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The George MacDonald Society Newsletter No. 47, Summer 1998

THE INTERIM *ORTS*

The endeavour, mentioned in *Orts* 46, to supply members with an alternative MacDonald magazine until Tim Braithwaite is able to take up the reins did not succeed. It is essential that *Orts* should have an editor skilled in popular journalism who can stimulate contributions and create a lively magazine. Such people are not easy to find. Tim remains as keen as ever and should be returning before the year's end. Full approval has been given for the sort of developments he is planning.

It is particularly unfortunate that this situation has arisen at a time when the Society is experiencing a take-over attempt. This is being engineered by interests who wish to create a situation where the Society's work is reduced to popularising only one aspect of MacDonald's writings, and not the aspects which make him, in G.K. Chesterton's words, 'one of the three or four greatest men of the nineteenth century.' Since the matter is *sub judice* few details can be reported at present. The situation has necessitated the inclusion in *Orts* of material which would under normal circumstances have been published in *North Wind*, for example book reviews such as those of *Para*doxa* Number 2 and *George MacDonald: A Devotional Guide*. The unprincipled nature of the take-over attempt has necessitated the inclusion of other material which in normal circumstances would be inappropriate, such as the registered Aims of the Society published in *Orts* 46. More than ever during this difficult period the patience and goodwill of the members of the Society is crucially important.

Responses to Responses

William Webb points out that Juliana Horatia Ewing was the daughter of Mrs Gatty (Aunt Judy of Aunt Judy's Magazine). Juliana was already editing her mother's magazine by 1868 and it was this which led to confusion between the two ladies.

Richard Reis has made what looks like a remarkable discovery about the origin of the erroneous comments about MacDonald in the Martin Gardner essay on the Wandering Jew mentioned in *Orts* 45 and 46. He is now exploring the matter further. Watch this space for details!



“Thus did Job continually”- The first plate of Blake’s *Job*

The experiences of the protagonists of MacDonald’s *Phantasies* and *Lilith* are in essence similar to those of Blake’s *Job*. Other plates from *Job* are reproduced below.

A revision of some anecdotes about Lewis Carroll and the MacDonalds

The fourth surviving volume of *Lewis Carroll's Diaries* for May 1862 to September 1864 has now been published by the Lewis Carroll Society. As with the earlier volumes it is an unexpurgated edition with copious notes by Edward Wakeling.

Edward has been able to reconstruct many events of the period April 1858-May 1862 for which diaries are missing, but sadly without discovering anything new which might have a bearing upon the first meetings of MacDonald and Carroll.

It turns out that the famous first-surviving diary entry referring to MacDonald has always been misquoted in the past (e.g. Raeper 173). The actual entry reads:

. . . . Then to Tudor Lodge, where I met Mr. MacDonald coming out. I did not go in as the party are, some away, and some ill, but walked a mile or so with him, on his way to a publisher with the M.S. of his fairy tale The Light Princess in which he showed me some exquisite drawings by Hughes

The reference to other members of the family has always previously been omitted.

Most readers will be aware of Carroll’s letter of Friday October 2nd 1863 ‘or rather Oct 3 – one a.m.’ to Mrs MacDonald where he describes his inability to find their new home in Earl’s Terrace Kensington (called Earles Terrace by Greville MacDonald in his biography of his father and by most later biographers):

Late as it is, I will write one line to tell you that I have made an effort (not on a Friday but yet a failure) to find your new house—I found an Earl Street, but the aborigines themselves didn't know of anything else beginning with "Earl." I mean to start again soon, taking a bag of provisions, an axe, & the other essentials for a traveller exploring an unknown region, & if you could furnish me with any landmarks it would be a great help .

. . . . This also has usually been misquoted in the past (e.g. Raeper 179). It has always been puzzling that Carroll could not find Earl's Terrace, since it lies beside the main west road out of central London. But now that the diary entry for Sept 30th is published in full we see that Carroll was searching for an Earl's *Place*! He eventually succeeded in finding the house on the Sunday.

