

the outbreak of the Spanish war may produce disagreement but, in his historical and social context, it denotes coherence.

On the other hand, discussing a situation as complex as that in Spain during the 1930s pays no regard to current ideas of political correctness and we have to take into account that it was not simply an issue of good and evil. Privately, the Spanish civil war greatly affected Tolkien and the way he behaved agreed with his own convictions. This should suffice.

José Manuel Ferrández Bru is founder member and former president of the Spanish Tolkien Society, he has published numerous articles about Tolkien but always in Spanish. He has a special interest on the author's connection with Spain through Fr Morgan and other people.

1. From the author's correspondence with Priscilla Tolkien.
2. Antonio Osborne's letter to Francis Morgan (original in Spanish), 10 January 1933; Osborne Archive.
3. Francis Morgan's letter to Antonio Osborne (original in Spanish), 10 May 1933; Osborne Archive.
4. Related with the Spanish war, a student asked him for a donation to support the republican cause and Lewis told him that he never donated money "to anything that had a directly political implication". West, J. G. Politics from the Shadowlands: C. S. Lewis on Earthly Government in *Policy Review* 68, 68–70 (1994).
5. On 24 May 1944, Churchill gave a speech in the House of Commons supporting the Franco regime, showing his gratitude for its neutrality in the Second World War, which he considered a great service to the allies.
6. Curiously the British fascist groups never were strong sympathizers of Franco's cause. Oswald Mosley, leader of the British Union of Fascists, stated arrogantly: "No British blood should be shed on behalf Spain." Buchanan, T. *Britain and the Spanish Civil War* 90 (Cambridge University Press, 1997). p 90

7. Tolkien had an additional link with Archbishop Hinsley. Hinsley appointed to David Mathew as Auxiliary Bishop, who was the brother of Tolkien's good friend Fr Gervase Mathew, a Dominican scholar who lived in Oxford working in Blackfriars College. Both, Gervase and David had spent his childhood in Lyme Regis. In this town, Tolkien knew them from a visit with Fr Morgan, who was a friend of the family, when all they were children.
8. Aspden, K. *Fortress Church: The English Roman Catholic Bishops and Politics, 1903–63* 89 (Gracewing, 2002).
9. Pearce, J. *Unafraid of Virginia Woolf: The Friends and Enemies of Roy Campbell* 257, 271 (ISI Books 2004).
10. C. S. Lewis was a merciless critic of Campbell (although Tolkien points to extraliterary arguments in order to justify the severity of his criticism such as "there is a good deal of Ulster still left in C.S.L. if hidden from himself" (*Letters* 83)).
11. Pablo Merry del Val, quoted above, was the son of Alfonso Merry del Val, cousin of Francis de Zulueta. In the Spanish war he served as head of press of the insurgents' government.
12. Tolkien refers to a group of poets that flourished in the context of the University of Oxford in the early 1930s, known as the Auden generation. This group of young poets led by W. H. Auden and made up by Cecil Day Lewis, Stephen Spender and Louis MacNiece belonged to the first generation of British attracted to Marxism. Interestingly despite their different attitude towards Spanish war and considering the fact that Tolkien criticized the Auden's departure to America during the Second World War, they developed a cordial friendship several years later. On the other hand, their relationship breaks up with the myth of the Tolkien's intolerance because Auden was a leftist sympathizer and a declared homosexual.
13. Inglis, F. Gentility and powerlessness: Tolkien and the new class in *This Far Land: J. R. R. Tolkien* (ed. Giddings, R.) 24–45 (Barnes and Noble, 1983).
14. Although several critics insist on a supposed apology of racial superiority in Tolkien (for example, because of his portraits of the elves or the men of Númenor) there is an unquestionable sample closely linked to the background of this work: the civil war in Gondor, in which a desire of racial purity leads to despotism and destruction.
15. Caldecott, S. *Secret Fire: The Spiritual Vision of J. R. R. Tolkien* 2 (Darton, Longman & Todd, 2003).
16. Curry, P. *Defending Middle-Earth: Tolkien: Myth and Modernity* 38 (Houghton Mifflin, 2004).

