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MacDonald's Crystal Palace: Diamonds and Rubies, Coal and Salt in *At the Back of the North Wind*

Lesley Willis Smith

“**W**hat is your name, little boy?” [the voice] asked.
“Diamond,” answered Diamond, under the bed-clothes.
“What a funny name!”¹

And it is, in any ordinary sense. But Diamond's name is as multi-faceted as the jewel itself, for the central figure in *At the Back of the North Wind* is both a boy with a distinctive and developing character and a mandala, or universal symbol of total integration and wholeness²—at least in process, for, as MacDonald says in *The Hope of the Gospel*, “we are not yet, we are only *becoming*.”³ George MacDonald believes that individuality must develop in the context of the collective, and that consciousness and the unconscious need to be integrated in both areas. The work of Carl Jung is illuminating with regard to both,⁴ and his fascination with alchemy is of particular interest as MacDonald sometimes appears, principally in *At the Back of the North Wind*, to be writing almost to an alchemical prescription (Jung is not, of course, concerned with the defunct “royal art” *per se*, but with what he describes in *Psychology and Alchemy* as “the signal connection between our modern psychology of the unconscious and alchemical symbolism”).⁵ The diamond is the *lapis*, or stone, “whose prism contains all the hues of the rainbow”⁶ and is therefore the ultimate symbol of completeness; in *Unspoken Sermons* MacDonald even says that “every human being is like a facet cut in the great diamond” which is God himself.⁷

The depiction of Diamond in *At the Back of the North Wind* involves three layers of authorial input. One is drawn from real life, for his character owes a great deal to MacDonald's son Maurice;⁸ one is influenced by MacDonald's reading, and especially by Paul Dombey in Charles Dickens's *Dombey and Son*;⁹ and one—the most crucial—is the product of MacDonald's imagination on both the symbolic and realistic levels.

An important dimension of the symbolic meaning of Diamond's name derives from what may be described as the collective consciousness, part and parcel of what Tolkien defines as the “Primary World, Reality” which, like the “Secondary World” of fantasy, figures largely in the book.¹⁰ Less than twenty years before the publication of *At the Back of the North*

Wind, the most famous diamond on earth—the Koh-i-Noor, or “Mountain of Light”—was brought to Britain from India, was given to Queen Victoria and was a major exhibit in the Great Exhibition of 1851 in the newly-constructed Crystal Palace, a showplace for the development of commerce, industry and technology, not only in Britain and her Empire but in countries around the world.¹¹ The Exhibition was enormously popular. Among the approximately six million visitors¹² were members of the MacDonald family, including George MacDonald himself¹³—and he would have found nothing to deprecate in this display.¹⁴ Indeed, he wrote to his father using the Great Exhibition as an inducement to visit Arundel: “You could come while the Exhibition was open.”¹⁵

In view of MacDonald’s love of jewels, however—“My father’s delight in gems was wonderful. They were to him symbolic,” says Greville MacDonald¹⁶—it is not strange that the Koh-i-Noor Diamond should have been to him, as it was to many others, the most fascinating exhibit of all. As a contemporary correspondent of *The Times* reported:

The Koh-i-Noor is at present decidedly the lion of the Exhibition. A mysterious interest appears to be attached to it, and now that so many precautions have been resorted to, and so much difficulty attends its inspection, the crowd is enormously enhanced, and the policemen at either end of the covered entrance have much trouble in restraining the struggling and impatient multitude.

Koh-i-Noor, in *Wikipedia*

Public interest in the jewel was if anything reinforced from about 1855, when newspapers were coming into their own—what John Sutherland calls “the explosive growth of a national press”¹⁷—and this interest was also reflected and perpetuated in novels. In Wilkie Collins’ *The Moonstone*, published (in *All the Year Round*) a little before *At the Back of the North Wind*, the moonstone is based partly on the Koh-i-Noor, as attested by Collins in his preface to the first complete edition in 1868. He describes it as reputedly “one of the sacred gems of India” and as “the subject of a prediction, which prophesied certain misfortune to the persons who should divert it from its ancient uses.”¹⁸ This by no means lessened the fascination of the jewel. MacDonald himself mentions it in his much later novel *Mary Marston* (1881); describing the dishonest character of Lady Malice (what a name!) he says “had she been certain of escaping discovery, she would have slipped the koh-i-noor into her belt-pouch” (*MM* 87). What happens in *At the Back of the North Wind* is that MacDonald transforms the allegedly stolen

Koh-i-Noor, enormously valuable yet reputedly accursed and therefore taboo, into a blessing precious beyond price—the living child who is at the heart of the book.

