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In Tribute: What J.R.R. Tolkien Means to some of His Admirers

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IN TRIBUTE
WHAT J.R.R. TOLKIEN MEANS TO SOME OF HIS ADMIRERS
PROFESSOR TOLKIEN 
ENTERS HEAVEN

by Benjamin Urrutia

God smiled and said,
"Jack, my son, I put you in charge
Of greeting your friend and showing him around."
Jack Lewis thanked Him very much
And thought how delighted Tolkien would be
To see the mallorn-trees abloom in Paradise,
Heavenly landscapes expanded and improved
According to the books that he had written.
And if his joy in seeing his wife again
Was like Lewis’, when he saw Joy herself again,
No measure should be found for it anywhere.
This is the secret of Heaven: Paradise is reunion,
Walking together beyond the confines of the Earth,
Seeing once more the beloved face you thought lost
For Ever. Eternal is a mighty word,
It is one of God’s names.
First you must see her! Then the Brandywine
And Withywindle. All your rivers are here.
The caverns of Aglarond are as you described them,
Tear-filled wonder for newcomers.
The trees are the best. The white tree of life,
The golden tree of knowledge,
Their places are of honor,
With the ships and stars and stones.
Be welcome!

ON THE DEATH OF J.R.R. TOLKIEN

September 2, 1973

by William Rust Norris

He opened up a door to me
Beyond the ocean, across the sea,
Beyond the moon, beyond the mind,
There was no end to wonders I could find,
Where hobbits and dwarves and rings of power,
And orcs and an eye in a dark tower,
Contended together, right versus wrong,
To see who would prove more strong--
The Free Peoples of the West,
Representing all that was noble and best,
Or the slavery of Mordor in the East,
Darkness promised to all, the great and the least,
Who would win in this epic Quest,
Could the Free Peoples pass the test
And surrender and shun the evil One,
And cast it into the fiery cauldron?
Or would Sauron gain the Ring,
And to all destruction bring?
Or would the Free Peoples in victory fall
By using the Ring, themselves to enthral
In a slavery of a worser sort,
Which would all good things abort
In the even more dreadful wrong,
Subversion of right, the good and the strong?

All these things I was able to see,
When he opened the door to me--
A man of vision, talent too,
Out of which this story grew,
We will all long mourn your passing,
Chronicler of a world entrancing,
Author, scholar, poet, friend--
Farewell, Professor Tolkien.

TOLKIEN

You bore us from the Shire across a world
Of wonderment, now darkling and now bright,
Until the Ring into the fire was hurled.
Oh, many thanks to you, my lord. Goodnight.

by Poul Anderson

A BAROQUE MEMORIAL: 
J.R.R. TOLKIEN

by J. R. Christopher

Who is the stranger staring at trees,
watching the oaks, the elms admiring?
Where have he come to this curious forest,
this ancient woodland? What welcome has found here?
The gnarled and twisted trees so huge,
the man so small he seems a halfling;
he stands amid the roots which rise to his knees.

Ovid and Seneca, Statius, Claudian,
Nonnus and Chaucer --the choice ones of old--
Spenser and Keats, have spoken of trees,
have listed the species, in lines of renown.
The HOLLY for peace, pacem in terris,
is mentioned in song-- as a single bob;
the whitest flower, the sharpest prickle,
the reddest berry, the bitter bark--
the white for Christ’s virtue, the crown of its leaves,
the drupe red as blood drained all so bitterly,
for the Torment of Christ was on a Tau Cross,
shaped out of Holly, Holly the holy one.
The FURZE, the gorse, the fortunate shrub
(for shrubs also grow green in clearings
in this ancient forest)— the Furze with its spines,
its dark-green branches, its golden flowers
--frequented by bees, the first of the year—
is burnt by shepherds at the spring equinox,
for sheep to nibble at the new growth,
burning, dying—reborn like the Phoenix,
like Christ reborn. The Quickbeam, the ROWAN,
the Mountain Ash, is mentioned by Druids
for wands of wizards, for of the wounded healing
(the Quickbeam will quicken the quietest dying),
for calling on spirits, compelling their answers;
the Rowan’s red berries, its red-berry clusters,
are the feast of dead heroes, the food of the brave ones.
The HAZEL with filberts is formed into thickets,
and wisdom is his who wins to the center
to feed on the filberts, to fill his deep longing,
to know the nine Hazels nigh Conla's Well
which flower as they're nutting, all fairness, all
knowledge.

