and even Boromir. Though Denethor still dies in roughly the same manner in both text and film, Faramir (even though tempted by the Ring) is redeemed because he lets Frodo go and still retains his honor for his city, even though his actions mean almost certain death. Movie Faramir wants to be loved by his father. He wishes to bring back the Ring to please his father and doesn't recognize at first that this same action is what ultimately killed Boromir and split up the Fellowship. When Faramir realizes that this is true,

after having seen the exchange between Frodo and Sam in Osgiliath, he lets the Hobbits go and is willing to accept his Father's judgment. The Faramir of the films is redeemed through his choices as he accepts his responsibility.

The route to acceptance is different from text to film, but the end result is the same. Faramir is a character with whom audiences can relate. They feel for the complicated relationship Faramir has with his father and they use Faramir as a conduit to access this separate space of responsibility, identify problems in their lives, and return from their adventures ready to fully embrace who they are meant to be. The changes made in pursuit of adaptation do not ruin the message of this escapist text. Rather, it broadens the audience reached by *The Lord of the Rings* and allows them to become more responsible and hopeful in the face of their own adversities. Faramir's relationship with his family members is complicated, as evidenced by his reaction to Denethor's command to retake Osgiliath:

DENETHOR. Much must be risked in war. Is there a Captain here who still has the courage to do his lord's will?

FARAMIR. You wish now that our places had been exchanged. That I had died and Boromir had lived.

DENETHOR. Yes, I wish that.

FARAMIR. Since you are robbed of Boromir, I will do what I can in his stead. If I should return, think better of me father.

DENETHOR. That will depend on the manner of your return. (*The Return of the King* 1:22:39-1:23:44)

It is clear from this exchange that Denethor angrily despises Faramir and that Faramir's self-sacrificing nature is being used here to attempt to please his father, or at least atone for

something that is not his fault. Many of the viewers of the film may have gone through similar circumstances or may have closely related experiences that dealt with the attitudes of family members. The adaptation of Faramir may have changed his character. But the function of Faramir's character as a sympathetic one in both contexts can empower readers/viewers to seek power and responsibility in their own lives. When audiences see this journey represented on screen (or indeed see this in any media that connects to their individual journeys), they may be better equipped to connect to the people around them and become more empathetic human beings.

The concept that human beings can be better trained to connect to one another through these stories may seem impossible, but actually has a good basis in academic communities through what scholars called "identification." Identification and the concept of the "identifying reader" also has sometimes negative connotations, but they are imperative to understanding the contextual background surrounding Escapism and the claim that Escapism fosters responsibility. Analyzing the different functions Faramir serves will enable the audience to better see how characters like him can create responsibility.

When audiences of a specific work, be it literary or adapted material, begin to identify with the characters or emotions in that work, they shift from being merely observers and become "identifying readers" (Bley). In this context, "identifying readers" are audience members who see or understand characters as extensions of themselves in order to work through thinking or feeling differently about themselves. While it may seem extreme, as well as not always the best choice for readers, there is a role to identification in literature. Identification can make reading or watching more aesthetically enjoyable, but also prompt real self-reflection and/or change in members of the audience. This identification occurs both because it acts as a kind of rhetorical

tool used to convince the audience of their connection with the character (Burke, Hansen), but also because it makes the problems that audience members face more manageable and easier to see. Indeed this reaction is what prompts Escapism to create responsibility:

It was pointed out above that identification makes for the realization of the complete aesthetic experience... [Identification enables] the facing of a psychological problem, bringing it to light as in psychoanalysis; preparation for facing a physical problem, through vicarious practice; and escape, with the understanding that the word is not necessarily deprecatory. It must by now be self-evident that none of these three potentialities can be realized without identification. (Bley 29)

Identification has a purpose in literature and has become even more popular in the last twenty years. The rise of video games and “choose-your-own-adventure” books and television shows that allow audiences to step into specific characters and narratives has proven beneficial for cognitive and physical health (Nicodemo). The same is true of escapist texts because the connection that readers forge with the character they identify with can help them become more open to creativity and be better equipped to handle any psychological or physical problem that may arise in society. Today’s audiences are more equipped to serve and establish empathetic connections with those around them because they are more likely to help or take care of people with whom they identify (Nikolajeva). Escapist literature can help develop this identification and more.

