

Orts: The George MacDonald Society Newsletter

Volume 39

Article 1

1996

Orts 39, 1996

The George MacDonald Society

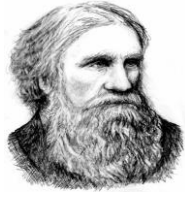
Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.snc.edu/orts>

 Part of the [Literature in English, British Isles Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

The George MacDonald Society (1996) "Orts 39, 1996," *Orts: The George MacDonald Society Newsletter*: Vol. 39, Article 1.
Available at: <http://digitalcommons.snc.edu/orts/vol39/iss1/1>

This Newsletter is brought to you for free and open access by the English at Digital Commons @ St. Norbert College. It has been accepted for inclusion in Orts: The George MacDonald Society Newsletter by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ St. Norbert College. For more information, please contact sarah.titus@snc.edu.



Orts

The George MacDonald Society Newsletter No. 39 April 1996

AN UNUSUAL MEETING

The Society planned a rather unusual meeting for 26 March this year, designed for mainly social purposes and without business discussion, or any specific lecture topic. It was hoped to attract some members who were not generally able to get to meetings, to hear something of what MacDonald meant to a number of people, in an informal atmosphere, at Freda Levson's flat.

In fact about ten people were present, one or two being prevented from attending at the last minute. One of these was a French member, Mme Georgette Lormant-Maury, who however later sent in the remarks (on *Sir Gibbie*) that she had hoped to deliver. Welcome visitors who are not often seen-included Julia Hett, Daphne Hort and Anthony Wright. Anthony reminded us of a point made by W. H. Auden, that 'symbol hunting' is the wrong way to read MacDonald's fantasies, which must be accepted as a whole, the message with the story—the 'teaching without tears' that he gives without being over-didactic. Anthony and Daphne Hort both had had experience of psychotherapeutic work, which certainly relates to MacDonald's power as a teacher and guide.

The meeting showed how potent the simple reading aloud of a narrative can be—reading aloud being a long-forgotten domestic entertainment! It reminds one how the primitive poets and story-tellers must have held their listeners enthralled. Serials and short stories read on the radio show there is still a public for this kind of narration. John Heath-Stubbs chose a passage from Lilith to be read at our meeting, and I think even those who were familiar with it found it spell-binding (Kath Macdonald was the reader).

Societies need social occasions, as the very name implies, and it was felt that this was a successful event which may well be repeated.

SEVEN MAGAZINE VOL. 12

The Marion Wade Center in Wheaton, U.S.A. has now been in existence for thirty years. Its annual publication 'Seven' has appeared again and is rich and varied, dealing with all the writers of its choice. It is necessary here to concentrate on our particular author, and in this post-centenary year the emphasis fell on MacDonald's Lilith.

That climactic work belongs to the writer's last creative period, and his last years, from 1880, were spent in Bordighera, Italy. Barbara Reynolds gives a picture of the town in Seven and stresses the beneficial effects of the MacDonalds' residence in Casa Coraggio there—he was 'one

of the most generous of the resident British donors'. His 'Casa' is now transformed into a housing complex of about 40 appartments.

Last year's symposium in Cologne, Germany, devoted to Lilith had a most carefully planned programme including drama as well as talks. A peaceful landscape by John Sell Cotman was chosen as a visual expression of the whole occasion—though it hardly seems to relate to the apocalyptic drama of the story. The water shown perhaps indicated the 'mirror' theme of the symposium's title. It was an important creative event, especially in its international basis; is MacDonald the first Scot to make any impact on the continent since Byron and Sir Walter Scott? All the symposium papers will be published in English either in North Wind or in Seven. Adelheid Kegler who writes in Seven sees MacDonald from an individual angle, aligning him with Emily Bronte, Le Fanu, Herman Melville, the German Wilhelm Raabe, David Lindsay and the Russian Symbolists (presumably such as Blok).

Three early reviews of Lilith are of great interest, of which one by Katherine Pearson Woods shows true appreciation. She notes how the late book 'balances' the early Phantastes published at the beginning of the author's career. Her comments were published in New York in 1895.

Professor G. Spina writes perceptively of Lilith, calling it 'A dark labyrinth (leading) towards the light' (if I may add one word to his title.)

Two reprints of MacDonald are noted in Seven: What's Mine's Mine which is Vol. 15 of the Sunrise Centenary edition (Eureka, California), and a reprint of the 'Diary of an Old Soul' (Augsburg, Minneapolis). This contains some of the poet's most characteristic work, witnessing his love of George Herbert's verse.

RAPHAEL SHABERMAN

The Society was shocked at suddenly losing a friend and a long-standing member by the recent death of Raphael Shaberman. Beside his deep knowledge of MacDonald and especially of MacDonald's bibliography, he was an expert on Lewis Carroll. An obituary by a friend will appear later in one of the Society's publications. It is proposed to have a memorial meeting in London with members of the Lewis Carroll Society. Those interested in such a meeting-date to be arranged—are asked to contact John Docherty. The location would be Freda Levson's flat (addresses of both members on page 8).