“What a funny name!” says North Wind (*ABNW* 9)—surely the understatement of the book, but it does open the subject on the level of a child’s understanding. And what a funny conversation, taking place as it does between North Wind and a little boy in the Primary World, a world in which London street names are accurately given and the protagonist for some time drives a cab and carefully reckons up his fares. But the narrator says “I have seen this world . . . look as strange as ever I saw Fairyland” (17), and strange things happen in it.¹⁹ Diamond explains that his father, a coachman, named him after a favourite horse, which is surely strange enough: “He is Old Diamond, and I am Young Diamond” (9).²⁰ Boy and horse relate primarily to Joseph the coachman rather than to each other—“he’s Big Diamond, and I’m Little Diamond; and I don’t know which of us my father likes best” (10)—though their personal relationship develops as Diamond matures. And both horse and boy will later become part of a symbolic trinity of diamonds—body, mind and spirit, with their concomitant functions of sensation, meditation and imagination—in which it is imperative that the horse should take the lowest place.²¹

North Wind tells Diamond that she already knows his name and has even defended its suitability:

“Don’t you remember that day when the man was finding fault with your name—how I blew the window in?”

“Yes, yes,” answered Diamond, eagerly. “Our window opens like a door, right over the coach-house door. And the wind—you, ma’am—came in, and blew the bible out of the man’s hands, and the leaves went all flutter flutter on the floor, and my mother picked it up and gave it back to him open, and there—“

“Was your name in the bible,—the sixth stone in the high priest’s breast-plate.”

If Diamond is disappointed with this explanation—““Oh!—a stone, was it?” said Diamond. ‘I thought it had been a horse—I did’” (13)—it is rewarding for the reader. The reference is to the breastplate of Aaron, the first high priest, as described in the Book of Exodus:

And thou shalt set in it settings of stones, even four rows of stones: the first row shall be a sardius [ruby], a topaz, and a carbuncle: this shall be the first row.

And the second row shall be an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond. (Exodus 28: 17-18)

But if Diamond is to achieve the symbolic fullness of his name he must begin by coming to terms with the animal who lives in the stable beneath him and who, in MacDonald's eyes, is also more precious than the Koh-i-Noor. In an essay in *Unspoken Sermons: Series Three*, MacDonald says that while "the precious things of the earth . . . may be said to have come from [God's] hands . . . the live things come from his heart" ("The Inheritance," 613). And North Wind puts it more succinctly: "A horse is better than a stone any day" (*ABNW* 13).

At the beginning of the book Diamond regards Horse Diamond with timidity:

[When] young Diamond woke in the middle of the night, and felt the bed shaking in the blasts of the north wind, he could not help wondering whether, if the wind should blow the house down, and he were to fall through into the manger, old Diamond mightn't eat him up before he knew him in his nightgown. (3)

But Diamond begins to grow close to the horse after his first encounter with North Wind. He hesitates to follow her down the dark, unfamiliar staircase to the yard and runs instead to the stable ladder with its comforting gleam of light at the bottom. And

there was horse Diamond's great head poked out of his box on to the ladder, for he knew boy Diamond although he was in his nightgown, and wanted him to pull his ears for him. This Diamond did very gently for a minute or so . . . (15)

Ear-pulling notwithstanding, Diamond is not so wise in the ways of friendship as he later becomes, for he decides next morning to give the sleeping horse a surprise. But when he climbs onto old Diamond's back the horse gets up with a tremendous commotion and the situation is only saved when the child gives a cry of terror:

For when [the horse] heard young Diamond's cry he knew that there was nothing to kick about; for young Diamond was a good boy, and old Diamond was a good horse, and the one was all right on the back of the other. (26)

And the first change of any significance in Diamond's behaviour is that he forsakes his earlier game of sitting in a blanket cave before his mother's fire²² and takes to driving two broken chairs harnessed to a cradle (29). The mother-image of the cave is not abandoned, for the cradle is a

mother-image too.²³ But Diamond has begun to enact his father's role which, when described to North Wind, was merely a future prospect: "I'm going to be a coachman" (32).

