Orts 61, 2002

The George MacDonald Society

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The George MacDonald Society Newsletter No. 61, 2002

The George MacDonald Society

The Society was founded in 1980, seventy-five years after MacDonald's death in 1905. It exists to celebrate and promote the works of George MacDonald and provide a forum for the exchange of views and information about his life and work.

Members of the Society receive the quarterly newsletter Orts (meaning 'scraps') and the annual journal, North Wind. There are annual one-day conferences for members in varying locations throughout Britain.

Visit our home-page: http://www.gmsociety.org.uk/
Also:
http://www.george-macdonald.com/

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More than six months ago and just before the dreadful events in New York of "9/11", the Society's 2001 conference in Hastings must seem only a distant memory to those who were there. George MacDonald spent two periods of his life in Hastings (the Sussex watering place was a favourite of Victorian writers and artists) and it was in 1858 during his first stay that he first met Charles Dodgson (Lewis Carroll), and so we were determined to hold a gathering there. Saturday 8 September turned out to be a warm, sunny late Summer day. We gathered (members of the Society were joined by members of the Lewis Carroll Society and the Dickens Fellowship) at the conference centre 'Capel ne Ferne', a magnificent Victorian mansion in St Leonards-on-Sea, Hastings's 'other half'. After a brief introduction from me, local historian and Society member Edward Preston gave a most impressive illustrated talk on the history of Hastings and St
Leonards, showing how the Cinque Port of Hastings developed into the fashionable nineteenth century seaside resort of Hastings and St Leonards. He also told us about how MacDonald first came there with his family at the suggestion of his friend Lady Byron (widow of the poet) and how he met Dodgson at the surgery of Dr James Hunt.

John Docherty followed with a most interesting talk on the influence Phantastes had on the creation of Alice in Wonderland and later Sylvie and Bruno. In turn, Carroll’s literary efforts had a direct effect on MacDonald's own writing for children in the Princess books.

After an excellent buffet lunch we boarded a coach for a guided tour of both towns under Edward Preston's expert tutelage. The high spot of the afternoon was a visit to MacDonald's former residence, Halloway House, which has been lovingly restored by its present owners. They very kindly showed the whole party of nearly thirty people around their home. Then it was back to 'Capel ne Ferne' for a final cup of tea before we dispersed, although some members decided to make a weekend of it and stayed overnight in Hastings.

The day was judged a huge success and followed on very well from the literary conference held in Oxford in September 1999 and the Bedford visit of September 2000. Ideas for a future similar event would be welcomed by the Committee.

Richard Lines

Annual General Meeting, Friday 19 October 2001

This was held once again in a central London venue, the Gardiner Room at Swedenborg House in Holborn. Despite the central London venue and the rather better weather than on the occasion of the 2000 AGM at the same place, attendance was very disappointing. Reports from the Treasurer and Membership Secretary, Vivienne Forrest, were read by the Chairman. Membership stood at 152, there being 73 UK members, 58 US members, with the balance being scattered around the world from France to Japan. The Treasurer's report showed a deficit for the year of £629 with a balance of only £26 at the bank at the close of our financial year, 30th September. The position was not quite as bad as it seemed, as a cheque for £500 odd for American memberships had been delayed owing to the halting of airmail services post-11th September. A cheque for £300 from the Ashfield Trust had also arrived too late for the annual accounts. The Treasurer acknowledged the generous support given to the Society by the Trust over a number of years.

The Chairman reported on the activities of the Society over the year, including the recent highly successful Hastings conference. Ian Blakemore, the new editor of 'Orts', was congratulated on having produced two excellent editions. John Docherty had resumed the editorship of 'North Wind' and No. 19 had appeared during the course of the year. (The out of sequence No. 18, which had failed to appear in 1999, and No. 20, containing an index for Nos 11-20 appeared at the very end of 2001.) John was congratulated on his efforts.