It is also important to consider how escapist texts function, and ultimately connect these texts to their audiences to establish responsibility and achieve hopefulness. An important distinction to be made about escapist texts comes from the earlier definition given by Tolkien. Often, critics believe that Escapism is about running from responsibility. But the difference

between what critics think Escapism is and how Tolkien defines it depends upon what audiences assume its function is. In “On Fairy Stories,” Tolkien establishes that the Escapism critics think of is entirely different from what Escapism actually is. Tolkien asks:

Why should a man be scorned if, finding himself in prison, he tries to get out and go home? Or if, when he cannot do so, he thinks and talks about other topics than jailers and prison-walls? The world outside has not become less real because the prisoner cannot see it. In using escape in this way the critics have chosen the wrong word, and, what is more, they are confusing, not always by sincere error, the Escape of the Prisoner with the Flight of the Deserter. (“On Fairy Stories” 69)

Critics assume that people who read escapist texts are looking for a way out of their lives. This assumption carries negative and misunderstood connotations. Audiences seeking a break from their lives are not irresponsible. In a culture and day where self-care is constantly discussed, it seems odd that this solution (that people already seek, regardless of definitions and connotations) is discredited, when it in fact, helps people seek responsibility and hope. When audiences have stepped into the separate space that Escapism creates, they recover the energy and optimism needed to keep going and they emerge from these stories ready to take on life’s challenges. Audiences are also better prepared to connect to other people and help others recover their enthusiasm for life because escapist texts already fulfill these needs (for connection) for their audience and enable them to reach out to other people.

The other remaining issue is that critics assume that the only stories that function as escapist texts are fairy tales, which are oft viewed as being for children. Tolkien also disagrees with this assertion, “If fairy-story as a kind is worth reading at all it is worthy to be written for and read by adults. They will, of course, put more in and get more out than children can” (“On

Fairy Stories” 58). We learn from these stories, indeed from all kinds of stories. While it may seem irrational given the context of *The Lord of the Rings* and “On Fairy Stories,” these are not the only escapist texts. In terms of Escapism creating responsibility, any text that provides reconciliation, connection, and recovery can be an escapist text. Combining escapist texts with our established ideas of identification allows all willing audiences to find deeper meaning in these interdisciplinary texts, especially as some of the texts that could best fit into this category might be frowned upon or judged to be less worthy because they are popular. Instead of trying to define which texts are or are not escapist texts, it would be better to look at some specific aspects of the effect of escapist texts and simply acknowledge that escapist texts can come from anywhere (so long as they have a strong physical, emotional, or psychological impact upon their audience).

As previously established, escapist texts’ first function is to create a separate space, one in which there are no boundaries to what an audience can learn, what they can feel, or how this can create connections to all other people. As Maria Nikolajeva states in her text, *Reading For Learning: Cognitive Approaches to Children’s Literature*,

Since, as I have shown, a novice reader’s knowledge is insufficient to support this strategy, the novel becomes a cognitive puzzle. The life-to-text connection is essential to understanding the novel and to connecting back to life, for instance, by saying: “This has happened; it was horrible, it must never happen again. (Nikolajeva 74)

Escapist texts can help audiences reconcile past traumatic experiences or feelings that hold the audience back from responsibility and connection. Nikolajeva acknowledges that the separate space that these texts create allows audiences to come to the same (responsible) conclusions together.

What is most important, however, is that these spaces are focused on connection and allow all people to grow closer together. The common misconception is that Escapism is about leaving the real world in order to avoid dealing with our issues. But this couldn't be further from the truth. In her essay "On Tolkien and Fairy-Stories," author Terri Windling details the traumatic experiences of growing up in an abusive and violent environment and longing for a true home, separate from the ravages of evil. Windling discusses Tolkien's worlds as gateways that allowed her to eventually escape from her circumstances and find a community that truly felt like home. She didn't seek to disconnect herself from her world, but rather to find deeper connections in literature that enabled her to seek strength and progress in her own life. Even as she moved to other fantasy books, written by other authors, Windling found the strength to be a guide to others on the path:

This does not mean, of course, a life free of difficulties and challenges, but one that partakes of the qualities of life that Tolkien required in a fairy-story's ending: the consolation of joy and what he called 'a miraculous grace'... Now, however, I have a different part to play. I'm not the hero, struggling through; I'm the one waiting by the side of the road, disguised, and ready to light the way for those who come behind me.
(Windling 229)

The purpose of escapist texts is to act as guiding forces and also as spaces where readers can reach oneness of self. When they emerge from this space, they feel a responsibility to return to what they had once known, overcome it, and eventually lead others to become reconnected with themselves.