The YEW tree, the death tree, the evergreen
faeless,
the longest-lived tree in the lines of the poets,
whose branches make longbows, whose berries
make poison
(King Hamlet of Denmark was harmed by the
berry juice) --
the Yew tree has grown in graveyards for ages,
with scarlet its berries and scaly its bark,
and grown in the forest, and flourished there ever.
The Aspen, WHITE POPLAR, with silver-white
leaves,
white bark on its branches, bearing its catkins,
the tree of old age, in Ireland was rod-shaped
to measure all corpses and cunningly 'mind them
that death was no end. The ASH with its keys
was shaped once to wands, wound with spirals --
by Druids was shaped thus the shady branch-
spreader;
was shaped once to oars by ancients in Wales;
is shaped now to bats for striking at baseballs --
how Ygdrasill's fallen, the Ash of fame,
to popping up flies in a popular pastime!
-- but still in the forest the shady one flourishes,
the tree of rebirth, born from blood --
sacred and secret the rites of rebirth.
These trees and these shrubs, and several in
addition,
are grown in this forest -- fir trees and oaks,
fruit trees, elms, olives, palms;
the pine and the cedar, the platan and cypress,
the willow and birch, the beech and sallow,
the myrrh, the maple, the myrtle, and more.

Amid those trees are moving figures:
the lovers who've met on a midsummer's night;
a duke who's led his followers hence;
an army which is hidden behind tree-branches,
so the wood seems moving; a steadfast maiden
from her younger brothers separated;
a poet who's heeding a nightingale's song;
and a poet whose passage is blocked
by a lion, a wolf, and a leopard so gay --
almost, it seems that Middle-earth
is but a forest, a far-stretching woodland,
with stable cities and civilizations
but clearings amid trees, till the jungle takes them
like Mayan ruins, like Olmec ruins --
Copán and Uxmal, Ventál and Alában.
(Have we killed the trees, the corpses uprooted
with gigantic bulldozers, the stumps and the stubs?
Have we destroyed the saplings, till cities are
cemented
with permanent boundaries, unbroken forever?
Have we notched for extinction that which Niggle
painted?)

Deeper, deeper, in the dark-shadowed forest,
which poets remember and praise in their tellings,
as Joseph of Exeter justly has catalogued
(and Statius and Claudian, Spenser and Keats);
deeper, deeper, in the darkened green glimmer,
where the great trees grow, with grey lichens,
with tangled boughs and matted twigs,
with ivy wrapped, with cobwebs hung,
where sunlight's seldom -- a shaft in the shadows.
Deeper, deeper, in the green darkness,
where the Onodrim dwell, the tree-herding Ents
(ou sont les épouses of yesteryear?);
where the Elvës on mellyrn attach their telain,
the Quendi, first speakers, questing for word-
shapers;
where the White Tree grows, seedling of Nimloth,
fruit of Galathilion, descending from Telperion.
Deeper, deeper, to the sacred center --
there is the stranger, staring at trees,
watching the oaks, the elms admiring;
the man so small he seems a halfling --
he stands amid roots which rise to his knees.

There in the center the sacred mound,
where once there were two, two growing trees--
the one, an apple (no holly at all),
whatever is claimed in legends of old) --
the apple, which was cut, was shaped to a cross;
the other, still growing, still green and still
thriving,
leaving and fruiting, is the Tree of Life,
as was listed, ye catalogueby a poet of old.
And there is the stranger, staring at trees;
he lifting a hand, his right hand,
to the flourishing tree picks a fruit:
the Fruit of Life from the Tree of Life.

TOLKIEN AND RECOVERY
by James Allen

"Before we reach such states we need recovery. We should look at green again, and be startled anew (but not blinded) by blue and yellow and red.
We should meet the centaur and the dragon, and then perhaps suddenly behold, like the ancient shepherds, sheep, and dogs, and horses -- and wolves. This recovery fairy-stories help us make. In that sense only a taste for them may make us, or keep us, childish."

This is Tolkien's statement of what recovery is, as given in his essay 'On Fairy-Stories.' And the attainment of recovery by the reader of Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings explains to a large extent the success of this work. Where much modern literature demands sophistication, or more often an imitation thereof, Tolkien demands a natural response to what one might almost call clichés.

For example, consider the elephant! The elephant is to most of us a creature about which we are rather blase'. And normally we might ask a book which contains an elephant to tell us something new about elephants, or to use an elephant in a novel way -- to somehow be original with an elephant.
Tolkien instead presents only what we all know about elephants, but probably know so well that we have forgotten we know it.