A very recent publication of Raphael's will also serve as a kind of memorial to him. This is a well-illustrated book In Pursuit of Lewis Carroll (Greenwich Exchange, £14.99), in which the author imagines entering a dream-like state and meeting Sherlock Holmes; he takes advantage of that supreme if fictitious intelligence to discuss some disputed points and rash assumptions about the modest creator of Alice. Readers will enjoy this unusual approach and will probably read accounts of Carroll with more critical attention in future.

AN OMISSION IN A 'NORTH WIND' ESSAY

In an account of Jean Paul Richter's influence on George MacDonald in the latest 'North Wind,' I described the dark and despairing 'Dream of the Dead Christ' of the German writer which MacDonald says impressed his fictional 'Ranald Bannerman' so strongly. The passage makes one think that it expresses MacDonald's own reactions to Jean Paul's vision. Some readers may recall that one of the leading characters in another MacDonald story, Mary Marston, is depicted reading aloud this same dream to Mary and another girl, and both are deeply affected (Chapter III). I should have mentioned this scene, with its praise of Jean Paul and an interesting mention of Thomas Carlyle's translation of it. I am grateful to Deirdre Hayward for calling this reference to my attention.

W. Webb

MACDONALD STUDIES IN ITALY

Professor G. Spina, who directs studies in non-Italian language and literature at the University of Genoa has sent us a list of monographs and papers produced in recent years under his supervision. A good many deal with aspects of George MacDonald and some are detailed here. They include 'The female devil (or Lucifer) in MacDonald' (presumably including his temptresses and evil mothers); 'The Shadow in Phantastes'; 'The influence of Dante on MacDonald' (G.Spina); 'The subterranean journey in The Princess and the Goblin'; 'The harmony of form and structure in the fantasy of MacDonald' (G. Spina). The Professor has also written 'The realism of MacDonald'; a bibliographical sketch dealing with him; and a short book 'James Hogg, voice of the Scottish border'. This has some relevance to MacDonald, particularly to At the Back of the North Wind, and will probably be available in Kings College Library, London. The text is in Italian as no doubt are all the items mentioned here.

'SEEMING TOMFOOLERY' AMONG THE VICTORIANS

John Docherty will give a paper at the conference on Reassessing mid-Victorian Britain at the Leeds Centre for Victorian Studies, 15-17 July. His theme is 'How Charles Kingsley, George MacDonald and Lewis Carroll used 'seeming tomfoolery' (Kingsley's term) with a serious purpose in their ostensibly juvenile stories to disseminate the teachings of F. D. Maurice.

BIBLICAL ALLUSIONS IN 'LILITH'

The list in progress of biblical allusions in MacDonald's final work is not absolutely completed yet. Much useful work has been received but there is still some to be done and John Docherty would like further help in this matter.

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE MACDONALD COLLECTION, KINGS COLLEGE

The following books are particularly needed.

The first biography of MacDonald, by Joseph Johnson, 1906

Colin Manlove: *Modern Fantasy*

The Impulse of Fantasy Literature

Stephen Prickett: *Victorian Fantasy*

The Society would pay for these works if unable to obtain them as gifts.

COMITTEE MEMBERS AND THE SOCIETY

The Society recently had some discussion about the structure of the committee. It is undesirable that posts other than those demanding special knowledge and experience are held too long by any one person. The usual procedure (as for example in the Lewis Carroll Society) is for all committee members other than the editors of the news-letter and the journal to resign after 3 years in office of course being eligible for re-election after a specified period.

The committee members, with the dates on which their names first appear in the minute book, are as follows—omitting the two editors:

Freda Levson	1980	Douglas Troup	1992
Phil Streeter	1980	Vivienne Forrest	1994
Rachel Johnson	1980	Roy Bricknell	1994
Kath Macdonald	1992		

Please note: Proposals for new committee members are invited so that service for more than 3 years can be avoided. This of course is merely a matter of society organisation—no reflection on anyone is implied!

The present list of Patrons of the Society is as follows:

Sir Hugh & Lady Casson; Brian Sibley; Prof. Giorgio Spina;

Marina Warner

President: Regius Prof. Stephen Prickett

NEWS FROM THE GERMAN 'INKLINGS' SOCIETY

The latest bulletin from the very active German 'Inklings' group gives us early warning of the celebration of C. S. Lewis's hundredth birthday; he was born in winter 1898.

However we hear more of another important birthday, the 75th of Gisbert Kranz, who has been a vital influence on the society since its inception. The transference of his very considerable library to the University of Eichstatt was noted in an earlier *Orts*, making that and the Marion Wade Center in U.S.A. the leading centres for study of Lewis, MacDonald and related Christian authors. Gisbert Kranz's learning is extremely deep and wide-ranging including Dante and early Christian literature, and he is very interested in the visual arts also.