In the course of his nocturnal expeditions with North Wind Diamond never has any adventures involving horses, perhaps because he has a more exotic mode of transport, but more probably because horse and wind represent two different spheres of the unconscious—the instinctual and the spiritual²⁴—and Diamond cannot, or at any rate does not make contact with both levels simultaneously. So his journeys to the country at the back of the North Wind take place either when he is separated from Old Diamond or when the horse has faded into the background. But Old Diamond is significant in the context of young Diamond's day-to-day struggles, especially in the real battleground of Bloomsbury and the central London area. The close proximity of horse and boy in the stables of both Chiswick and Bloomsbury is important too, for without making too much of young Diamond as a Christ-figure,²⁵ a stable, or at least the coach house, was presumably the place of his birth.²⁶ Certainly it is the setting for an important stage in his growth to maturity on the night when North Wind, to encourage him to stand up and overcome his fears, says "Diamond, dear . . . be a man" (67). And more important than proximity is co-operation between boy and horse, for their relationship symbolises Young Diamond's assimilation of the instinctual level of his psyche. During his first ride,

Diamond soon found that, as he was obedient to his father, so the horse was obedient to him. . . . And another discovery he made was that, in order to guide the horse, he had in a measure to obey the horse first. If he did not yield his body to the motions of the horse's body, he could not guide him; he must fall off. (54)

This is the era of struggle for Diamond. He is in the thick of all the change and upheaval to which his family is subject when they are obliged to leave their home on the Colemans' estate in the country—a tremendous adjustment to new and less appealing surroundings (152), precarious finances and even short commons (310-11), and the delightful but certainly traumatic events of the birth of a second son just before moving to London and of a daughter while they are there. Against this background his own identity develops. Long before, in a cathedral (another form of Crystal Palace for this increasingly spiritualised jewel), North Wind has taught him literally to stand and keep standing on his own feet (81-82), but now he must also change the lives of those around him for the better. When his family moves

into the mews, Diamond does his best to “keep out the misery that was trying to get in at doors and windows” (155), begins to heal the wretchedness of the drunken cabman and his family next door (177ff), and extends his care for Nanny the crossing-sweeper (whom he has already defended), a solicitude which turns out to be as important on the symbolic level of the book as it is to the plot—if indeed the two can be separated.

Horse Diamond cannot help Boy Diamond in these endeavours, but, when Joseph falls ill, the two diamonds share the venture of driving the cab. Young Diamond has first to saddle up the horse—“If the old horse had had the least objection to the proceeding, of course he could not have done it” (218)—and then to drive him in order to feed the family. And he proves his discretion as well as his driving ability when he takes Mr. Evans (Miss Coleman’s former sweetheart, now presumed dead) to the Colemans’ new house in Hoxton. After this, “his father seemed ever so much better from finding that his boy was . . . quite taking his place as a man who judged what was wise, and did work worth doing” (251).²⁷

During the Bloomsbury era North Wind, Diamond’s great support and mentor, fades into the background: “Indeed, there was such a high wall, and there were so many houses about the mews, that North Wind seldom got into the place at all” (152). Although she continues to help in practical ways, such as blowing down a stack of chimneys to alter the direction of the cab (174-75), Diamond “could not quite satisfy himself whether the whole affair [of his first journey with her] was not a dream which he had dreamed when he was a very little boy” (174)—a forgivable doubt in view of “those precious dreams he had so often had, in which he floated about on the air at will” (358). And he finds a new mentor in the eventual patron of the family—Mr. Raymond, the similarity of whose name to Diamond’s own is significant. For as Freud says:

[Children] are never ready to accept a similarity between two words as having no meaning; they consistently assume that if two things are called by similar-sounding names this must imply the existence of some deep-lying point of agreement between them.²⁸

This presumably applies to the childlike as well²⁹—and in any case children do have a special claim on a book which first appeared in a journal specifically designed for them.³⁰ Mr. Raymond is another diamond; and MacDonald is playing not only on the similarity in sound between the two words but on what—to adults even more than to children—is an apparent similarity of meaning, for the words suggest “light of the world” and “day of

the world" respectively.³¹

By this point Diamond, as his father has discovered in the course of his illness, has become "not only useful to his family but useful to other people" (*ABNW* 251)—that is, his psyche is now centred, as it should be, in a universal context. He turns to Mr. Raymond for help when Nanny is ill, and it is thanks to him that she is conveyed from her filthy cellar to a children's hospital. Then a chain of events begins in which Mr. Raymond, his future wife, Nanny and Diamond are inextricably involved. Nanny's dream of the moon—triggered, as she says herself, by Mr. Raymond's story about Princess Daylight in which the waxing and waning of the moon are of crucial importance (295)—actually begins with her contemplation of the ruby ring lent her by the future Mrs. Raymond:

"I kept seeing deeper and deeper into the stone. . . . I do think it was the ring that set me dreaming; for, after I had taken my tea, I leaned back, half lying and half sitting, and looked at the ring on my finger. By degrees I began to dream. The ring grew larger and larger, until at last I found that I was not looking at a red stone, but at a red sunset. . . . Why couldn't I live in the sunset instead of in that dirt?" (293)