There and Back Again and other travel books of the 1930s

DALE NELSON

Often overlooked by Tolkien's admirers is the fact that the interwar years were the golden age of the British travel book, when civilians could still cross frontiers relatively freely and "Mr. Peter Fleming went to the Gobi Desert, Mr. Graham Greene to the Liberian hinterland; Robert Byron ... to the ruins of Persia"¹. It paid publishers to print travel books. Sometimes readers forget that Tolkien gave his 1937 classic *The Hobbit* the subtitle *There and Back Again*, and that "There and Back Again" is the main title chosen by Bilbo for his reminiscences — his subtitle being 'A Hobbit's Holiday'. *The Hobbit* has been discussed as a quest story indebted to medieval sagas and poetry, as a parable of maturation and, of course, as a children's adventure tale, but it also uses characteristics of the contemporary popular travel writing.

Restricting our attention just to the 1930s, we find

evocative titles that could have been applied to Bilbo's eventful journey: *Remote People* (Evelyn Waugh, 1931), *Strange Wonders: Tales of Travel* (Christopher Sykes, 1937) and *The Lawless Roads* (Graham Greene, 1939), a title that Tolkien could have used for Chapter 2, referring to the Lone-lands that Bilbo and his companions enter when the Shire is long left behind. Just missing the interwar period was *Far Away and Long Ago* (W. H. Hudson, 1918). Those titles are romantic enough. However, in keeping with the somewhat deflationary tone of much interwar travel writing are titles such as *One's Company: A Journey to China* (Peter Fleming, 1934), *Ninety-Two Days: The Account of a Tropical Journey through British Guiana and Part of Brazil* (Waugh, 1934) and *Hindoo Holiday: An Indian Journal* (J. R. Ackerley, 1932). Like these titles, Bilbo's own modest titles for his proposed memoirs, *There and Back Again: A Hobbit's Holiday*, would



have promised no great discoveries or bloodcurdling adventures to his readers — although readers of Tolkien's narrative, having arrived at the book's end, know that those are exactly what Bilbo did experience. The ironic or self-deprecating tone of the British travel book was so well established as a convention by 1933 that Robert Byron could begin one of his contributions to the genre thus:

It has been the boast of some travel books to contain nothing that can either instruct or improve their readers. The boast is one I should like to make. (ref. 2)

The travel-book titles typically imply that there will be much inconvenience and even some serious discomfort, but nothing truly tragic will occur.* Such titles suggest a fundamentally inconsequential but interesting journey undertaken by an ordinary person sojourning, although it be for a relatively brief time, among extraordinary scenes and peoples. The traveller is (like Bilbo) a person of some

*Of course, *The Hobbit* contains important departures from the travel book formula. Bilbo's journey is profoundly consequential for the history of Middle-earth because he brings back Sauron's Ring. But Bilbo doesn't realize that the Ring is of enormous importance, and neither did Tolkien when he wrote the book. The tone of *The Hobbit* becomes more heroic round about Chapters 14–17, as has often been noted. Here the travel book flavour is, indeed, nearly absent. Bilbo's involvement in the Battle of the Five Armies at the book's climax is important, but it was never foreseen by him and he never sees himself as a true hero. As for the typical travel book's lack of a 'tragic' dimension — it may be objected that there's Thorin's death. One suspects that Bilbo found this subject a bit above him when he wrote that part of his memoir. His own subtitle, 'A Hobbit's Holiday', obviously shies away from the elegiac as well as other aspects of the heroic. Bilbo's book was to be a precursor of the 1930s travel books that were thousands of years in the future relative to Bilbo's late-Third Age milieu!

means and is likeable, cultured but probably not erudite, usually unattached romantically or domestically, does not see himself as heroic, and is often not the best-informed member of the (usually all-male) travelling group. He is not trying to escape some serious problem at home, but might be feeling a little stale. The object of the journey may be romantic, but incidents of the journey are often treated ironically. The traveller is not profoundly changed by his travels (see the concluding exchange between Gandalf and Bilbo). That is the formula for the typical British interwar travel book, and it is a formula that Tolkien seems to have adapted for his children's book.