Identification makes Faramir an apt character for readers/viewers to hold onto, regardless of which version is chosen, because his journey and quest for the love and acceptance of his

family (but ultimately, himself) is an easier quest for readers to identify with. It might be harder for readers to connect with the other characters from *The Lord of the Rings* because adapted characters like Frodo and Aragorn don't necessarily function the same as they did in the novels. But with Faramir, any changes made in adaptation go to serve the same purpose: Faramir must overcome the failings of his father and brother and reconcile the house of Steward. Faramir's motivations may have shifted in the adaptation from book to film, but ultimately, the adaptive focus on Faramir is more easily relatable to every reader struggling with how they feel about themselves. Faramir's external issues with his family are centered solely upon his internal anxieties about saving his home. In the end, Faramir accepts the responsibilities given to him and he fulfills his quest for reconciliation or for honor. The emotional journey of his character speaks to identifying audiences, making Faramir essential to understanding what *The Lord of the Rings* can teach audiences about self-identity and responsibility and further the goal of getting readers/viewers to empathize with those around them.

In a further passage in her text *Learning For Reading*, Maria Nikolajeva discuss the implications of empathy and identification on novice vs. expert readers. But the underlying point that she makes about attribution (identification) in reading is as follows:

Experimental research has now confirmed what scholars of literature have known all along: that reading fiction is beneficial for our cognitive and affective development...

Mind-reading and empathy are essential social skills, and if they are not innate, but have to be trained, fiction may be the best training field for emotional literacy. (Nikolajeva 94)

While she stresses the need for balance in teaching students about fiction and caution in identification with characters for novice readers, Nikolajeva makes a valid point about the value of empathy in texts. Empathy is about allowing others to feel their emotions, rather than

sympathizing with their issues. When readers/viewers identify with and empathize with characters, they recognize and allow these characters to feel whatever they are feeling and this teaches them to recognize and empathize with the feelings of the people around them.

This means that the second function of escapist texts is to allow this connection and then help identifying readers to establish stronger connections with others as they empathically reach out to others and ultimately, help guide them forward. Nikolajeva's ideas about literature and empathy help to demonstrate the principles set forth in the thesis; Escapism creates a separate space where readers can reconnect with themselves and find responsibility, helping them to return to their circumstances with the tools and inclination necessary to connect to others and foster hope in society.

Examples of escapist texts, empathetic connection, and identification can be found in other related fields. The established legitimacy of Romanticism and the increased understanding of nostalgia and its connection to memory bring validity to escapist texts, both their impact on society, but also for how they function amid literary and adaptation circles. The concepts best embodied by these fields of study unknowingly fall into what escapist texts attempt to create for readers. The need to connect with nature is an inherent piece of Romanticism; escape is only achieved through removal of oneself from urbanity and an escape into nature to seek reconnection. Many Romantic poets and writers felt that the best way to evoke this feeling and desire in their audiences was to write about nature or about this process in order to inspire others to follow suit.

This is the exact premise of Escapism and a highlighted feature of escapist texts. The belief that escapist texts fall solely into fantasy or science fiction genres is not rooted in reader response and the need for adaptation. Any text can function as an escapist text for readers, so

long as it inspires readers to seek out defining experiences and further encourages readers/viewers to reasonably find the strength in their own lives to keep going.

Nostalgia falls into the same placement for escapist texts as Romanticism does. Unfortunately, while the study of Nostalgia and an understanding of how it impacts audiences is important for today's society (nostalgia creates a longing for reconciliation with our own pasts and creates a greater desire in people for escape), it also carries negative connotations for how much it pulls people out of their lives. This view polarizes communities and forces them to believe that things like Nostalgia and Escapism are negative areas of study. But this view fundamentally misunderstands the role of these concepts and even how they are used in communities. Nostalgia and Escapism are good things to use in society as motivators toward self-fulfillment and responsibility. Too much of either of these, however, can cause readers/viewers to turn away from society. Just like medication, sunlight, and water (all good things), too much of something (in this case, nostalgic material) can cause a loss of connection because whatever compels audiences to consume this type of media is fueled by pain and isolation. Understanding the need for balance is key to allowing all communities to drop pretenses against Romanticism, Nostalgia, and Escapism and better establish connection and responsibility in coming generations.