Suddenly, in the midst of Gollum's description of the Harad road, Sam interrupts and asks, "Were
there any oliphaunts?" The reader is quite likely to be as puzzled as Gollum about what an oliphaunt may be. So Sam recites an old poem giving the characteristics of this legendary creature:

Grey as a mouse,
Big as a house,
Nose like a snake,
I make the earth shake,

eetc.

The reader is forced to put the description together and to recreate the elephant which seems so familiar, and in doing redisCOVERs how unutterably strange and wonderful this animal is. When later an oliphaunt actually appears it is like a marvellous dream come true. Tolkien recovers for the reader the joy that such a beast exists, and that it can actually be seen.

Other marvels appear in Tolkien's world which, like the oliphaunt, are but slight exaggerations of the marvels of our own. Lothlorien is a forest transfigured by Elven power, but still its beauty and its quality are those proper to a forest; and in it the forests of our own days also share, as they share in the tangled gloom of Fangorn and the Old Forest and Mirkwood. The elven stars still shine upon us. Misty mountains and blue mountains and white mountains still lure us in the distance. And the ocean calls.

For Middle-earth is no invention of Tolkien, but is our own round world. The term "Middle-earth" was used in Middle English to distinguish the world of man from Heaven above, Hell beneath, and from Faerie and other vaguer realms. And one's view of it depends on the point of view one takes. Tolkien looks at it with appreciation, both at the good and at the bad. From the natural world and from the rural suburbs about Birmingham came the woods and plains and mountains and the Shire. From the great cities of man comes Minas Tirith. But also there are the Brown Lands, and Isengard, and Mordor, evils whose sources can be seen in careless slash mining, in the continuous spread of a concrete blight over the land, and in a way of thought to which beauty and comfort and natural pleasure are of no account but which esteems power and possession above all else.

And so strangely, this fantasy work proves much more relevant to modern life than many a purportedly serious novel that seeks actually to treat modern life. In the end one must choose to follow Mordor or to oppose it. Tolkien leaves one no doubt on that score. One can be deceived, as is Denethor of Minas Tirith, but still the choice is made. For Denethor does not understand that there are diverse kinds of good, but only one kind of evil.

The recovery of moral vision and aesthetic vision which Tolkien has offered has I believe not been entirely without effect, though there is really no way to measure it. How much does the ecology movement owe to Tolkien? How much is the increased demand for quality of life to take precedence over production influenced by Tolkien's work? Some, I think. For Tolkien can and does hit hard in this vein, not by argument but by showing us the natural and the needlessly contrived. And he hits people who would never think to follow through an intellectual argument about ecology and sociology.

Look, Tolkien says, consider the elephant and consider the barrenness of Mordor. Consider Fangorn and consider the blighted Nan Curunfr. Consider which way is life and which way is death. It is this consideration—whether the answers are exactly those of Tolkien—that we need today and are to some extent getting. And to Tolkien must go some of the thanks.

by Mrs. Janest B. Fisher

To express what J.R.R. Tolkien and his works have meant to me seemed very simple when I first received the bulletin, but it has proved not so. I wanted to say something in verse, but nothing worked out—not even a few lines, as Frodo managed for Gandalf. Yet, like most whose lives he has touched deeply, I could not be totally silent.

Wordsworth wrote, "The world is too much with us..." and that has never seemed more true than today. So many find it impossible to cope, and there are untold thousands more who lead "lives of quiet desperation." What Tolkien did for his many devotees was to provide another world in which we all are citizens by proxy. Residence for a few hours in Middle Earth brings a renewal, in a place where despair is countered by hope, and the commonplace by magic. There it is always possible to find both singing joy and the sweet sadness that brings catharsis, and to come back to the daily routine inspired and refreshed. It is a world which never fails to delight, never disappoints—and yet it is a world where the human condition reflects our own; we are not aliens there.

They say that not long ago, a small gray ship dropped anchor in a strange harbor. Those keen of eye saw a tall, white-haired figure go aboard in the dim twilight, whereupon the small craft weighed anchor and fast faded from sight. I do not know if this report is true or not, but most citizens of Middle-earth, permanent and temporary, firmly believe that the last true Elv Friend has gone into the utmost West.

Ave atque Vale.

by Diana Paxson DeCles

I hope this reaches the appropriate quarter before the Nov. 20th deadline. I had a rather sentimental piece which I felt it better not to send. Below you will find a more rational comment. The College of Bards of the Kingdom of the West held a special Bardic Revel the week after Tolkien's death, at which "The Homecoming of Beornoth Beorthelm's Son" was performed as a dramatic reading, and various other appropriate pieces were read. We ended with the last pages of LOTR, which had everyone in tears.