It is not part of my purpose, by the way, to insist that Tolkien must have been a devoted reader of travel books, let alone that he deliberately imitated (or parodied) any particular one. I will be content to argue that *The Hobbit*, as well as showing the children's book qualities, the echoes of medieval literature, and other features that others have discussed already, is pervasively marked by characteristics of a type of writing very much in the air during the specific decade in which Tolkien wrote his book. This was a time, Evelyn Waugh remembered, when, as a reviewer, he used to receive travel books "in batches of four or five a week"¹. Like book publishers, editors of newspapers and magazines (such as *Wide World*) also loaded up their pages with travel writing. Tolkien couldn't miss it. Many of my examples of this writing will be taken from Peter Fleming's *Brazilian Adventure* (1933), which Paul Fussell says was "perhaps the most popular travel book written between the wars"³. It seems likely that Tolkien had been working on *The Hobbit* for many months by the time *Brazilian Adventure* was

published. I don't know whether he ever read it. But it is a good exemplar of a kind of writing that finds many echoes in *The Hobbit*.

The travel-book journey might start with an advertisement leading to face-to-face negotiations:

Exploring and sporting expedition, under experienced guidance, leaving England June, to explore rivers Central Brazil, if possible ascertain fate Colonel Fawcett; abundance game, big and small; exceptional fishing; ROOM TWO MORE GUNS; highest references expected and given. — Write Box X, The Times, E. C. 4
(ref. 4)

Gandalf set up Bilbo for adventures that he did not desire, by leaving a mark that the dwarf Gloin interprets as an advertisement (5):

“Burglar wants good job, plenty of Excitement and reasonable Reward, that's how it is usually read. You can say Expert treasure-hunter instead of Burglar if you like. Some of them do. It's all the same to us. Gandalf told us that there was a man of the sort in these parts looking for a Job at once, and that he had arranged for a meeting here this Wednesday tea-time.”

Patrick Balfour's Asian journey began when he happened to see a London 'sandwichman' bearing a sign:

TO INDIA
BY ROLLS-ROYCE CAR
FOR £34
LEAVING OCTOBER 18

Whimsically, he answers the advertisement “and thought no more about it” until his telephone rings in the middle of the night⁶. In each case — Fleming's, Balfour's, Bilbo's — the journey does not begin with the traveller making travel plans on his own initiative. Somehow, he gets caught up in someone else's agenda.

The impetus for the journey may, to be sure, include an element of romantic legend. In *The Hobbit* it is a tale of exile and lost treasure. In *Brazilian Adventure* it is an attempt to find, or find news of, the vanished explorer Fawcett (whose story is told in the recently published *Lost City of Z* by David Grann). But the tone is relatively light-hearted.

Travel books such as *Brazilian Adventure* are first-person real-world narratives, whereas Tolkien has cast Bilbo's fantasy-world journey over the Misty Mountains, through Mirkwood and to the Lonely Mountain in the third person. A third-person narrator has advantages over a first-person one for a story set in an invented world. Still, Tolkien uses a version of the deflationary tone characteristic of the travel book as written by Fleming, Waugh and others. For example, here's Waugh:

I do not think I shall ever forget the sight of [the volcanic Mt] Etna at sunset; the mountain almost invisible in a blur of pastel

grey, glowing on the top and then repeating its shape, as though reflected, in a wisp of grey smoke, with the whole horizon behind radiant with pink light, fading gently into a grey pastel sky. Nothing I have ever seen in Art or Nature was quite so revolting.
(ref. 7)

And here's Tolkien:

The lands opened wide about him, filled with the waters of the river which broke up and wandered in a hundred winding courses, or halted in marshes and pools dotted with isles on every side; but still a strong water flowed steadily through the midst. And far away, its dark head in a torn cloud, there loomed the Mountain! Its nearest neighbours to the North-East and the tumbled land that joined it to them could not be seen. All alone it rose and looked across the marshes to the forest. The Lonely Mountain! Bilbo had come far and through many adventures to see it, and now he did not like the look of it in the least.
(ref. 5)

In each passage, the description of an impressive, even formidable, landscape is followed by an ironic, deflating comment.