The officers and Committee were re-elected for 2002, with the exception of Katharine Macdonald who wished to stand down after many years service. She was thanked for all she has
done for the Society. She has not ceased to be an active member and continues to host the occasional Committee meeting at her flat in west London. Not long after the AGM Vivienne Forrest expressed the wish to step down from her twin jobs as Treasurer and Membership Secretary owing to distance and continuing health problems. At the time of writing a successor had not yet been found. Volunteers are sought from among the membership. The same person need not hold both offices. Roger Bardet has continued to act as Minutes Secretary, but since the retirement of Deirdre Hayward the Society does not have an official Secretary.

After the formal business John Docherty gave a most erudite talk on the theme of Professor Stephen Prickett's Oxford paper, the influence of German writers (particularly Goethe) on MacDonald.

Richard Lines

**George MacDonald Summer School**

Including an exhibition of MacDonald's manuscript material
Ending with a Book Fair

**Thursday 8th, 9th, and 10th August 2002**

'Mathematics, Science, and George MacDonald'. By David L. Neuhouser, Curator Edwin W. Brown Collection at Taylor University, Upland Indiana, U.S.A.
'MacDonald's Scottish Novels and Huntly'. By David Robb
'The Fantasy Works of George MacDonald'. By Colin Manlove
'Collecting and reading the books and poems of George MacDonald'.
By Ian Blakemore and others—a workshop

The exhibition will be held over three days at the Brander Library, Huntly of some of the works held by Aberdeen University—manuscripts and letters:
- Versions 1-2 of *The History of Robert Falconer*
- The holograph manuscript of *The Vicars Daughter*
- The first part of *The Snow Fight*
- Concluding parts of *At the Back of The North Wind*
- Letters from A.J. Scott and Arthur Hughes

The event will end with a Book Fair on Saturday 10th August in the afternoon.

A separate news-sheet will be out in May and will be mailed out to members. This is a great opportunity and members will not wish to miss this important event.

"God is God to us not that we may say *He is, but that we may know Him*; and when we know Him, then we are with Him, at home, at the heart of the universe, the heir of all things".

*There and Back*
Some Possible Sources for Phantastes

Colin Manlove

This is really only a few notes to Phantastes, but they will suggest that, like other authors, MacDonald picked up ideas from every quarter. We tend to stress his debts to Dante, Spenser or the Romantics, but we need not always go so high or so far back. The intention here sometimes seems to be to give MacDonald, and the study of him, dignity by association, a dignity he has in ample measure in himself. I have elsewhere argued—somewhere at the back of the North Wind—that MacDonald was indebted to children's fantasies written close in time to his own, particularly Francis Paget's The Hope of the Katzekopfs (1844) and Frances Browne's Granny's Wonderful Chair (1856).

Here, first, is Dinah Mulock, a fellow London-Scots writer who became a close friend of MacDonald's in the 1860s. Mulock was authoress of the romantic fantasy Alice Learmont (1852), a reworking of the Thomas the Rhymer/Tam Lin story, to which another Scot, Andrew Lang, was to be so (silently) indebted in his The Gold of Faimilee (1888); but my quotations are from her less well known Avillion and Other Tales (1853):

I followed him far into the forest to a great temple. Its strong tree-pillars had never been reared; they had risen of themselves...
Its walls were formed of interlacing verdure, its pavement tesselated with flowers.
Through its leafy branches rang the voices of innumerable choristers.... And its roof was the blue infinite ether.... Upwards rose the prayers and praises of the worshippers....
I heard from afar the loud song; I saw the multitude.... Every age, sex, and rank, uniting in the same solemn strain.... (92-3)

This, from the title story, is actually a far happier and simpler emotional scene than that of its equivalent in Phantastes (ch.23), where the fervour of the wood worshipers is qualified by its object, by them unseen—the man-devouring wolf beneath the altar. Further, MacDonald's forest church is much more man-made, with much sense of enclosure. Trees have been cut down on the way there, and organised into close-knit walls of yew round what is a huge forest clearing in the shape of a parallelogram. More human ranks of soldiery organise and lead the ceremony, in which the worshippers are less participants than followers. Nevertheless it seems possible that MacDonald got his idea of a woodland church and worship from this source.