Some of Carroll's most famous photographs, formerly thought to have been taken at MacDonald's father-in-law's house, Elm Lodge, in Hampstead are now shown to have been taken in the garden of the Earl's Terrace house. Edward Wakelings's research on the plate numbers of Carroll's photographs shows that no photographs were apparently taken when Carroll accompanied MacDonald to visit his father-in-law at Elm Lodge on Oct. 10th 1863. And the photographs taken at Elm Lodge immediately after the MacDonalds had moved there for a while in July 1863 were apparently all taken indoors. The splendid series of photographs of the MacDonalds and their friends taken against the background of a garden wall with fruit trees trained against it must therefore have been taken in the garden at 12 Earl's Terrace. However the much-reproduced profile view of MacDonald writing at a round table, which Greville dates to 1862, but which some authorities had thought to be earlier than this, is now proved by its plate number to have been taken at Elm Lodge in July 1863.

Opportunities for Literary Holidays in England.

The annual events celebrating George Eliot and Daphne du Maurier have grown steadily since they were first reported in *Orts* just a few years ago. In particular, what was just a du Maurier festival in Fowey, Cornwall has now grown into a major "Festival of Arts and Literature," attracting many celebrities, although still with the primary emphasis upon Daphne du Maurier. It runs from May 8th to the 17th. full details from Restormel Borough Council: phone (0)1726 74466; fax (0)1726 68339.

As before, the central features of the George Eliot celebrations are the eight-hour tours of George Eliot Country (starting from Nuneaton Museum at 1.30.p.m.) They are splendid value at £7.50. They take place on the second Sunday of each month from May to September. Cheques, made payable to Nuneaton & Bedworth Council, to be sent to Rose Selwyn, Marketing Officer, Nuneaton & Bedworth Council, Town Hall, Coton Road, Nuneaton, Warwickshire, CV11 5AA. Early booking is advisable.

It still happens occasionally!

Freda Levson, who has hosted the Committee Meetings of the MacDonald Society more or less since its inception, has a home-help to assist her with some of the household chores. They had talked together about her interest in George MacDonald, so when this lady happened to see what was obviously an old edition of a MacDonald book in good condition for sale at £5 she realised it was worth buying. It turned out to be a first edition of MacDonald's first book *Within and Without*, and, to cut a long story short, she was soon able to sell it for £500.



Blake's Description of the nadir of Job's experiences.

MacDonald emphasises how the sense of terror can be crucial to God's purpose.

Seven number 14 (1997)

The current issue of *Seven* has a seven-page article by Rolland Hein on the Variorum Edition of *Lilith* which develops the themes of his short article in *North Wind* 16. (Readers may have been puzzled that the *Variorum Lilith* was not included in the list of Johannesen publications at the back of *North Wind* 16. This was apparently because of the layout policy which has been adopted for the journal. The *Variorum Lilith* is, of course, still available from Johannesens or from any good bookseller).

The "Book Notes" in this issue of *Seven* include a page of short reviews of recent works on MacDonald. The issue also includes a review by Tony Dawson, Associate Director of Computing Services at Wheaton College, titled "*Seven* Authors on the Internet." We are very grateful to Tony Dawson and to Chris Mitchell the reviews editor for permission to quote from the relevant sections of this article. *Copyright applies to these quotations.*

The importance of a writer's work is often measured by the extent of its dissemination. The seven authors to whom this journal is devoted are among the most widely read in books, articles, letters, theses, and dissertations, and now their works are represented on the Internet. This article provides a brief introduction to the Internet, and then focuses on a sampling of Internet resources devoted to *Seven's* authors.

The Internet originally consisted of a Defense Department network which linked government computers around the world, and a governmentally funded network which linked computers at educational institutes and research centers. These networks are now accessible to the general public, and consist of computers which communicate with each other over high-speed telephone lines and other telecommunications systems. In recent years private companies...have begun selling Internet access to companies and individuals, and today people in the millions access the Internet daily. . . .