Tolkien's way of writing about food is very close to that of Peter Fleming. Here's Tolkien:

‘... there they rested for a while and had such a breakfast as they could, chiefly cram and water. (If you want to know what cram is, I can only say that I don't know the recipe; but it is biscuitish, keeps good indefinitely, is supposed to be sustaining, and is certainly not entertaining, being in fact very uninteresting except as a chewing exercise. It was made by the Lake-men for long journeys).
(ref. 5)

Here's Fleming:

I had better explain about farinha, which is important stuff in Central Brazil. Farinha is made from the mandioca or cassava, a root of which the chief peculiarity is that, while its juice is a rapidly destructive poison, the flour is a nutritious though insipid food. After the juice has been extracted the mandioca is dried, ground, and baked. The result looks like a pale and rather knobby form of sawdust, a substance to which it is not noticeably superior in flavour.
(ref. 4)

Here's Fleming on the way the travellers' imaginations circled around food:

....the earlier hours of the afternoon [on their arduous return journey by row-boat] would be devoted to a discussion of the meals we would have when we got home, and to dietetic reminiscences: Brie cheese — alligator pears — the pint-pots at the Trout — cherry jam in the Pyrenees — a woodcock pie in Roger's room at Eton — sausages and mash.
(ref. 4)

When Bilbo's hand closes over Gollum's Ring for the first time, the hobbit doesn't suddenly feel a sense of menace

or of imminent power. No; at the beginning of Chapter 5, exhausted from his adventures inside the Misty Mountains, Bilbo is wrapped up in a reverie of food:

He thought of himself frying bacon and eggs in his own kitchen at home — for he could feel inside that it was high time for some meal or other; but that only made him miserabler. (ref. 5)

Just before the Mirkwood spiders begin to try to trap weary, hungry Bilbo in Chapter 8, he is resting:

So he sat himself down with his back to a tree, and not for the last time fell to thinking of his far-distant hobbit hole with its beautiful pantries. He was deep in thoughts of bacon and eggs and toast and butter when he felt something touch him. (ref. 5)

Travellers in these 1930s books are on long, long walks. They are apt to find themselves at cross-purposes with people they meet along the way. Sometimes the atmosphere may be tense; but it is sometimes farcical. In Chapter 7 of *The Hobbit* Gandalf directs the group members to arrive in pairs at Beorn's dwelling; the wizard wants to make it easier for Beorn to accept so many guests, and he succeeds, but not before the bear-man comes near being exasperated. The dialogue is delightfully amusing for the reader. What one person, Beorn, expects is quite different from how the incident develops. A similar source of humour appears when Waugh describes a troop of boy scouts in Aden. A Somali boy is tested on the scout law:

"First scout law a scout's honour iss to be trust second scout law..." et cetera, in one breath.
"Very good, Abdul. Now tell me what does 'thrifty' mean?"
"Trifty min?"
"Yes, what do you mean, when you say a scout is thrifty?"
"I min a scout hass no money."
"Well, that's more or less right. What does 'clean' mean?"
"Clin min?"
"You said just now a scout is clean in thought, word, and deed."
"Yis, scott iss clin."
"Well, what do you mean by that?"
"I min tought, worden deed." (ref. 7)

Both parties in this dialogue seemed to be losing confidence in the other's intelligence.

Incidentally, people who haven't read travel books of the 1920s and 1930s might expect that they relate adventures with dangerous animals — lions, tigers, elephants gone musth. In my experience of reading them, these books don't contain such episodes. Similarly, there are no dangerous brutes in *The Hobbit*. To be sure, wolves (Wargs) and spiders appear. But these are rational creatures. Gandalf knows the language of the wolves, and the spiders and Bilbo speak the same language. Beorn and some bears apparently talk to each other in bear language at night. Clearly, Bilbo and the dwarves are never threatened by simple animals during their long journeys, and, from what I have seen, Fleming, Waugh,

Greene, Byron and others never have to defend themselves against poisonous reptiles or ravenous mammals. L. Sprague de Camp once asked Tolkien why there seem to be no large mammals roaming Middle-earth, and Tolkien replied that his imagination was formed by England⁸, where animals such as wild bears and boars disappeared long ago. In any event, if Tolkien read 1930s travel books with accounts of scenes far from England, he still would not have run across (melo)dramatic scenes with threatening brutes that might have suggested episodes for *The Hobbit*.