Why then use Faramir specifically to promote Escapism as a general tenet of responsibility in society? Given the expansive history of material that could be used to help audiences become identifying readers, couldn't any material that evokes these feelings work in the same way? In fact, they could. The point of escapist texts (and why, indeed, they are so hard to define) is that they allow audiences to connect to each other, regardless of the specific text because they all establish communal feelings and empathetic connections between one another.

There is no one correct example of an escapist text, just as no two people are exactly alike. People, in their vast experiences and personalities, need different feelings or identifying emotions/events to feel connected. And through identification, this becomes possible, regardless of text. This doesn't invalidate the premise of this thesis, but rather contextualizes this work to show how texts of this nature create responsibility for people who enjoy such an expansive work, just as historical fiction does for its fans and the same for members of the scientific community (or any community, for that matter).

Thus, Faramir becomes a fair character by which to connect audiences to other worlds. Because Faramir's function is the same when translated in both text and film, he serves fans of the overall work that is *The Lord of the Rings*, a sort of connecting piece that allows for all audiences to join together. One of the great issues that fans of the books have with Faramir's adaptation to film is a two-fold problem. The first part entails his overall demeanor. The Faramir represented on the screen appears to be cruel to those around him, jealous, and leaning toward almost bloodthirsty. One of the interactions portrayed on screen that horrified fans of the books was when Faramir interrogates Gollum. When Faramir orders the capture of Gollum at the Forbidden Pool, every moment, from Faramir waking Frodo, to Frodo's going down to Gollum is filled with images of Faramir's face. At this point, Faramir seems to relish the idea of killing Gollum, as his eyes seem hungry for blood (*The Two Towers* 2:24:18). When Frodo calls to Gollum and Faramir has him captured, the camera lingers on Frodo's despair before splitting to Faramir's face, where he wears a gloating expression (*The Two Towers* 2:25:59). The fans felt betrayed by this "perversion" of Faramir's character (Watson).

The second part of the problem with his characterization was that the Faramir of the movies was actually tempted by the Ring, whereas his book counterpart didn't seem to recognize (at first) the Ring and its bearer for what they were:

Nor when the riddling words of our dream were debated among us, did I think of *Isildur's Bane* as being this same thing... What in truth this Thing is I cannot yet guess; but some heirloom of power and peril it must be. A fell weapon, perchance, devised by the Dark Lord. If it were a thing that gave advantage in battle, I can well believe that Boromir, the proud and fearless, often rash, ever anxious for the victory of Minas Tirith (and his own glory therein), might desire such a thing and be allured by it. (Tolkien, *The Two Towers* 656)

Faramir understands the temptations that consumed Boromir and eventually led to his death. Faramir is often described in the text as looking "stern and commanding, [with] a keen wit" (648). Given the fairness he shows when he returns to speak with Frodo and Sam after the battle with the Oliphaunts, Faramir would have the wisdom to discern between truth and lies as he seeks to understand what happened to Boromir. Rather than jump to conclusions, Faramir (being more even-tempered than his brother) demonstrates the qualities that make him trustworthy to noble characters like Aragorn or Gandalf, and especially a friend to Frodo and Sam.

After Faramir comes to the realization that Boromir was tempted by the Ring and caused his downfall, he lets the Hobbits go, even after he finds out that the object of power is a Ring and that it is something he could easily take.

After noting Boromir's desire for the Ring in the previously given section, Faramir gives Frodo his assurances that he will not attempt to take the Ring, first while not knowing its true form and origin:

But fear no more! I would not take this thing, if it lay by the highway. Not were Minas Tirith falling into ruin and I alone could save her, so, using the weapon of the Dark Lord for her good and my glory. No, I do not wish for such triumphs, Frodo, son of Drogo.

(656)

Then later in the section, after Sam has accidentally revealed to Faramir what the object of power is and their role in seeking its destruction through the guide of the creature, Golem:

We are truth-speakers, we men of Gondor. We boast seldom, and then perform, or die in the attempt. *Not if I found it on the highway would I take it* I said. Even if I were such a man as to desire this thing, and even though I knew not clearly what this thing was when I spoke, still I should take these words as a vow, and be held by them. But I am not such a man. Or I am wise enough to know that there are some perils from which a man must flee. Sit at peace! (665-666)

Faramir notes here that his first duty is to his people. He is a son of Gondor and, as such, he would never lie or attempt to trick Frodo into giving him the tool of the enemy. Faramir immediately shows his strength and sets up the difference between Boromir and himself. Whereas Boromir brought about his own destruction, Faramir is much more temperate and practical.