This complements Diamond's earlier waking fantasy of living in a sunset (29); but Nanny's dream goes further. Eventually she finds herself in the garden, watching the moon which she has always loved—"She's the only thing worth looking at in our street at night" (296)—when a dog chases her into a small summer-house, reminiscent (to the reader, though not to her) of the one that used to stand in the garden of The Wilderness.³² As Diamond was fascinated by the pane of stained glass in the real summer-house, so Nanny in the dream summer-house sees "the moon beginning to shine again—but only through one of the panes—and that one was just the colour of the ruby." And as she earlier kept looking at the ring, so now "the moon was so beautiful that [she] couldn't keep from looking at it through the red pane" (298).

Nanny's unconscious is claiming her attention in this dream, in which the moon, symbolically associated with the unconscious, plays so great a part: "Somehow the moon suited me exactly" (295). But Diamond has begun to feel the attraction of the ruby even before he hears the story of Nanny's dream. The foundation has been laid by the emphasis on roses and rose-colour in his own dream of the stars (233-34)—and shortly before he visits Nanny in hospital a ruby of another sort enters Diamond's life in the shape of Mr. Raymond's horse, which Joseph is to work and care for with his

own horse while his master is abroad: “Oddly enough, the name of the new horse was Ruby, for he was a very red chestnut. . . . Young Diamond said they were rich now, with such a big diamond and such a big ruby” (290).³³ And he interrupts Nanny during the narration of her dream to point out the coincidence of Horse Ruby’s having arrived at the same time as she borrowed the ruby ring (293).

Just as old Diamond was part of Diamond’s family before he himself was born, so Ruby precedes Nanny into Joseph’s and Martha’s establishment. And his presence is intimately connected with her own, for Mr. Raymond stipulates that Joseph shall provide for her as for one of his own children—“so long, that is, as he had the horse” (287). But though Ruby and Nanny have a symbolic connection, they have no relationship. Ruby’s thoughts are entirely (and sometimes misguidedly) on his distant master, while Nanny turns out to be less exalted as a human being than Ruby, “an angel of a horse” (323), is as an animal.

There is, however, symbolic consistency in the very lack of a parallel between the connection of Horse Diamond with Boy Diamond on the one hand and the connection of Ruby with Nanny on the other. The two Diamonds harmonise and finally enter the trinity of diamonds headed by Mr. Raymond. But the trinity is an incomplete symbol of the self, the wholeness of which must be represented by a quaternity.³⁴ Ruby and Nanny complement each other in symbolising the fourth element (in this case the ruby), which is ambiguous and problematic, since “[this] ‘inferior’ personality is made up of everything that will not fit in with, and adapt to, the laws and regulations of conscious life. It is compounded of ‘disobedience’”³⁵—the one thing Ruby and Nanny have in common. The sense of taboo which clings to the Koh-i-Noor (both sacred and “stolen”) is projected not onto the diamonds but onto the rubies in *At the Back of the North Wind*, though in a comparatively mild form.³⁶ Ruby is unconscious of or indifferent to his exploitation of those who have charge of him—but then, as Job tells us, “the price of wisdom is above rubies” (Job 28:18). Yet the ruby (or sardius), like the diamond, is a stone in the High Priest’s breastplate, and though Ruby shirks working for Joseph because, as he explains to Horse Diamond, “Your master’s not mine. . . . I must attend to my own master’s interests” (*ABNW* 317),³⁷ his intentions are good. Nanny, however, is more blameable. She tells Diamond that in her dream the man in the moon “made me sit down under a lamp that hung from the roof”³⁸ and gave me some bread and honey” (305). This is the beginning of a connection with the moon lady’s bees³⁹ which promises

enlightenment, since they “gather their honey from the sun and the stars” (304). But the man in the moon refuses to open their box and show them to Nanny, since “they are so bright that if one were to fly into your eye, it would blind you altogether” (305). In other words, she is not ready for such a degree of enlightenment and must begin with the humble task of cleaning the windows of the moon. Yet Nanny cannot resist opening the box “the tiniest crack” when she is alone (306), and three bees escape and have to be burned, precipitating a storm—in other words, lack of self-control leads to chaos.