Also suggestive is another story from Avillion, 'The Rosicrucian: A Tale of Cologne', which itself seems indebted to the stories in Hoffmann's The Golden Pot and Fouque's Undine. Here a young student of divine mysteries is so bewitched by a female elemental spirit that he is prepared to kill his human beloved, Isilda, in the vain hope of possessing it. A prophetic poem tells of an
'Elle maid' or wood sprite 'who in front appears as a beautiful damsel, but seen behind is hollow like a mask' and drives men mad (243). The student in the end is told by the elemental spirits that since he has sinned he cannot see them any more; and he then dies. The link with MacDonald's Maid of the Alder Tree, whom Anodos pursues instead of his white lady, seems clear. MacDonald more starkly links the Alder Maiden with death by making her hollow rear like a gaping coffin; and he makes her more of a predator.

Next, it has been so far surprisingly unremarked that Macdonald could owe something to contemporary writers in America such as Hawthorne or Poe. Hawthorne's Twice-Told Tales (1842) was first published in London in 1851, and his collection Mosses from an Old Manse (1846) appeared in London in 1852. Meanwhile Poe's Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque (1840) and his Tales (1845), which created an international sensation, came to London in 1845 and 1848; MacDonald mentions them in David Elginbrod, 1863 (II,276).

Hawthorne is at least parallel to MacDonald in his espousal of the fragmentary and the unfinished in art, as a means of evoking the mysterious in life; though he is without MacDonald's Christian concern. Like MacDonald, Hawthorne believed that 'The greatest forces lie in the region of the uncomprehended' (MacDonald 1893, ix), and set out to try to evoke it in The Scarlet Letter (1849).

In America there was a wave of classical and idealised sculpture in the 1830s and 1840s against which Hawthorne and others including Emerson were reacting (Turner ch.3, esp. 19ff.): such sculpture was par excellence the finished, the whole and the complete. MacDonald's white lady in the alabaster in Phantastes (ch.5) appears at first an idealised sculpture, but one latent rather than realised. For Anodos the stillness of art suggests a deficiency, which he is drawn to remedy by giving the figure plasticity and motion, "'For, I argued, 'who can tell but this cave may be the home of Marble, and this, essential Marble—that spirit of marble which, present throughout, makes it capable of being moulded into any form?'" (45). In his attraction to the suggestiveness of marble as much as to actually realising it, Anodos (and presumably MacDonald) is close to Hawthorne.

Indeed MacDonald may here be specifically indebted to Hawthorne's story 'Drowne's Wooden Image' in Mosses from an Old Manse. This describes a wood carver of competent but lifeless figureheads for ships, who is one day suddenly inspired enough to produce a carving of a woman so vivid as to seem alive. Drowne minimises his art, saying, like Michelangelo (Turner, 190), that it was less a case of him inventing, than of liberating the figure already present within the block of wood. "'The figure lies within that block of oak, and it is my business to find it'" (Hawthorne, Mosses, 353; see also 351). MacDonald's Anodos also sees the woman's shape as contained within the block of alabaster he discovers (Phantastes, 44-5); and he too is inspired, for he bursts into song and this releases the lady. Anodos is again a song-sculptor later on, when in the hall of statues in the fairy palace he brings the invisible figure of the lady on her plinth into being.

Hawthorne is often suggestive of MacDonald. Two others of his stories, 'A Select Party' and 'The Hall of Fantasy', have buildings which are nearer than anything in MacDonald's British or German predecessors to the fairy palace at the centre of Phantastes, with a great fountain, statues,
a library, and pillars made of precious stones. Add to Hawthorne a possible reading by MacDonald of Poe's 'The Masque of the Red Death', and one has the dancing figures that fill the halls, without Poe's menace. Here too one may mention Poe's 'The Assignation' as a possible source for the Cosmo story. Hawthorne is, like MacDonald, fascinated by the moon, as an image of the imagination which transfigures reality, melting away its boundaries. In moonlight the very floor of his study becomes to Hawthorne 'a neutral territory, somewhere between the real world and fairy-land, where the Actual and the Imaginary may meet, and each imbue itself with the nature of the other' (Hawthorne 1959, 45). In Phantastes it is the moon that enables Anodos to see the inhabitants of Fairy Land more plainly (80), the moon that pervades the fairy palace, and the moon that later melts the walls of the tower in which he is imprisoned. MacDonald uses the moon to similar purpose throughout his work.²