I leave it to others to discuss the excellence and significance of J.R.R. Tolkien's work. The Lord of the Rings is rich enough in meaning to sustain the Mythopoeic Society for years to come. It bears re-reading better than anything I know. Unfortunately,
after the first dozen or so readings of it, I discovered a terrible thing—I could go through it annually each September, but I had to find something else to read for the other eleven months of the year. In this search I realized that the contribution of Tolkien to literature is by no means limited to the books he wrote.

It is sad but true that great works of literature are not produced every day. Aside from the inroads made in the corpus of literature by changes in language or the vagaries of time, only a few of the products of any literary period survive. To anyone who has studied literature in an academic setting, it often seems that all the giants lived long ago, and our own times will surely never be able to produce their equals. One finds oneself regretting not having been able to drop in at Johnson's coffeehouse, or attend the Globe Theater.

At present "best-sellers" seem to be chosen by the literary or commercial establishments. And if one finds oneself decidedly out of sympathy with both, the prospect afforded by contemporary literature can be a rather bleak one. However, across the smoggy heavens of modern literature, Tolkien blazes, with rather more unexpectedness and effect than the Ka-houtek comet. Who could have predicted it? Not Tolkien himself, since Lewis assures us he had to be persuaded into trying to publish at all; not Unwin or Houghton-Mifflin, although they had the perception to buy the book, since they had not the faith to try and find it a wider audience. It was left to Ace, in that market research could never have foreseen. And to those of us who had just about given up on our own time, it proved that the age of giants may indeed come again.

There is no denying that some wonderful things were written in the years before the Lord of the Rings appeared—but how many people read them? Who had heard of Charles Williams? C.S. Lewis depended on a few fans and ecclesiastical circles for sales; MacDonald was an obscure author of Victorian children's fantasy. Poul Anderson had found a publisher for The Broken Sword, but it was a poor-quality hardback, long out of print, a coveted collector's item to those few who knew of it at all. In general, anything fantastic was labeled a fairy tale and sent to the juvenile editor.

To some extent this is still true, but for those of us who would rather consider how hardship and terror can bring forth courage, loyalty, and faith, rather than how prosperity reveals degradation, pettiness, and despair; to those who would rather see the glory that lies within quite ordinary things rather than the hollowness of all that seems fair; to those who desire to see elves and dragons and heroes with bright swords more than suburban love affairs and cowboys, cops, or robbers armed with guns; to those of us who find in the archetypes of myth and legend a higher truth than that of social realism, the literary scene shines immesurably brighter than it did ten years ago.

The Lord of the Rings is certainly magnificent enough in itself to earn our gratitude for the man who wrote it, but the effect of the appearance of Middle-earth in the literary landscape should redound to Tolkien's glory as well. He reconciles us to our time. We may regret the age of Chaucer, or Shakespeare, or William Morris, but we who have shared a world with J. R. R. Tolkien can hold up our heads with the denizens of any literary Golden Age history has known.

Allusion of Wizards

From the furthest West the Wizards come
And walk among us in the forms of men,
Pretended mortals, thus disguised for some
Few score of years ere they depart again.

But they do marvels—Mighty with a word,
Show Magic Kingdoms, beauties sharp as swords;
Unseen colors, melodies unheard;
Elves and queens and dragons, and their lords.

And then the glory's cloaked, the Voice is still,
And yet, the fields we know, by light of day
Have still somehow the look of Grammar's.

Our faltering tongues essay the Word we will,
Seeking the West, but who shall show the way
To follow Them across so wide a sea

RECOVERY

by Jeanne Wardwell

"Recovery is a re-gaining—regaining of a clear view." So said J.R.R. Tolkien in his essay "On Fairy-Stories." This recovery is exactly what his works have given to his readers—the regaining of a clear view of nature, of man, of the truths of life. We do tend to see the world around us with jaded eyes; this is what he called "the drab blur of triteness or familiarity" and, his anathema, "possessiveness." The task of fantasy, he stated, was to remove this blur, to "clean our windows," to help us to see things as they were meant to be seen. In this way at least, his creation (or "subcreation") is a resounding success.

So much has been said about the truths he presents in The Lord of the Rings and in certain of his shorter works that is seems redundant to go into them here, but in any case we certainly come to see these insights with fresh awareness, with clear vision, rather than hearing them as dull platitudes, spoken halfheartedly and from a sense of duty rather than feeling. The sense of wrong communicated by the desires of Sauron and of Saruman to dominate the wills of others is more far-reaching and comes closer to the heart, and will thus be better remembered by the trilogy's readers, than all the speeches and essays against war, imperialism, and the loss of various rights and freedoms produced in the last two centuries. This is recovery of the highest possible vision, and the recovery of that vision is the only hope for the world today, as it was in Middle-earth; and we always have that hope. Our immediate hope should be that the recovery of this vision will continue to spread.