Travellers may be attracted by older, aesthetically superior cultures that they seek or encounter. Robert Byron⁹ enthuses over "the perfection of architecture" in Isfahan, Persia. (Interestingly, Byron discerns in the Friday Mosque "a hint of William Morris" in the design of a rose-tree, and we remember the importance of Morris as a writer for Tolkien.) Elvish culture, as represented in Chapter 3 By Rivendell, is older than, and superior to, the Shire. Elrond represents the greatest of Middle-earth cultures. He is "an elf-friend" and "as noble and as fair in face as an elf-lord", and his "house was perfect," a living repository of lore and a place where evil things do not come.

Conversely, travellers are disgusted by some of the things they see. Greene¹⁰ loathed "The Horrible Village" of Duogobmai: its diseased inhabitants, dust, "skinny chickens everywhere", bat-eared puppies nosing in the food Greene will eat, rats rustling. Lying in a wretched hut, he can't stop brooding over fears of "leprosy, yaws, smallpox". The spiders who capture the dwarves in Chapter 8 are "huge and horrible", with voices described as a "thin creaking and hissing". They make the dwarves "sick and weary" from their venom and the discomfort of being trussed up in sticky webs. When struck, "a noise like the kicking of a flabby football" is produced. Bilbo and the dwarves at last drive them back to their "dark colony" — a "horrible village" indeed.

The travel-book qualities of *The Hobbit* are not sustained through all of its episodes; at least, I would not want to argue that the climactic material with Smaug, Bard and the Battle of the Five Armies, have any definite affinities with travel books. But we should deal with one more parallel between Tolkien's classic and the typical interwar travel books. When Waugh mentioned¹ the batches of travel books that reviewers used to receive, he mentioned that they were typically "cram-full of charm and enlarged Leica snapshots". Obviously, children's books often contain illustrations. But note that Tolkien's illustrations in the hardcover editions of *The Hobbit* are not depictions of the adventures. The published book doesn't show the goblins' attack, the spiders' raid, or the elves capturing the dwarves; there is no picture of Gollum, nor of the burning of Lake-town. The majority of the pictures are landscapes or interiors: the frontispiece of The Hill; the full-page picture of the stormy Mountain-path; the end-of-chapter drawing of the Misty Mountains "looking West"; a picture of Beorn's (empty) hall; a full-page drawing of Lake-town; a picture of the inside of Bag End. Perhaps people who have thought about the matter have supposed that many of Tolkien's pictures have small or no figures because the artist

was shy of rendering them. Perhaps; but these drawings are equivalents of travel-book photographs; when exciting things are happening, the traveller is not going to manage a camera; it is when things are quiet that he will be able to compose a photograph. Whether Tolkien had travel-book photos in mind when he designed many of the pictures for *The Hobbit*, he might as well have had: in all cases, the pictures don't depict the most exciting sequences. The trolls are just sitting there, as if an artist drew them unobserved. Even the colour picture of Smaug is still, almost like a carefully composed travel-book picture of some Asian dragon sculpture. And, just as the typical travel book enticed readers with endpaper maps, so too do hardcover editions of *The Hobbit*.

The golden age of British literary travel ended with the beginnings (or resumption) of European war and then world war. The 'New Hobbit', the sequel to Bilbo's adventures, is, to be sure, a story of long journeys, but those journeys lack the open-air excursion feeling of the 1937 book, and *The Lord of the Rings* remains fantastic literature's greatest tale of war. The *Hobbit* is a classic for the generations and is also a book belonging to the interwar high-water mark of the travel book.

