

[Email from Dorothy Smith, the sister of Ullin Place, to his son Thomas. Date: 24 Feb. 2021. Made public with her consent.]

Co-incidentally, Thomas, I was tracking through my journal files [...] I came across something I'd written about Ullin not long after his death. [...]

This passage was written after some recollections of how we four Places spent our holidays in an old farm house in Woodhall.

I thought it might be interesting for you to have some image of his extraordinary mind. So here's what I wrote in 2000.

The last time I saw Ullin was in November. In a quiet time together in the hospital where he was recovering from pneumonia, I told him that he had been very important to me in my life. There were so many ways in which he has been part of who I have become even though for many, many years, we lived on different continents. It was from him I learned the deep pleasures of the life of intellect and imagination. It is hard to subdue memory to the discipline of words. So I take just one narrow band of time—to the period during the war when our vacations from boarding school were spent in a village called Woodhall in Wensleydale. During those years, we four, Ullin, David, Milner and myself, walked, bicycled, hiked, travelled on the trains that chuntered up and down the valley carrying passengers, mail and milk, exploring the Douk caves in Ribblesdale, old lead mines in the fells above Woodhall, the Roman road that strides off over the fell above Bainbridge, the ancient ruins on top of Ingleborough, the fells between Wensleydale and Swaledale. In all our expeditions Ullin was leader. Don't imagine him to have been an autocrat. It was rather his inventive and enticing itineraries that drew us. He made the plans; he organized the venture; he had formulated the pathway and destination. Always he worked with an extraordinary sense of the not-yet-known, the yet-to-be-mapped. For him the terrain was always waiting to be named and known beyond the immediate. His landscapes were peopled with the past, with the other. He renamed the landscape of our travels in the language of Tolkien's mythology. Far from this imaginative life being alien to his powerful intellect and scientific inclination, they were integrated. He lived, in a sense, to discover the secret workings or presences hidden in the immediate. This was his magic: that while being attentive to the detail, he always moved to incorporate detail into a larger mapping of connections. The local terrain had more to it than could be seen; there were channels and diggings underground; there was a past of two thousand years to be found in the contours of the present; and later, there were the secrets of human behaviour to be uncovered. He was always making maps and diagrams, of railways, regions, churches, archeological sites. But for the most part the maps he made were more than maps; they were imaginative reconstructions that projected into possibility, into what might become known, what might be discovered.

He was indeed a remarkable man.
with love
Dorothy