An additional Tribute is on page 35.
haps, further degradations cause him to suspect a human agent and he finally calls the police to protect his property.

Of course, this kind of comparison can only be taken so far. The speaking creatures of Middle Earth are intelligent, rational beings, not mindless insects, and there is no reason to think that the Valar "keep" Middle-earth as a sort of game preserve. Nevertheless, if they are as far beyond humanity in development as man is beyond bees, we may just possibly imagine why the Valar fail to act against Morgoth. He was, after all, one of their own kind. They would probably have found it difficult to imagine that he was indeed capable of evil. In addition, they may have had all sorts of other purposes to accomplish besides being guardians of Middle Earth.

Finally, their concept of guardianship is undoubtedly on a very different moral plane from that of a bee-keeper, as David Ring has pointed out so well.

IN TRIBUTE (continuing from page 14.)

by Nancy-Lou Patterson

A clear view of man--of other beings--is essential to the vision of truth, and the epic is full of understanding of all intelligent species of Middle-earth; and if the characters in the epic can learn to understand each other, and each other's characteristics of species and their needs and problems, then what indeed is the matter with us, today? We are faced with as many differences among peoples, but at least we are all men. Should we not be able to find it easier than did the peoples of Middle-earth? And on a more personal level, the friendships are deep and meaningful, loyal and lasting, everything a friendship should be. Who can fail to be moved by the joy of Aragorn and Eomer upon their meeting in battle upon the Pelennor Fields? Who would not smile at the camaraderie of Merry and Pippin, their jokes and spirited conversation, as they buoy each other up in strange places and in dark moments? Who would not laugh as Gimli chides the hobbits for 'truancy' as the five companions meet at last in Isengard? Who would not understand the friendship which grows between Legolas and Gimli, representatives of two widely disparate species, once they have come to understand and appreciate each other during their long travels and adventures with the Company? And, finally, who could possibly find anything corny or unreal about the devotion of Frodo and Sam, a gut-level relationship, based far more on the necessity of physical and psychological survival than on the nicety on which we tend to pride ourselves? Tolkien's narrative is so vivid and compelling that we find ourselves side by side with the characters, sharing in their trials and in their joys; and our understanding is widely broadened, almost without our realization of the fact.

But perhaps one of the subtlest, and yet most charming, of the visions we see thus clearly is that of nature itself--of water and wind, sun, moon and stars, trees, flowers, mountains, meadows, birds and beasts, all that we tend to take the most for granted. Not only are Tolkien's descriptions vivid and beautiful, but the reverence for all these things expressed by his characters open our eyes to them in a way we have forgotten existed. I have seen this at work in myself during the last six years since reading the trilogy for the first time: of trees that I have passed by daily for years, I now study with interest and wonder the contours of the branches and the shape and color of the leaves; I gaze into the hearts of flowers; I have rediscovered my once intense interest in the stars; and this past summer one day I was rewarded by the sight of a type of butterfly, in the yard of a city dormitory, which I had sought in vain for years as a child in a country town. I might never have noticed it at all; but I did, and my surprise was such that I started after it in wonder, as I would have done fifteen years ago, heedless of time or place. I owe this increasing awareness to Tolkien's works; I remember how I once let so many things go past me without notice.

Wordsworth said that the older man becomes, the farther he goes from his Creator and from the fresh observations of the wonder of creation. Tolkien has shown us that we need not lose this intimacy with creation. Our eyes can be opened anew, as they were in our youth, and it is possible, even desirable, for maturity and a sense of wonder to go hand in hand. His fantasy is proof of that; in his works, the two supposed opposites blend and grow together as one quality in his characters. So should they do for the reader. Tolkien is already sorely missed, not only as a writer whose beloved works will no longer be augmented, but as a man whom one feels one knows personally through his works, and as a living link between the Primary World in which we live and the Secondary World of his subcreation, as if he were come from Middle-earth himself, or as if he had the long life of Elrond that spanned the ages and brought the far distant past close to us through his living memory. His Middle-earth is indeed more real than many of the things that surround us here, and in a very real sense he is still with us and will continue to be as long as his works are read and remembered, which promises to be a very long time indeed--perhaps even as long as the life of Elrond.