The fourth and maverick element of the psyche is a source of energy that is, however, by no means wholly negative. It is “absent and yet present, [it] always appears in the fiery agony of the furnace and symbolizes the divine presence—succour and the completion of the work,” says Jung.⁴⁰ If Ruby, as the angel-horse which he declares himself to be (*ABNW* 320), is the “divine presence,” Nanny, in “the fire of the fever” (254), suffers the “fiery agony of the furnace”—even though, in *At the Back of the North Wind*, it is tempered by “the dew of tenderness” (254). And when she recovers, Joseph’s whole family (of which she is now part) has still much to suffer—a suffering of which Ruby is an indirect cause, although he does eventually bring “succour and the completion of the work.” A heavy burden for Joseph during Mr. Raymond’s absence (“No wonder, father: he’s so fat,” says Diamond [*ABNW* 323]), he becomes an invaluable assistant after his master’s return: “Considering his fat, he exerted himself amazingly, and got over the ground with incredible speed. So willing, even anxious, was he to go now, that Joseph had to hold him quite tight” (332).

Nanny, as good and as strong as she is in spite of the disadvantage of her wretched background, suffers from a divided self. Her unconscious self knows she needs Diamond—“she had dreamed of him often, and had talked much about him when delirious” (255)—but her conscious self is capable only of shallow judgement: “Now that she could manage the baby as well as he [we learn when she is established in the family], she judged herself altogether his superior” (333). She never achieves her full potential and cannot pair with Diamond, whose love is of too unselfish and spiritual a nature for her fully to appreciate it. Instead she pairs with Cripple Jim, whose love is of a lower order than Diamond’s—he allows his shyness to keep him from visiting her in hospital, i.e., he puts his own feelings before hers—and who, like Nanny, lets fear and ignorance get the upper hand, as when they are afraid of the dragonfly in the well (343) or of the thunder and lightning (350-51). Nanny does grow through her dream, but not enough; she

tells Diamond that she would never open the lady's box of bees again if she had the chance—but she does not believe she ever will have another chance, and anyway, “[it] was only a dream” (308). Cripple Jim, for his part, is “very fond of looking at the man in the moon” (302)—but he never gets any further; not surprisingly, since the man in the moon is inferior to the moon itself. “I daren't [show you the lightning bees] . . . I have no business with them. I don't understand them,” says the man in the moon to Nanny (305). Failure adequately to transcend the instinctual level of the unconscious means that Nanny and Jim must be restricted on the conscious level too, and so they never realise that they owe almost everything to Diamond; his “unconscious influence” improves their behaviour (346), but they rationalise his wisdom as folly and gradually exclude him from their company.⁴¹

On the animal level, however, Horse Ruby and Horse Diamond are paired, though there is much conflict and difficulty to be worked through first. Though Diamond does not see North Wind during the London era, he does once hear her voice; the end of the sojourn in Bloomsbury is signalled by her calling him down to the stable to listen to a conversation between the two horses,⁴² who are, at this point, ill-matched both in feeling and appearance. When Diamond comes in, they are in the middle of a quarrel—or rather old Diamond is finding fault with Ruby, who, “with [his] fat and [his] shine,” makes old Diamond “ashamed of being a horse” (317) and sounds for all the world like one of the prophet Jeremiah's wicked men—“They are waxen fat, they shine” (Jer. 5:28). Old Diamond has already been established as a good horse who does his duty and probably exercises a wholesome moral influence on Joseph (*ABNW* 285); the question has even been raised whether he will go to heaven (284)—and Mr. Stonecrop describes him as being “as strong as a church” (146). But he is too much of “an ignorant, rude old human horse” to understand an angel, or rather a mount for angels, for, as Ruby remarks, “there are horses in heaven for angels to ride upon, as well as other animals, lions and eagles and bulls, in more important situations” (320).⁴³ Yet the very next day Mr. Raymond says “I think they make a very nice pair. If the one's too fat, the other's too lean—so that's all right” (329),⁴⁴ and “Before the end of the month, Ruby had got respectably thin, and Diamond respectably stout. They really began to look fit for double harness” (333).

Until the end of the Bloomsbury section the rubies, both ring and horse, cause much uneasiness. Both jewel and animal are lent⁴⁵ and therefore of special concern to their recipients, whose cases, however, are very dissimilar: Joseph is reluctant to accept the horse, but Nanny yearns for

the ring and thereby reveals her own association with the ruby element. In Nanny's dream the lady in the moon tells the little man to "take that ring off her finger. I am sadly afraid she has stolen it"—which betrays contamination by Nanny's "lower" unconscious, since North Wind, who sent the dream, must be well aware that the ring has not been stolen—while Joseph confesses to feeling so anxious about Mr. Raymond's horse that "when [Ruby's] between the shafts, I sit on the box as miserable as if I'd stolen him" (307, 328; italics mine). There is something taboo or threatening about the rubies because the fourth dimension of the psyche which Ruby and Nanny represent is feeling; not love, but those intense emotions which, when fully experienced, tend to become unmanageable. They must never predominate, which is why Ruby has a subordinate position in the angelic hierarchy and Nanny in the family, but they must be integrated into the psyche in order to give love (concern for others) the dimension of emotional warmth: Joseph is eventually "reconciled to Ruby" (329), of whom his dislike has soon "so utterly vanished that he felt as if Ruby . . . had been his friend all the time" (332).