Information on the Internet ranges from the ridiculous to the sublime... Unlike a refereed journal or edited publication, the Internet is a *tabula rasa* upon which anyone can express him or herself: There is an increasing body of reliable information on the Internet, but one must proceed with care, particularly when seeking scholarly information. One must also be advised that copyright laws apply to the Internet, but are often blatantly ignored.

Internet authors provide information in a variety of formats, one of the most popular of which is the webpage. Webpages are comprised of text and graphics, and are accessed via programmes called browsers... Other popular Internet formats include listserves (an electronic mail system that sends and receives topical messages to and from multiple recipients), newsgroups (common repositories of documents organised by topic), chat rooms . . . and games. This article will focus almost exclusively upon webpaggers, but *Seven*'s authors are represented in other formats on the Internet as well.

Webpages on the Internet are organised and listed in a variety of indices and are accessible via search engines, some of the most popular of which are Alta Vista, Infoseek, Excite, Lycos, Yahoo, and Webcrawler...

I did not include every viable webpage devoted to *Seven*'s authors, but rather attempted to select a representative sample. I then noted the major features of each webpage and noted its content and utility: I did not review the aesthetic quality of the webpages. Finally, for each author, I attempted to select at least one webpage which contains extensive references to other pertinent Internet resources.

The life, thought and works of George MacDonald are well represented on the Internet, and two webpages deserve particular attention. *The Golden Key* (http://dSPACE.dial.pipex.com/town/plaza/ev90481/md_index.htm) contains a timeline of MacDonald's life, a selection of quotations, a gallery of photographs, his obituary from the *Manchester Guardian*, and an extensive collection of references to other MacDonald webpages. The MacDonald scholar will appreciate the chronological bibliography and the collection of articles addressing topics such as MacDonald's theology, his relationship with Mark Twain, his influence on C.S. Lewis and his interest in Frederick von Hardenberg (Novalis).

Corage, God Mend Al (<http://members.aol.com/Djones9607/gmd.html>) takes its name from an anagram of "George MacDonald" which the author used as his motto. This webpage includes a brief biography, and claims to be "the most extensive listing of George MacDonald links anywhere on the Worldwide web." The webpage contains over thirty references to other webpages, and therefore serves as a good starting point for MacDonald Internet studies. Of particular interest to the MacDonald scholar are the links to Don W King's essay, "The Childlike in George MacDonald and C.S. Lewis," Roderick McGillis's reviews of Rolland Hein's *George MacDonald: Victorian Mythmaker* and Glenn Sadler's *An Expression of Character: The Letters of George MacDonald*, and pointers to the web pages of rare booksellers.

George MacDonald is the *Seven* author with the most extensive collection of online works; this is due, no doubt, to the fact that he is the earliest of the seven subject authors and a larger portion of his work is in the public domain.

Dawson goes on to list the webpage codes (uniform resource locators) for a selection of unexpurgated versions of MacDonald's works which are online. He repeats these in the Appendix to the article.

QUESTIONNAIRE SENT TO SELECTED NORTH AMERICAN MEMBERS

In March, several members mentioned this questionnaire to us, assuming that we had received prior notification of its existence. In fact it had not been mentioned to the Committee and we were until then unaware of it. We understand that members have been asked to express a preference for the format of the 1997 *North Wind* without there being any mention of the fact that this issue cost **four times as much** to produce as recent issues.

It had been agreed, and reported in *Orts*, that as an experiment the 1997 issue would be printed, not photocopied. Our Treasurer had carefully checked this out and she concluded that the cost would at most be two and a half times as much as is normally spent. This excess expenditure was acceptable as a 'one-off' because the print-run would leave a surplus of copies which would be useful for publicity purposes in N. America. The Society possessed reserve funds sufficient to cover this expenditure for a single issue, but not on a regular basis. **If only half the sum spent upon the 1997 issue been available to previous editors, *North Wind* would have had such features as a printed cover with lettered spine years ago.** We were informed of the actual cost of this issue of *North Wind* after the publication of the last *Orts* but before the questionnaire was sent out.