The dichotomy that is shown between the two brothers is also indicative of the influences they allow in their lives. Boromir is very much like his father and consistently seeks to please him (which is ironic considering he can do no wrong in Denethor's eyes). But Faramir is not. Faramir is very clearly an ally of Gandalf and trusts Gandalf's judgment. This isn't to say that Boromir is evil. But their paths show which influences and responsibilities they undertook. Faramir's selflessness and sense of honor prepare him to be the eventual Steward of Gondor and

his loyalty shows Aragorn that he is willing to work hard as Steward and serve the King. In the similarities shown between Aragorn and Faramir's journeys, Faramir is clearly a hero. In a letter to a fan, Tolkien stated, "As far as any character is 'like me' it is Faramir" (*Letters* 232). Given Tolkien's experience with the horrors of war, meeting Faramir (as Tolkien recounts in another of his letters) and seeing himself in Faramir were part of a process of healing. Tolkien was able to write these stories that have connected so many people together and found the responsibility and creativity needed to move past his traumas. This is apparent in a scene from the books that was included in the extended editions of the films. In both the book and the film versions of *The Return of the King*, the exchange between Faramir and Éowyn in the Houses of Healing about finding hope and the clear love in Faramir's expressions and soft, kind words to Éowyn demonstrate his devotion and love. This sets up film-Faramir's redemption more clearly, as the prior bloodthirsty looks that he gave Gollum are replaced with loving looks after the trial for his father has ended. The Faramir of *The Two Towers* has survived the physical battle at Osgiliath and the metaphorical battle for reclaiming his honor after his shameful actions of trying to take the Ring and he has claimed the calm, loving expressions that fans of the books had imagined in this exchange with Éowyn. Though Faramir loses his brother and his father, his responsibility gives him purpose and his love for his people, along with his love for Éowyn, help him to recover that purpose at the end of the story.

Faramir's function and journey are, however, changed in the films, including Faramir's attempting to take the Ring to his father by way of bringing the Hobbits to Osgiliath, a decision that was widely protested by the fan communities surrounding *The Lord of the Rings* (Watson). The ultimate goal of this, however, was not intended to make Faramir a bad guy. On the contrary, the extended editions of the film set out to show Faramir's motivations, and ultimately

redeem his actions, along with the actions of Boromir. All of this is done to avoid invalidating the power of the Ring and to fit better into the adaptation, without sacrificing Faramir's core values and the story itself. The prior quote in which Faramir vows not to take the Ring to Minas Tirith, even if it were destined to be destroyed, is included in the films, albeit in a more emotionally charged place.

These points about Faramir also serve the purpose of adaptation: to tell the story in a way that adapts to the audience and allows for the work to be continually applicable, while also speaking to the original material that created or inspired it. Sometimes, filmmakers recognize that the source material may not translate into a new medium and adapts to make it still as faithful as possible with new methods, like using themes or motifs (Hutcheon). The point that adaptations change things is well-recognized in fairy-tale and adaptation communities, as Cristina Bacchilega states, "When discussing fairy-tale film specifically, Jack Zipes has emphasized that, like translation and appropriation, adaptation is an interpretive and transformative set of operations— selecting, updating... Like appropriation and translation, adaptation is imbricated with matters of property and propriety in that making a story one's own often involves expropriation, which [Zipes states] in turn raises 'ethical responsibility to the source, hypotext, and audience'" (Bacchilega 212). Elements of the story have to transform in order for audiences to understand what they see on screen.

Peter Jackson realized that audiences might not understand how powerful the Ring was with what they had been presented (as there was no feasible way to give the chapters of background and explanation Tolkien gives throughout the books to the audience) if there were characters that were not tempted by the Ring. Faramir's character does shift because of this decision, but he is ultimately redeemed by his choices, choosing to let go of his father's evil

desires and help Frodo on his way to destroy the Ring. Jackson also recognized that this change could be hard for audiences- this situation is acknowledged in the films in an exchange between Frodo and Sam in Osgiliath:

FRODO. I can't do this, Sam

SAM. I know. It's all wrong. By rights, we shouldn't even be here. But we are. (*The Two Towers* 3:21:39-3:22:01)

Despite the changes, Jackson wanted the audience to feel like the characters were intact, even if the story doesn't get them there in the same way. Ultimately, the shifting lens of adaptation that features Faramir, Boromir, and Denethor changes them to allow for redemption in the most emotional way possible. Rather than telling this to Frodo (though he does include encouraging words and help when he releases them to destroy the Ring), these words are spoken by Faramir to his father in explaining why he let Frodo go. Denethor is angry and sentences Faramir to take back Osgiliath from the Orcs—what would ultimately constitute a death sentence. Faramir agrees to attempt a suicide mission to reclaim Osgiliath, in order to regain his lost honor in his father's eyes. When he is brought back from the battle, Denethor mourns the loss of his son and plans to burn him on a funeral pyre. Faramir's actions are ultimately redeemable.