If the scene in the Bloomsbury stable underlines the conflict between diamond and ruby, it is also the prelude to its resolution—and to the integration of all the symbolic elements of the book into a harmonious community. In the Mound section of *At the Back of the North Wind* there are overlapping quaternities of rubies and diamonds. Horse Diamond and Horse Ruby pull a carriage for Mr. Raymond and his wife, the owner of the ruby ring; an important link between the animal and human pairs is the fact that both the rubies come from Mr. Raymond. The matching of Horse Ruby and Horse Diamond, however, stops short of union, since there can be no "coniunctio"⁴⁶ where both elements are male. And this promotes the harmonious development of the psyche, for although animals, as "the instinctive forces of the unconscious," are "brought into unity within the mandala,"⁴⁷ it is imperative that the union of opposites should occur on the human or conscious level. Jung points out that "it must be reckoned a psychic catastrophe when the *ego* [consciousness] is assimilated by the *self* [total psyche], for "the image of wholeness then remains in the unconscious"—i.e. the self will be dominated by the instincts.⁴⁸ The "coniunctio" is achieved by Mr. and Mrs. Raymond, the two "diamonds" who are, respectively, the giver and the receiver of the ruby ring. Diamond, the symbolic offspring of the "chymical wedding"⁴⁹ of the white and red, the king and queen, makes up a trinity which is turned into a quaternity by the ruby element—in the

same way that the overlapping trinity of diamonds (master, boy and horse) is transformed into a quaternity by Horse Ruby. Although the influence of the fourth element—the ruby—defies precise quantification, it is significant that when Joseph compares the emaciated Horse Diamond with the bloated Ruby he says “[the] horse is worth three of the other now” (*ABNW* 329). Nanny, too, is a witness that the diamond far outweighs the ruby, for in her dream of the pale moon (which somewhat resembles a diamond) she finds that “as [she] looked it got larger and larger till it filled the whole pane [of ruby-coloured glass] and outgrew it” (298). And the Mound section of *At the Back of the North Wind* focuses not only on Diamond the boy but—more and more--on Diamond in his quality of mandala.

Although he has been the principal means of drawing the little community together, Diamond becomes a more and more solitary figure, for his increasing unworldliness distances him from everybody; in this sense, and only in this sense, he partakes of the taboo. Nanny and Jim dismiss Diamond by describing him as having “a tile loose” (an echo of North Wind’s having torn some tiles off the roof in order to take Diamond out to visit the cathedral [65]) or as being “God’s baby” (345, 346 and elsewhere),⁵⁰ the tutor—the narrator as persona—says: “A gush of reverence came over me, and with a single *good night*, I turned and left him in his nest” (345). And there is a context of couples or pairs who emphasise his solitude, although three of them—his parents, his employers and the horses—recede into the background. Of those in the middle ground, Nanny and Jim are increasingly engrossed in each other, and Diamond’s brother and sister, close to each other in age, are a sibling pair.

Diamond in a sense engineers his own dispensability—and not only because he is the proximate cause of Nanny’s coming into the family. The comparative isolation so remarkable in the Mound section begins in Bloomsbury; the boy who sings to his brother that “Diamond’s his nurse” (165) teaches Nanny to usurp his function, and “she had not many such lessons before she was able to perform those duties quite as well as Diamond himself” (309). And “[when] the second baby came, Diamond gave up his room that Nanny might be at hand to help his mother” (313). The innocent-looking comment in the Mound section that “[towards] his father and mother, she was all they could wish” (333) is especially significant in view of Martha’s earlier reliance on Diamond’s help at home—“you’re as good to your mother as if you were a girl” (156).⁵¹

The baby boy who was born when Diamond was away from home,

and who seems so oddly without a name, plays a special part in the distancing of his elder brother from the family, for Diamond appears actually to be grooming him as a successor. After his first assay at driving Diamond picks up the baby and sings a lullaby which begins:

baby baby babbling
 your father's gone a-cabbing
 to catch a shilling for its pence
 to make the baby babbling dance
 for old Diamond's a duck
 they say he can swim
 but the duck of diamonds
 is baby that's him (164)

The symbolic connection between the two brothers—and the horse—is reinforced soon afterwards when the drunken cabman's wife next door identifies their nocturnal visitor as Diamond, and “a duck o' diamonds he is!” she adds (183).⁵² But Diamond identifies his brother as *the* “duck of diamonds,” and therefore as the new Diamond who will grow into his full identity and complete the trinity of diamonds (horse, boy and Mr. Raymond) when his elder brother leaves. This why the baby's name—the first thing anyone wants to know after ascertaining his or her gender—is never given. And so Diamond, who did not want to remain in the country at the back of the north wind because he could not leave his mother (118-19), sees his family become a quaternity of father, mother, son and daughter without him.