As the 1997 *North Wind* is a special issue, we had intended to ask for reader responses in this present issue of *Orts*. Naturally we had not expected that such a survey would be forestalled by another! We promptly requested a copy of the questionnaire so that it could be quoted in *Orts*, but have not received any reply.

The members who wrote to us were under the clear impression that the questionnaire they received was issued by the MacDonald Society. Their comments differ so much that the possibility arises that there was more than one version of the questionnaire. We made a number of enquiries amongst members on the N. American list and have discovered that not all were sent the questionnaire. Non-receipt seems to be linked with active membership. People known to be unlikely to provide the hoped-for sort of responses seem to have been excluded.

A questionnaire like this—which withholds information vital to its proper completion, and which has not been sent to those members within the sample area considered unlikely to respond as the compiler desires—is a powerful tool for misleading ordinary people, but it has no other value whatsoever. Moreover it is not just the N. American members who completed the questionnaire who have been misled. The individual responses acceptable to the compiler—which amount in all to less than one side of an A4 sheet with double spacing—have now been sent to those people outside N. America thought most likely to be supportive.

The Charity Commissioners emphasise that, whilst there is no objection in principle to the Committee appointing officers who reside outside the jurisdiction of the English High Court,

such officers must work together with the other officers of the Society. It is important that the officers of the Society should enjoy the maximum practicable degree of autonomy. But along with this goes the necessity to co-operate in the running of the Society in accordance with its Constitution.

"Re-interpreting History in Children's Literature"

The fact that the world seems smaller than it once did, that travel for business and pleasure takes people much further than it did in the first half of this century, has not yet brought about quite such friendly relations between all countries as the optimists expected or hoped.

However, if different nations can get together for purposes such as considering children's stories and other juvenile literature, this must help-and be of particular value in keeping the concerns of children in people's minds. Background activities like these may have a powerful indirect influence. The founding of the International Research Society for Children's Literature in 1970 is of real significance in the total picture.

The Society's Biennial Congress at York last year was truly international and a great success-not least in the complex organisation involved. About 170 people from 28 countries took part, and 100 papers were read, as we are informed by the person in charge, Ann Lawson Lucas. The, fairy-tale and fantasy elements seem to have had their share of the discussions. The general title of the Congress was "The Past in the Present"—with the subtitle I have used for the heading above.

One session was intriguingly entitled "The Duty of Internet Internationalism: Roald Dahls of the World, Unite!"

We were very pleased to learn that the 1997 IRSCL Award was presented to Rod McGillis for *The Nimble Reader* as a significant contribution to children's literature studies.

-W.W



Blake's depiction of Job's vision of the true God

MACDONALD ON READING

MacDonald wrote few essays. The sort of material which most writers would put into essays, he preferred to insert at relevant places in his novels or to develop as sermons. But his most important comments upon reading, comments which are particularly relevant for readers of his own work, appear in the two essays on the creative imagination in *A Dish of Orts*. The second part of the first essay, which explores the cultivation of the creative imagination is reproduced below. It follows the conventions of the period (soon to be rejected by MacDonald) of purporting to be addressed to a private tutor of a child and employing the male pronoun for throughout. But it is clear that MacDonald is writing for everyone who wishes to understand how to approach the reading of any book.

To come now to the culture of the imagination. Its development is one of the main ends of the divine education of life with all its efforts and experiences. Therefore the first and essential means of its culture must be an ordering of our life towards harmony with its ideal in the mind of God. As he that is willing to do the will of the Father, shall know of the doctrine, so, we doubt not, he that will do the will of THE POET, shall behold the beautiful. For all is God's: and the man who is growing into harmony with His will, is growing into harmony with himself: all the hidden glories of his being are coming out into the light or humble consciousness: so that at the last he shall be a pure microcosm, faithfully reflecting, after his manner, the mighty macrocosm. We believe therefore, that nothing will do so much for the intellect or the imagination as being good—we do not mean after any formula or any creed, but simply after the faith of Him who did the will of his Father in heaven.