Phantastes seems also to owe something to Sara Coleridge's Phantasmion, Prince of Palmland (1837), a cluttered English romance of knights, ladies and damsels in a swoony pastoral landscape. The fairy Potentilla, queen of the insect realm, allows the young Phantasmion to fashion living wings for himself out of a myriad different coloured butterflies in a woodland glade: this may well be the source of the butterfly wings the little girl gathers in Phantastes, chapter 23. There are other suggestive moments in Phantasmion, such as a spirit of the flowers (93) and a winged lady like those of the 'loveless planet' (118), but none so striking; and whether MacDonald struggled through the rest of this long soporific dream-narrative must be uncertain. Actually there are two moments more anticipatory of Lilith—the overgrown ruin of a 'skeleton palace' (251) and the appearance of panthers and leopards (281-4).

Among the German Romantic writers of fairy tales, Novalis and Hoffmann have often been cited as sources for Phantastes, though not always with a great deal of evidence from their actual fantasies. Such evidence is more readily to be found in Friedrich de la Motte Fouque's Undine (1819), which MacDonald himself considered 'the most beautiful' fairy tale he knew (MacDonald 1893, iii). The tale centres on an isolated fisherman's hut beside a lake backed all round with almost impassable woods, which are filled with seeming horrors (suggestive of the Ash Tree?). The cottage stands on a flat grassy promontory, which for most of the story is turned to an island by a magical flood that rises round it. This is quite close to the cottage MacDonald's Anodos finds on a flat grassy island in the midst of the sea, and which is also supernaturally flooded (Phantastes, ch. 19). Fouque's cottage, however, does not sink beneath the sea: for that MacDonald may be indebted to the story of the drowned valley in Ovid's 'Baucis and Philemon' in the Metamorphoses, as retold in Hawthorne's A Wonder Book (London, 1851), or else to folk narratives of churches and cities which, though overwhelmed, continue functioning far beneath the waves (Thompson, 261).

Also in 1819, Fouque himself published J. von Eichendorff's The Marble Statue (Das Marmorbild) in his edited collection Das Frauentaschenbuch, and this tale of a statue of Venus that comes to life and infatuates young Florio with an image of the perfect woman may be a source for MacDonald's statuesque white lady, though she is good where this Venus is base and dangerous. Of course, the basic story is that of Pygmalion in Ovid.

Whilst seeing these various writers and works as possible sources for Phantastes, one is paradoxically reminded of MacDonald's originality; for he transposes them to wholly new and
often more profound purposes.

Notes

1. North Wind 18 (now available).
2. One might add that one in particular of Hawthorne's 'Tanglewood' stories, 'The Three Golden Apples', is at times suggestive of MacDonald's 'The Golden Key'; and that the titles 'Mosses from an Old Manse' and 'Tanglewood Tales' might even have suggested the names of the children in that story....

Texts Used

Phantastes and Lilith (London: Gollancz, 1962)

Frances White Ewbank Colloquium on C. S. Lewis and Friends

Pamela Jordan, Kristen Prillwitz, and David Neuhausser

On November 16-18, 2001 the third Frances White Ewbank Colloquium on C.S. Lewis and Friends was held at Taylor University in Upland, Indiana U.S.A. Featured speakers were Dr. Terry Lindvall author of Surprised by Laughter, Mrs. Maureen Collins, distinguished detective fiction expert, Dr. Rolland Hein, author of The Harmony Within and George MacDonald: Victorian Mythmaker, and Dr. Jared Lobdell, writer on Lewis. Lindvall spoke in chapel on Friday morning referencing Lewis' comments about the importance of continuing educational endeavors during wartime.