Although Diamond in a sense becomes isolated, he is anything but incomplete. As befits the “most brilliant and valuable of precious stones,”⁵³ he is one of the “living philosophical stones” which the alchemist Dorn urges all who seek the ultimate truth to be.⁵⁴ The triangular family unit of Joseph, Martha, and Diamond in the Wilderness section of *At the Back of the North Wind* is intersected by the trinity of Horse Diamond (“Old Diamond's a duck” [ABNW 164]), Boy Diamond (“a duck o' diamonds” [183]) and baby (“the duck of diamonds” [164]); and, “if the Trinity is understood as a process . . .” says Jung in *Psychology and Religion*, “then, by the addition of the Fourth, this process would culminate in a condition of absolute totality” (par. 290). The “process” in MacDonald's book involves a general reshuffle, for just as Ruby replaces the unnamed horse who was formerly old Diamond's stablemate (148), so Nanny, closely associated with Ruby, replaces Diamond on a practical level. The family quaternity of Joseph, Martha, their unnamed son, and their daughter Dulcimer is settled in a cottage in the grounds; but

Diamond, so vital to the original family unit, has moved from a “nest” under the thatch (340) to the more exalted “nest” of a tower room in the main house (341). From the tower, or sometimes a tree—both points of vantage from which, in hero myth (of which there are elements in *At the Back of the North Wind*) perspective on life may be gained—Diamond symbolically affirms the wholeness of the family; for, as Jung observes in *Aion*, the complement of quaternity is unity; five, in fact, corresponds to the indistinguishability of unity and quaternity (par.351n).

Diamond, the fifth, is a symbol of unity and totality of a very particular kind. He becomes the *lapis aethereus*, or ethereal stone (*Psychology and Alchemy*, par. 343). When North Wind first takes Diamond out with her they visit a fashionable house where a party is being held; North Wind takes the shape of a wolf and bounds upstairs to frighten a drunken nurse, and Diamond rushes after her, fully visible to the guests who regard him with well-bred surprise (*ABNW* 35). But during his first (supposed) journey to North Wind’s back Diamond’s body undergoes a symbolic and subsequently progressive refinement, though it makes no difference to his daily occupations. One stage in the search for the philosopher’s stone, the “ever-hoped-for and never-to-be-discovered ‘One,’” as Jung calls it, is described by the alchemist Khunrath as follows: “The spirit . . . must first be separated from its body and, after the purification of the latter, infused back into it” (*Psychology and Alchemy*, par. 165). This is what happens during the Sandwich episode, when Diamond’s spirit goes to the country at the back of the north wind (or rather to North Wind’s dream of it) while his body lies in a coma at his aunt’s house.

But Diamond as mandala must, to be fully effective, develop in tandem with his growth to maturity as a living child with a unique character—and this growth is situated in a wider context, both realistic and symbolic.⁵⁵ The two-world consciousness revealed in *At the Back of the North Wind* has been remarked upon by many critics,⁵⁶ and the mixture is one of the factors that gives the book a unique value, for MacDonald is showing the fundamental unity of life on all levels. It would be more accurate, however, to speak of the three-world consciousness of *At the Back of the North Wind*, for the entire book is permeated by the spiritual—“a something of which all human, all divine words, figures, pictures, motion-forms, are but the outer laminar spheres through which the central reality shines more or less plainly” (*Unspoken Sermons Series Three*, 425). MacDonald sees no essential conflict between material and spiritual and no threat to faith in

scientific discoveries, whether in the fields of geology or of evolution; all are part of God's universe, like the Nature in the "changeful profusions" of which "God . . . is ever uttering himself" (*USS* 1, 15). And within the Primary World, too (to keep Tolkien's capitalisation) there is development which makes it not simply the "ordinary" everyday world in which everyone knows what to expect but a world in transition—a world in which MacDonald is passionately interested and of which Diamond must be fully part.