But if we speak of direct means for the culture of the imagination, the whole is comprised in two words—food and exercise. . . . Feed your imagination with food convenient for it, and exercise it, not in the contortions of the acrobat, but in the movements of the gymnast. And first for the food.

Goethe has told us that the way to develop the aesthetic faculty is to have constantly before our eyes, that is, in the room we most frequent, some work of the best attainable art. This will teach us to refuse the evil and choose the good. It will plant itself in our minds and become our counsellor. Involuntarily, unconsciously, we shall compare with its perfection everything which comes before us for judgement. Now, although no better advice could be given, it involves one danger, that of narrowness But in the culture of the imagination, books, although not the only, are the readiest means of supplying the food convenient for it, and a hundred may be had where even one work of art of the right sort is unattainable And in variety alone is safety from the danger of the convenient food becoming the inconvenient model.

Let us suppose, then, that one who himself justly estimates the imagination is anxious to develop its operation in his child. No doubt the best beginning, especially if the child be young, is an acquaintance with nature, in which let him be encouraged to observe vital phenomena, to put things together, to speculate from what he sees to what he does not see. But let earnest care be taken that on no matter shall he go on talking foolishly. Let him be as fanciful as he may, but let him not, even in his fancy, sin against fancy's sense; for fancy has its laws as certainly as the

most ordinary business of life. . . .

But where this association with nature is but occasionally possible, recourse must be had to literature. In books, we not only have store of all results of the imagination, but in them, as in her workshop, we may behold her embodying before our very eyes, in music of speech, in wonder of words, till her work . . . stands finished before us. In this kind, then, the best must be set before the learner, that he may eat and not be satisfied; for the finest products of the imagination are of the best nourishment for the beginnings of that imagination. And the mind of the teacher must mediate between the work of art and the mind of the pupil, bringing them together in the vital contact of intelligence; directing the observation to the lines of expression, the points of force; and helping the mind to repose upon the whole, so that no separable beauties shall lead to a neglect of the scope—that is the shape or form complete. And ever he must seek to *show* excellence rather than talk about it, giving the thing itself, that it may grow into the mind, and not a eulogy of his own upon the thing; [he must isolate] the point worthy of remark rather than making many remarks upon the point.

Especially must he endeavour to show the spiritual scaffolding or skeleton of any work of art; those main ideas upon which the shape is constructed, and around which the rest group as ministering dependencies.

But he will not, therefore, pass over that intellectual structure without which the other could not be manifested. He will not forget the builder while he admires the architect. While he dwells with delight on the relation of the peculiar arch to the meaning of the whole cathedral, he will not think it needless to explain the principles on which it is constructed Every beauty will have its word, only all beauties will be subordinated to the final beauty—that is, the unity of the whole.

He will introduce his pupil into the society which he himself prizes most But he will likewise seek to tum him aside from such company, whether of books or of men, as might tend to lower his reverence, his choice, or his standard. He will, therefore, discourage indiscriminate reading, and that worst than waste which consists in skimming books He knows that if a book is worth reading at all, it is worth reading well; and that, if it is not worth reading, it is only to the most accomplished reader that it *can* be worth skimming. He will seek to make him discern, not merely between the good and the evil, but between the good and the not so good. And this not for the sake of sharpening the intellect, still less of generating that self-satisfaction which is the closest attendant upon criticism, but for the sake of choosing the best path and the best companions A spirit of criticism for the sake of the truth—a spirit that does not start from its chamber at every noise, but waits till its presence is desired—cannot, indeed, garnish the house, but can sweep it clean. Were there enough of such wise criticism, there would be ten times the study of the best writers of the past, and perhaps one-tenth of the admiration for the ephemeral productions of the day. A gathered mountain of misplaced worships would be swept into the sea by the study of one good book; and while what was good in an inferior book would still be admired, the relative position of the book would be altered and its influence lessened.