It is in these actions, both in the novel and in the films, that the audience can understand the sacrifice that he attempts to make and the responsibility that Faramir embodies. This is the aspect of *The Lord of the Rings* as an escapist text that establishes responsibility. Seeing these acts of bravery, understanding character motivations, and identifying with his journey can allow the audience to better establish patterns of responsibility and seeking it in their own lives. The adaptation of Faramir may change some elements of his journey. But the care that he displays in the films for the Hobbits before sending them off with Golem to Cirith Ungol is still apparent.

For the fans of the novel, Faramir's concern in the passage describing this is a continuation of the care he's shown them as guests in his camp and extends into letting them go and not seeking to take the Ring. Faramir in the films doesn't act the same way, but the anger with which he addresses Golem's soon-to-be treachery is a touching emotional element and redeeming moment. He may not have behaved appropriately in the beginning, but his care here lets the audience feel connected to him and his actions and care more about what happens to this man who seeks redemption.

This is what adaptation must do. In order to properly convey the power of the Ring without the necessary time for backstory, Jackson has to make creative choices that attempt to speak to the novel, while also representing the novel well on film. These changes are better placed in the Extended Editions of the films, which include the necessary additional background, while still trying to make the story palatable for all types of audiences.

While Faramir's desire to take the Ring is a part of the films, his supposed cruelty to Golem and to the Hobbits is better explained and gives greater depth to his character overall. These changes are necessary to adaptation in order to make the storyline clearer, help with shifting the storylines of other characters, and essentially, will connect to a wider audience by reconnecting them with identification and giving them increased empathy. The motivations of each of the characters involved is idealistic in the text (intended to show the goodness of society in the face of change and war), but the films seek to show the darker side of humanity- that any person can be tempted by evil, no matter how good. The difference between what the film deems an honorable person and what it deems an evil person is the choice to possess the Ring or to turn away from it. While film-Faramir appears to be deceived by the Ring, in actuality, he is only trying to appease his father's avarice. Faramir's motivations are essentially honorable.

While he initially puts the desires of his father (for power and to rule Gondor) before what he may know is right, Faramir soon recognizes that the greed that overtook and killed Boromir came from their father and that bringing the Ring to Denethor would result in Gondor's destruction. Faramir recognizes in Frodo a determination to do what is right in the face of what is difficult, and this inspires him to seek the redemption of men, his lineage, and most importantly, himself, by helping Frodo at the expense of his own life. Because Faramir acts in this way, his honor is restored and he eventually returns home and is rewarded for his righteous choice. Again, the choices displayed lead toward greater introspection and desire for responsibility on the part of the audience because they see this represented and can connect to who Faramir becomes.

Faramir's journey fits into his own arc as a character and isn't brought down by the changes from source material to adapted material. Rather, the individual story elements make it easier for wider audiences to connect to his desires and struggles in either context. This isn't to say that audiences can't connect to other characters. Rather, Faramir is an apt example because the changes made to his character don't overwhelm the kind of person he is, what he needs to do to seek redemption, and the honor he embodies in the end. In order to discuss this in depth, however, it is important to go over specific instances of his arc that confirm his redemption and other points that, more importantly, showcase the avenues through which audience members could establish responsibility in their own lives and seek hope.

Seeking responsibility, contributing to society, and empathetically connecting to the world are effects of the feelings that these texts create. All of which stem from the hope that these texts can embody or create. The reason why these texts resonate with so many people is that they evoke strong emotions and prompt memories that continually remind them of those strong emotions to allow them to keep going in their lives. Reconnection with the self is

important to establish empathetic beings. Faramir can represent this reconnection in his journey, and also in where he ends up.