On Saturday, Lindvall spoke on "Laughing With God or the Devil: An Historical Theological, and Physiological Apologetic for Christians and Laughter." His presentation was insightful and entertaining. This session was particularly well attended because Taylor personnel had opportunity to hear Lindvall on Friday, and he is a gifted speaker; he also followed Jay Kessler's devotional (he shared the significant impact of MacDonald's thought in his own life and
reminded us of MacDonald's influence on Lewis.) Maureen Collins spoke on "The Mysteries of Dorothy L. Sayers" on Saturday as well. As an introduction to Sayers, her presentation was particularly appealing to students in the audience. Hein spoke on Friday afternoon on "What the Heart's Dear Imagination Dares: the Mythic Vision of George MacDonald." Lobdell's presentation, "C.S. Lewis & Nevill Coghill: An Irish Friendship, the Inklings, and the Cave" was an interesting look at Lewis' Irish connections. In addition to these plenary sessions nine concurrent sessions were held on Friday and Saturday. These sessions included seventeen papers, most on some aspect of Lewis' work but also concerning Tolkien, MacDonald, Sayers, Chesterton, and Williams and a panel discussion on teaching courses on Lewis and related authors. Two sessions were devoted to student papers, a first, second, and third place award was given; the quality of the student presentations was very good.

Other highlights of the colloquium included a very fine performance of Hamlet by the Taylor theatre and a Saturday night banquet. A fascinating presentation by Ellen Denham on an original libretto based on Tolkien's Beren and Luthien story captivated the banquet attendees.

The university drama department chose "Hamlet" as the play to be presented in connection with the colloquium because of the MacDonald manuscript on Hamlet. It has been the good fortune of Taylor University to come into possession of MacDonald's copy (previously owned by Rachel Johnson) of the play. This manuscript is apparently the one MacDonald used to lecture from and is a preliminary of his book, The Tragedy of Hamlet, which was published in 1885.

Dr. Pamela Jordan, Chair of the Lewis and Friends Committee and Chair of the English Department on the Fort Wayne campus of Taylor University, has begun a study of the MacDonald manuscript and presented some of the results of her preliminary study. MacDonald took a copy of the play found in the 1623 edition of Shakespeare and had it rebound with flyleaves inserted between the pages. On these flyleaves he wrote copious notes in different colored ink about the play. The title page on the play is inscribed to his daughter Lilia and dated 1881.

MacDonald's notes and marginalia reveal much about MacDonald as a scholar, critic, linguist, dramatist, lover of Shakespeare, and man of religious feeling. He carefully analyzed the first quarto and folio editions comparing them with the second quarto. He studied other printed versions of Hamlet and in this one expounds what he felt were proper reiterations and word choice. He comments often on lines that should be omitted and lines that should be kept in order to clarify meaning. Frequently, he pauses on a single word to trace its possible meanings. He indicated where the play should be divided into acts.

Not surprisingly, MacDonald's notes also provide insights into character interpretation, particularly that of Hamlet. These notes are some of the richest and most telling in the manuscript. MacDonald includes advice for actors and comments on how certain lines should be delivered. Revealing that he was widely read and a student of Shakespeare, the manuscript also contains commentary on other critical remarks and interpretations of the play. MacDonald often disagrees with other critics. Finally, as one would expect, MacDonald's theology and personal faith are evident in his marginal notes and commentary.
In Hein's talk, he explained that MacDonald attempted to glimpse the true nature of eternal reality. Tolkien, Hein pointed out, said that death most inspired MacDonald, thus all of MacDonald's major themes are related to death and integrated in it. However, death is seen as a positive occurrence. MacDonald had a deep sense of "something beyond," which caused him to portray the vision of a joyful afterlife. Hein made the point that MacDonald's inner life was in his novels, the clearest example of this being The Diary of an Old Soul. From this and his other novels, we see MacDonald's longing, desire, and undefined yet vivid vision of death and what comes after it. Hein described At the Back of the North Wind as being especially infused with this concept. In fact, Lady North Wind may also be called "death," and despite Diamond's confusion over her actions, she hears a song, which swallows up all the sorrow and pain of the men drowning at sea. Overall, MacDonald possessed a deep optimism, which derived much of its strength from looking straight at evil and suffering through personal experiences. He understood that adversity is needed to develop the soul and attain the joyful afterlife he so desired to show through his work.