Speaking of true learning, Lord Bacon says: "It taketh away vain admiration of anything,

which is the root of all weakness." The right teacher would have his pupil easy to please, but ill to satisfy; ready to enjoy, unready to embrace; keen to discover beauty, slow to say, "Here I will dwell."

[MacDonald then examines other subjects, concluding that the pupil should learn] not to mistake fancy, either in himself or in others for imagination, and to beware of hunting after resemblances that carry with them no interpretation.

Such training is not solely filled for the possible development of artistic faculty. Few, in this world, will ever be able to utter what they feel. Fewer still will be able to utter it in forms of their own. Nor is it necessary that there should be many such. But it is necessary that all should feel. It is necessary that all should understand and imagine the good. . . .

"The glory of God is to conceal a thing, but the glory of the king is to find it out," says Solomon. "As if," remarks Bacon upon the passage, "according to the innocent play of children, the Diving Majesty took delight to hide his works, to the end to have them found out; and as if kings could not obtain a greater honour than to be God's playfellows in that game."

One more quotation from the book of Ecclesiastes, setting forth both the necessity we are under to imagine, and the comfort that our imagining cannot outstrip God's making.

"I have seen the travail which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it. He hath made everything beautiful in his time; also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end" (35-42).

RUSKIN ON READING MYTH

MacDonald's conception of the writing of mythopoeia was taken up and developed by his close friend John Ruskin in the first part of *The Queen of the Air*, published two years after the date of MacDonald's essay. A passage in Ruskin's section 17 is particularly relevant to the quotation from Bacon. He explains that all great myths:

are didactic in the purest way, indirectly and occultly, so that, first, you shall only be bettered by them if you are already hard at work in bettering yourself; and when you are bettered by them it shall be partly with a general acceptance of their influence, so constant and subtle that you shall be no more conscious of it than of the healthy digestion of food; and partly by a gift of unexpected truth, which you shall only find by slow mining for it; —which is withheld on purpose, and close-locked, that you may not get it until you have forged the key of it in a furnace of your own heating. And this withholding of their meaning is continual, and confessed in the great poets. . . . [None] of the greater poets or teachers of any nation or time, ever spoke but with intentional reservation; nay, beyond this, there is often a meaning which they themselves cannot interpret—which it may be for ages long after them to interpret—in what they said, so far as it recorded true imaginative vision. For all the greatest myths have been seen, by the men who tell them, involuntarily and passively—seen by them with as great distinctness (and in some respects, though not in all, under conditions as far beyond the control of their will) as a dream sent

to any of us by night when we dream clearest; and it is this veracity of vision that could not be refused, and of moral that could not be foreseen, which in modern historical enquiry has been left wholly out of account: being indeed the thing which no merely historical investigator can understand, or even believe . . .

MIKE PARTRIDGE'S E-MAIL BULLETIN "WINGFOLD"

Mike writes to us:

Long-term I would like to find someone to host the technical side of this for me on an automated listserver. A couple of times I thought I might have found someone to do this but both times, unfortunately, it came to nothing. The advantages would be that it would free up my own time, and thus enable more immediate responses to individual postings, and most importantly enable the list to continue to operate when I am away from the computer, i.e. holidays and so on.

As has been described in *Orts*, the contributors to this bulletin are remarkable for their enthusiasm and goodwill. The help Mike requires provides an opportunity for a very worth-while activity for the right person with the right equipment. His e-mail address is partridge@dial.pipex.com His phone number is 0(044)1625 527 327. Mike's other Internet venture, his webpage "The Golden Key," is given pride of place in Tony Dawson's article on "Seven Authors on the Internet" quoted above.



An early portrait of Edward Hughes, fiancée of Mary MacDonald
© This painting is reproduced in colour in Leonard Roberts' book on Arthur Hughes mentioned in *Orts* 46.

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