Consider that Faramir's journey is well-represented by the speech that Sam gives at the end of Jackson's *The Two Towers*. After acknowledging that they were never meant to come to Osgiliath, Sam continues with a speech meant to inspire Frodo to keep going:

SAM. It's like in the great stories, Mr. Frodo. The ones that really mattered. Full of darkness and danger they were. And sometimes you didn't want to know the end. Because how could the end be happy? How could the world go back to the way it was when so much bad had happened? But in the end, it's only a passing thing, this shadow. Even darkness must pass. A new day will come. And when the sun shines it will shine out the clearer. Those were the stories that stayed with you... that meant something. Even if you were too small to understand why. But I think, Mr. Frodo, I do understand. I know now. Folk in those stories had lots of chances of turning back only they didn't. They kept going because they were holding on to something.

FRODO. What are we holding on to, Sam?

SAM. That there's some good in this world, Mr. Frodo. And it's worth fighting for. (*The Two Towers* 3:22:08-3:23:46)

This speech is hopeful. At a time in the films when their hopes are low and the Hobbits feel they are too far from their goal, Sam reminds them all (and the audience) that they can still succeed if they persevere.

After this point, the Hobbits are ready to return to their journey and at this point, Faramir lets them go. One of his kin reminds him that he will die for letting them go. But Faramir has started to realize that he can't continue on to his father with the Ring because he understands the

consequences and terror that using the Ring can have and he doesn't want to seek the ruin of his home with its power. It is at this point that audience understands that the hero in the story that Sam's speech discusses is Faramir and that he now understands what he is fighting for and that the Ring would bring only destruction. In the novel, when Frodo asks him what he wants in relation to the artifact, Faramir tells him that he would not take it from him, but that he would see Gondor returned to its former glory:

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: Minas Anor again as of old, full of light, high and fair, beautiful as a queen among other queens: not a mistress of many slaves, nay, not even a kind mistress of willing slaves. 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. I love that which they defend: the city of Men of Númenor; and I would have loved for her memory, her ancients, her beauty, and her present wisdom. Not feared, save as men may fear the dignity of a man, old and wise. (Tolkien, *The Two Towers* 656)

Faramir understands that Gondor's fate lies in the hands of those who choose to honorably defend it. When the time comes, both in the novel and in the film, Faramir chooses to let Frodo and Sam go, and ultimately redeems himself as a hero, just as Sam's speech suggests.

At the same time, Faramir's end destination solidifies his place as an honorable character with whom the audience can connect. He takes up the role of Steward of Gondor, ready to step down when Aragorn returns. In the end, Faramir is rewarded by remaining the Steward of Gondor at Aragorn's request, being appointed the Prince of Ithilien, and ultimately, in finding love and marriage with Éowyn. His journey is one that the audience can connect to, and the films

(while less detailed) give him these same honors. Faramir's actions make him reconcilable with his role and allow the audience to identify with him.

In the end, the most useful function of looking at the text and at the adaptation of the text is that the audience gets a fuller, more rounded view of Faramir as a character. Understanding Faramir's motives and feelings aids the audience as they identify with him and learn to seek responsibility, redemption, honor, or any other important attribute in their journeys together in life. The overall purpose of escapist texts and adaptation to multimedia is that they connect society together and create more responsible and sensitive people, that they end up making a difference in people's lives:

Rather than looking behind the text — for its hidden causes, determining conditions, and noxious motives — we might place ourselves in front of the text, reflecting on what it unfurls, calls forth, makes possible. This is not idealism, aestheticism, or magical thinking but a recognition — long overdue — of the text's status as coactor: as something that makes a difference, that helps makes things happen. (Felski 12)

It is interesting that critics assume that Escapism must instantly be relegated to magical thinking or a desire for running away, when it in fact has the ability to make a difference in the lives of all those who read it. The further implication for escapist texts is that, when they cause someone to become more responsible, these newly responsible people serve and help those around them, which enables them to feel comfortable enough to find their own escapist texts.

Because this is the case, any text that functions as “escapist” for an audience works to establish responsibility. It would be simple to claim that the only genres in which to find escapist texts are fantasy or science fiction based. But given the prior discussion on Romanticism and Nostalgia, combined with the diverse range of genres that adaptation covers today, any text that

evokes responsibility and a desire to enter a separate space to seek hope, functions as an escapist text for the audience member who identifies with it. Faramir works in *The Lord of the Rings* as a character with which audience members could connect, but in actuality, any of the characters from *The Lord of the Rings* could evoke this same reaction from the audience. Whether in adaptation or in text form, escapist texts allow audience members a deeper connection to the world around them and to the people around them. As Nikolajeva previously mentioned in *Reading For Learning*, escapist texts and their exhibition of identification can help readers connect better to the people around them as they interact with characters from novels. While we must be careful not to fully identify with characters (balance is key to not getting lost in characters), they should learn enough about characters to connect to diverse experiences, foreign to their own, and eventually learn how to empathetically treat and react to those around them.