Dale Nelson is associate professor of English at Mayville State University in North Dakota. He has written for

Mallorn, Tolkien Studies, Mythlore, Beyond Bree and the *J R R Tolkien Encyclopedia*, edited by Michael Drout.

1. Waugh, E. *When the Going Was Good* (Little, Brown, 1947). In this 314-page book, Waugh included "all that I wish to reprint of the four travel books I wrote between the years 1929 and 1935", that is, the 1930, 1931, 1934 and 1936 titles included in *Waugh Abroad* (see ref. 7).
2. Byron, R. *First Russia, Then Tibet* (Penguin, 1985). Originally published 1933.
3. Fussell, P. *Abroad: British Literary Traveling Between the Wars* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1982).
4. Fleming, P. *Brazilian Adventure* (Penguin, 1957). Originally published 1933; reprinted in the Penguin Travel Library ca 1985. Another good Fleming travel book, not cited here, is *News from Tartary* (Abacus, 1995), originally published 1936.
5. Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Hobbit, or There and Back Again* (Ballantine, 1982). The text is that of the revised edition, but having drafted this article, I compared my citations to this text with that of a 1938 Houghton Mifflin printing in the collection of Mayville State University in North Dakota (acquisition date 24 October 1938). There are no differences.
6. Balfour, P. *Grand Tour: Diary of an Eastward Journey. Illustrated with Photographs Taken by the Author, Many of Which Are Unique* (Harcourt, Brace, 1935).
7. Waugh, E. *Waugh Abroad: Collected Travel Writing* (Everyman's Library, 2003).
8. Nelson, D. Where Are the Large Animals in Middle-earth? *Beyond Bree* (April 2010).
9. Greene, G. *Journey Without Maps* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978). Originally published 1936.
10. Byron, R. *The Road to Oxiana* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1983). Originally published 1937.

The 'divine passive' in *The Lord of the Rings*

KUSUMITA PEDERSEN

In the narrative of *The Lord of the Rings*¹, God is never mentioned directly². At the same time, it is often observed that in this work, Tolkien does at times seem to refer to God, but in indirect ways. Tolkien acknowledges this. In a 1956 letter he appropriates the phrase of a critic who speaks of "that one ever-present Person who is never absent and never named" (*Letters* 192). In a slightly earlier letter to Father Robert Murray, Tolkien discusses in detail certain theological matters arising from "the mythology", but comments that in the book itself, "I have purposely kept all allusions to the highest matters down to mere hints, perceptible only by the most attentive, or kept them under unexplained symbolic forms" (*Letters* 156)³. This essay is concerned with these 'hints' and in particular with one very specific kind of 'hint' pointing to the divine presence. There is evidence that strongly suggests that Tolkien mentions God indirectly but deliberately by using what in biblical interpretation is called the 'divine passive'.

The subject of religion can be a sensitive one for those who care about Tolkien, so it is may be best to emphasize at the outset that, although references to the Bible unavoidably occur in what follows, I have no intention of trying to

prove that if Tolkien uses the divine passive he is referring to specifically Christian ideas. Nor am I seeking to advance an agenda about Tolkien as a 'Christian author' or some other kind of religious agenda. I am in agreement with Brian Rosebury, who states (referring to the text of *The Lord of the Rings* in itself): "Not only is Christianity not literally present, there is no surrogate for it or allegorical structure suggestive of it"⁴. This non-presence, however, does not rule out the use of a biblical rhetorical device. As the divine passive has been the subject of analysis and discussion by scholars of Scripture for more than a hundred years, Tolkien's employment of it may be a detail, but it is a significant one.

The divine passive is the use in the Bible of the passive voice to indicate that God, who is not named, is the doer of the action⁵. The divine passive is not only a technical matter debated by scholars, but is also well known as part of the toolbox of exegesis used by Christian clergy and others involved in Bible study. The English term 'divine passive' was coined by Joachim Jeremias, whose 1971 *New Testament Theology: The Proclamation of Jesus* is the study most often cited; the device is also called the *divinum passivum* and the 'theological passive', especially by European scholars.