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Meet Rev. Darren Hotmire

I became interested in MacDonald as I was recovering from an operation about 15 years ago (age of 19). A friend of mine lent me The Princess Stories. I liked them a great deal, so when I found that he had written more, I dutifully began to read them. I started with Sir Gibbie, though in the Michael Phillips edited version. I liked this even better than the princess stories. After several of the edited versions I read my first unedited copy (I don't remember which). This was a turning point in my reading; I enjoyed it even more than the modern editions. I realize now that this was when I became a serious MacDonald enthusiast. I began to read and collect the originals. A group of students at Taylor began doing this, including my twin brother and my roommate at Taylor. In all of this, we had influence from an older friend, Dr. David Neuhouser (Is this name at all familiar?) who made the loan and gifts of books to us.

I tried to read Phantasties early on, but found this to be too much for my unbaptized imagination. However, after several years of his other works and "imaginative maturity" on my part, I read this again a few years ago—with understanding and a great deal of fulfillment.

I received a masters from Trinity Seminary in Deerfield, Illinois. My thesis, not typical for the school, was entitled The God of George MacDonald. I also attended Taylor Universities Colloquium on C.S. Lewis and friends, and read a paper on Interpreting MacDonald's fairy tales based on his other writings...and one comparing the fairy tales of Lewis to MacDonald. I thought these immensely interesting, (!) but they were not very well attended.

I am currently an associate pastor and when I preach, there is normally a reference, quote, or at the very least some influence of MacDonald in the sermon. He, his writings, and his thoughts
have had a profound impact on myself and my perspective.

Darren Hotmire

"To see God and to love Him are one." George MacDonald

**LOVE IS STRENGTH**

Love alone is great in might,
Makes the heavy burden light,
Smooths rough ways to weary feet,
Makes the bitter morsel sweet:
Love alone is strength!

Might that is not born of Love
Is not Might born from above,
Has its birthplace down below
Where they neither reap nor sow:
Love alone is strength!

Love is stronger than all force,
Is its own eternal source;
Might is always in decay,
Love grows fresher every day:
Love alone is strength!

Little ones, no ill can chance;
Fear ye not, but sing and dance;
Though the high-heaved heaven should fall
God is plenty for us all:
Love alone is strength!

George MacDonald
PLEASE PLAN TO JOIN US FOR THE
FIFTH TRIENNIAL C.S. LEWIS SUMMER INSTITUTE
14-17 JULY 2002
OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITIES, ENGLAND

Editorial Policy

The George MacDonald Society's Newsletter - Orts and annual journal North Wind have two functions. Firstly, to publish material about the life and work of George MacDonald. Secondly, to publish details of the activities of the Society.

Contributions to Orts and North Wind are welcome through their respective editors. If you wish to submit a contribution please take note of the following:

- Submissions should be sent to the Editor.
- Submissions over 300 words should be made on floppy disc or by e-mail.
- Submissions under 300 words can be hand-written.
- Submissions on paper should be one-sided and double-spaced.
- All quotations should be clearly referenced, and a list of sources included.
- The Editor reserves the right to decide whether to publish a submission.

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The Marion E. Wade Center announces the publication of Volume 18 of *SEVEN: An Anglo-American Literary Review*. Featured in this issue are articles on Dorothy L. Sayers, C.S. Lewis, and Charles Williams, as well as a special section covering the Dedication of the Marion E. Wade Center's new building in September of 2001. The Dedication feature includes remarks by the British Consul General (Chicago), the Honorable Robert Culshaw, along with the keynote address on "An Anglo-American Special Cultural Relationship" delivered by the President of the Sayers Society, Dr. Barbara Reynolds.


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