AN ILLUSTRATED MACDONALD REPRINT

Glenn Sadler writes from U.S.A. that his revised edition of The Gifts of the Child Christ (which Greville MacDonald—and also William Raeper—name as '...of the Christ Child') is finished and will be published in the near future. Arthur Hughes's last nativity scene 'The Adoration and the Shepherds' of 1912 is to appear on the cover, a picture which once belonged to George and Greville. Illustrations inside are by Hughes and other artists. The volume should run to 600 pages and the American publisher Eerdmans is planning a British distributor for it.

(Information from Freda Levson)

HUNTLY NEWS: MACDONALD'S MEMORIAL STONE

The appeal in connection with the memorial to MacDonald and his wife in Drumblade churchyard is now closed. We are deeply grateful for all the enthusiasm and hard work of Tony Richardson on the finely lettered stone, and hope to make a presentation to him in due course. Seth Johannesen, now living at the writer's childhood home at Huntly and having become familiar with his new Scottish environment, will keep an eye on the stone when he goes to Drumblade church.

Those visiting Huntly may well be interested in viewing the handsome Memorial Book recording the unveiling service for the memorial and containing the list of contributors to the fund. It was beautifully written out for us by the late Anthony Barker, and is now kept in the Brander Library, Huntly.

The Huntly Hotel

The Square, Huntly, Aberdeenshire
AB54 5BR

The hotel is very conveniently situated
on the corner of the square opposite the Brander
Library and not far from the new 'Old Drill Hall'
museum.

The Proprietors Mrs Bell and Mrs Carder welcome
visitors interested in MacDonald
Telephone: (01466) 792 703

MACDONALD'S 'WISDOM TO LIVE BY'

Under this title Michael Phillips (Sunrise Books, of Eureka, California) announces for autumn 1996 a new compilation of brief quotations from every published work of George MacDonald, under headings such as Spiritual Proverbs, Life Observations and Practical Faith. The name of the compiler or editor is unfortunately not given. The format will match the Sunrise Centenary edition of MacDonald's works; the book is leather-bound and costs 19.95 (pre-publication offer). Details of a paperback will be given later.

The series of Sunrise Reprints continues with: Unspoken Sermons, 3rd Series. Now available, 26.50. The next volumes to appear will be the novels Castle Warlock and David Elginbrod.

THE GEORGE ELIOT FELLOWSHIP: GUIDED TOURS

The Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council, in association with the George Eliot Fellowship, is providing guided tours of the Midland places connected with the novelist George Eliot in the spring and summer. There will be a memorial lecture also on 12th October this year. Details of these and other events and of membership, can be obtained from the Secretary of the Fellowship, Mrs K. Adams, 71 Stepping Stones Road, Coventry CV58JT.

To follow the great success of Middlemarch, a film of Daniel Deronda is being made, to be seen later this year.

Some of MacDonald's Thoughts

It is only in God that the soul has room.

Obedience alone holds wide the door for the entrance of the spirit.

If you do not see that the commonest things of life belong to the plan of God, you have got to learn it.

In all God's works the laws of beauty are wrought out in vanishing portrayals, in birth and death. In these there is no hoarding, but an everfresh creating, and eternal flow of life from the heart of God.

Life is not in knowing that we are alive, but in loving all forms of life.

(From the forthcoming Wisdom to Live by: see above)

CAN ANYONE HELP...

Freda Levson is looking for two items in the 10-volume set of MacDonald's 'Works of Fancy and Imagination' published in small pocket format by Chatto & Windus:

Vol. VI. Phantastes Part II.

Vol. VIII. Stories. Part I of II.

Her address is 58A Westbourne Park Villas, London W2 5EB Tel 0171 221 0842

GEORGE MACDONALD AND SWEDENBORG

The 'New Church' inspired by Emmanuel Swedenborg, the Swedish scientist, mystic and philosopher (1688-1772) is more widespread than many who know no more than his name would suspect. Members of this Church began discussing Swedenborg's influence on MacDonald as long ago as 1883 ("MacDonald is considered by many almost a New Church man" —this was written in a Swedenborgian magazine of that date). More recently Richard Lines, President of the Swedenborg Society has tried to clarify the connections between the Swedish mystic, George MacDonald and C.S. Lewis. He considers that Swedenborg helped MacDonald to throw off the dour Calvinism in which he had been raised; and Greville MacDonald seems in no doubt about the influence—which William Raeper also noticed (in MacDonald's Lilith).

C.S. Lewis puts a dismissive speech in the mouth of his portrayal of 'George MacDonald', the character who guides the narrator in Lewis's *The Great Divorce*, implying MacDonald had no use for Swedenborg, but I believe no direct comment of his on the subject has survived, and clearly different views on the 'influence' exist.

CONTACTS

Chairman: Rev Phil Streeter, 66 Clydesdale Road, Hornchurch,
Essex RM11 1AQ Tel 61708 706178

Editor of 'North Wind'
John Docherty, 9 Medway Drive, Forest Row, Sussex
RH18 5NU Tel 01342 823859

Membership Secretary
Rachel Johnson, 61 Longdales Road, Lincoln LN2 2JS
Tel 01522 532967

Editor of 'Orts'
William Webb, 116 Pierrefondes Avenue, Farnborough, Hants
Tel 01252 543980