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Ever Yours, George MacDonald, George MacDonald: Images of his World, and From Alice to Harry Potter

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Book Reviews

Ever Yours, George MacDonald a compact disc containing 47 unabridged MacDonald works in Microsoft Word format \$12.95 inc. p& p. Full details from gmd@yours.com or in UK from sales@rosleybooks.com

This is an invaluable tool for every serious student of MacDonald. With it, anyone with a computer using “find” on the “edit” menu can instantly find any word or phrase in any of the MacDonald books included; any passages can instantly be copied and “pasted” into articles being written about MacDonald, without any danger of inaccurate transcription; and if a particular book has temporarily been lent or mislaid it can be read off the monitor screen.

George MacDonald: Images of his World, photographs by Larry E. Fink, biography by Rolland Hein, Abilene TX: Pasture Springs Press, 2004. 225 x 280mm. 110pp. h.b. ISBN 0-9670760-7-2.

This new book will delight people who love, and attempt to understand MacDonald’s widely ranging writings. Larry Fink is a fine photographer, sensitive to the subtle ways in which the many places where MacDonald lived influenced his writings. And, although all of MacDonald’s biographers give us good insights into his character, Rolland Hein’s biographical writings on MacDonald are the most sensitive to the whole man. This new book contains some minor factual and typographical errors but few readers will notice or be disturbed by them. Though a book for the coffee table, unlike nearly all “coffee-table” books, its primary purpose is not to advertise the good taste of its owner but to stimulate readers to explore more about MacDonald and his writings. Text and photographs are wonderfully matched, with only one possible exception: no still photograph could do justice to the description on page 26 from *The Marquis of Lossie* of a sunset at Portlossie (Cullen). Copies of the book can be ordered from the website: www.hsutx.edu/academics/litlang/macdonald.html

From Alice to Harry Potter: Children’s Fantasy in England, by Colin Manlove Christchurch NZ: Cybereditions, 2003. 250 pp. p.b. ISBN 1-877275-55-7.

As only twenty-three pages in this book are devoted to Victorian Children’s Fantasy, readers must not expect much analysis of MacDonald’s writings. For this they should look to some of Manlove’s earlier books. Yet even a two-line allusion in the present book can encapsulate a story’s essence: for example, his observation that “the whole object of the lady of *The Wise Woman*

(1875) is to train two girls away from the evil vision that sees reality only as something to be grasped by their hands” (28). There are thirty-two references to MacDonald scattered through the book, most of them brief but insightful observations on the relations between MacDonald’s approach and that of other authors.

The greatest value of the book for most readers will be Manlove’s ability to deepen understanding of twentieth century children’s books we thought we knew [55] well and, in so doing, encourage us to look at some of the many books he describes that we have not read. With some books he may stimulate the reader to violent disagreement; but violent disagreement obliges us to clarify our own perception of whatever book is in question, and this cannot but deepen our understanding. More often, the new perspectives he reveals are so self-evident that we cannot understand why we did not perceive them when we ourselves read the book!

Manlove discusses modern critical approaches to many of the books he examines. His accustomed historical approach permits a clear understanding of the evolution of children’s literature. Most critics of the last fifty years have tended to work back in time from the present day, neither noticing crucial elements of the best older stories, nor the lack of these elements in the majority of modern stories.

Two other new books have been brought to our attention too late to be reviewed in this issue: *George MacDonald Exposes False Conflicts: Jesus/God; Justice/Mercy; Science/Religion* by Mary Ellis Taylor, and *George MacDonald and the Logic of Faith* by Barbara Amell. [56]