

# To See With a Myriad of Eyes

By C. S. Lewis

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Those of us who have been true readers all our life seldom fully realise the enormous extension of our being which we owe to authors. We realise it best when we talk with an unlit-  
erary friend. He may be full of goodness and good sense but he inhabits a tiny world. In it, we  
5 should be suffocated. The man who is contented to be only himself, and therefore less a self, is  
in prison. My own eyes are not enough for me, I will see through those of others. Reality, even  
seen through the eyes of many, is not enough. I will see what others have invented. Even the  
eyes of all humanity are not enough. I regret that the brutes cannot write books. Very gladly  
10 would I learn what face things present to a mouse or a bee; more gladly still would I perceive  
the olfactory world charged with all the information and emotion it carries for a dog.

Literary experience heals the wound, without undermining the privilege, of individual-  
ity. There are mass emotions which heal the wound; but they destroy the privilege. In them our  
separate selves are pooled and we sink back into sub-individuality. But in reading great litera-  
15 ture I become a thousand men and yet remain myself. Like the night sky in the Greek poem, I  
see with a myriad of eyes, but it is still I who see. Here, as in worship, in love, in moral action,  
and in knowing, I transcend myself; and am never more myself than when I do.