Any character that can teach these principles applies in the same way and the overall view of the function of escapist texts broadens. Simply put, the predominant belief that Escapism causes disconnection is inaccurate. In actuality, Escapism prompts self-discovery, fulfillment, and ultimately, responsibility-led empathetic and intrinsic connection to the world around the audience. Adaptation makes this connection wider, as media represents these differences more fully, but it also serves another important point. Adapted materials, like film, music, games, or other media have the ability to connect to a wider group of people. And escape into these texts for audiences' sheds light on these spaces that create responsibility (among other valuable traits) and can bring about greater self-expression and connection with the world around them. Here, then, is the connection between these texts and these spaces of responsibility. These texts exist in a connective sphere that develops the space of the world we live in. To a degree, the world that we live in (and the spaces where we exist) are produced by the stories that we tell. The

suggestive lens that helps us look at these spaces as physical and metaphorical areas in our environment are influenced by adaptation and can help us understand and seek greater insight into who we are.

People feel very strongly about the stories that have shaped their environment to the point that authors or opposing viewpoints trying to change or influence how we think about that environment is like trying to fundamentally change who we are. We take stories into ourselves and allow them to shape the landscapes of our lives. We escape into these places to show us who we are. So, the place we escape into is the space where we discover truth. And when someone tries to alter or destroy the truths we've found, it fundamentally upsets the pieces that have influenced us and made us who we are. This is why people were upset at the changes that Peter Jackson made when he adapted *The Lord of the Rings* to film. The removal of Tom Bombadil, the shifting of characters like Faramir hurt people who felt that these characters exhibited who they were, who they identified with. This is why it is important to understand the nature of the return from escapist texts and how this can affect adaptation. Some things work better, but only if the natural stretching and shifting of these ideas can keep the points intact that garner the same reaction. When Frodo returns to the Shire in the books, the razing of the Shire has occurred, Sharky is in charge, and the Hobbits are suffering from the effects of mechanization and terror. And that was an allegory for Tolkien to show how he felt about returning from the first World War— how he couldn't go back to life after the war and remain in the same space as before. Tolkien worried that filmmakers wouldn't give respect to the original story or that it wouldn't be done properly (Tolkien, *The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien*). This is why people didn't want Jackson to adapt *The Lord of the Rings* to film; they feared that he would damage the story or the legacy of the man who wrote it.

And yet, the integrity of the story, though changed, still remains intact. Because rather than show the physical decimation of a place within the story, the personal internal destruction was what audiences connected to. This representation of what people felt was better established in the films depicted in Frodo's inability to readapt to the Shire and the need to leave for the Undying Lands, a place free from the pain inflicted by life and the elements of chaos that enshrouded the world of Middle-earth. Here, adaptation creates a space for healing by focusing on a place and making it into a concept. Though it's different from what people thought and wanted from the book, it still soothed the ache audiences felt by shifting the peace to yet another escape and connection with the self and with others. After entering the space of a story, it is impossible to return to the space we inhabited before and the self that existed before. But the metaphorical ending can show that we return to ourselves fundamentally changed. Not for the worse, but for the better. We don't have to hold onto our fears and pains. We now have the option of becoming better and moving on. Which is what Tolkien sought coming home from the war and what countless readers seek in his books. The plot may have shifted, but the space of healing and self-discovery that is created by the story and text itself remains. The learning experience is enhanced by multiple modes of media.

This thesis previously states that the effect of escapist texts and their creation of responsibility is meant to give people hope. The use of adaptation makes this possible, which includes the shifting lens that adaptation uses to convert characters from text to media. In the end, the changes in adaptation do not ruin the message of Escapist texts. Rather, it broadens the audience reached by these texts and allows them to become more responsible in the face of their own adversities. Faramir can be redeemed, Frodo can be saved, the world of Middle-Earth is not lost. And neither are the people who live and learn from these stories, or indeed any story of

escapist nature. Escapism can stand as a creator of responsibility because escapist texts ultimately connect audience members together through adversity to find hope in a better future. Ultimately, escapist texts can encourage a sense of completion in audiences, bring all communities together, and better the world in order to create more responsible and empathetic human beings in the future.

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