For the reader of the twenty-first century it is easy to overlook the excitement caused by the expansion, even the explosion of the railway system in early to mid-Victorian England—something that made a huge difference to life for people of all classes, for the movement of travellers, rich and poor, was far greater than the promoters had anticipated.⁵⁷ "I cannot convince myself that the roof of Bletchley station is more 'real' than the clouds," says Tolkien in "On Fairy-Stories," disagreeing with a "clerk of Oxenford" who apparently thinks so—"real life" in this context seems to fall short of academic standards," Tolkien sniffs (*Tree and Leaf*, 62). But MacDonald believes that the circumstances and amenities of everyday life are as important as those of the Secondary World—and considering that until well into the twentieth century the typical ambition of a small boy was to be a train driver, it must have been thrilling for a child in mid-Victorian England to read that Diamond had actually travelled by train (on his own, too). This might have seemed as exciting to some children as travelling on North Wind's back, but MacDonald, who is firmly in control, takes care that the trip cannot outshine his hero's more exotic adventures: "I will not describe the preparations Diamond made," says the narrator. "You would have thought he had been going on a three months' voyage. Nor will I describe the journey, for our business is now at the place." He doesn't even mention the words "train" or "railway," though Diamond's aunt, an unlikely apostle of modernity, meets her nephew at the station (*ABNW* 95).

"Our business is now at the place"—and Sandwich provides an important contextual background, for it is not only part of the Primary World but a part which reveals the overlapping of past and present in that world; not only "here and now," as Ronald MacDonald puts it,⁵⁸ but "then and now," or "then becoming now." On the one hand the town is linked with the past and with endings; it "used to be one of the chief seaports in England" (*ABNW* 96) but is now "nearly dead of old age" (95) because left high and dry by the sea. On the other hand, it is firmly linked to the present and the future; small though it is, it is served by a railway station and is the

residence of Diamond's aunt—she who sent his mother a letter inviting him to visit. Cheap postage, says Llewellyn Woodward, was hardly less important than cheap travel in improving the ordinary conditions of life. Before the introduction of the penny post in 1840 few poor people ever sent letters by post, and there were towns of 12,000 or so (larger than Sandwich) without post office or postman.⁵⁹ So Sandwich is not only, like The Wilderness and Bloomsbury, a locus of change, but also, symbolically, a point of departure for the resurrection which is the goal to which Diamond's whole life tends. This makes it a fit starting point for major development in the hero, and Sandwich also plays an important part in MacDonald's powerful evocation of his very own Crystal Palace, a symbolic context of crystals—not only precious stones, but common crystals associated with the basic needs of everyday life.

The non-precious crystals on which he focuses are coal and salt, basic components of shelter and food respectively. At the beginning of the book Joseph, Martha, and Diamond are living on the estate owned by Mr. Coleman, a merchant who lives next door, in more ways than one, to Mr. Dyves, an allusion to the rich man in the parable in St. Luke's Gospel who ignores the plight of Lazarus, the poor man, and is cast into hell.⁶⁰ The Colemans, as their name suggests, are symbolically connected with coal, and coal and diamonds are both carbon crystals.⁶¹ At this point in *At the Back of the North Wind* we are shown the complementary aspects—black and white—of the same material. This is why Diamond, on his first encounter with North Wind, goes out in the middle of the night to look at and then to enter the Colemans' house, although owing to the moral degeneration of the Colemans there is little follow-up to this incident and its full symbolic potential is never realised.

Long before Mr. Coleman is “what himself and his wife and the world called ruined” (129), dubious speculation has compromised his honesty, “the tail of which had slipped through his fingers to the very last joint, if not beyond it” (130).⁶² And, though the Colemans are described as “kind people,” it is clear that the word *kind* does not necessarily denote either moral worth or emotional strength in MacDonald's vocabulary. The Colemans “did not care much about children” (21), and it has never bothered them that Diamond's family lives in poverty and what would be squalor but for Martha, who is as careful a housewife as her New Testament prototype. Their attitude results, not merely from indifference, but from a kind of disciplined meanness. Boy Diamond, riding Horse Diamond for the first

time, sees Nanny sweeping a crossing before Mrs. Coleman:

He drew Diamond's bridle in eager anxiety to see whether
her outstretched hand would gather a penny from Mrs.
Coleman. But she had given one at the last crossing,
and the hand returned only to grasp its broom. (54)

And this is before the family has lost its money! Diamond's generosity in compensating his friend with his own penny (ironically, Mrs. Coleman's gift of the day before) saves the situation, but underlines the parsimony of his mistress.

Coal is a crystal of potential—a sort of “*prima materia*” in the alchemy of the book⁶³—but in the case of the Colemans this potential is never developed. Though they could have been “more ruddy in body than rubies” (Lamentations 4:7), i.e., giving off warmth and light like the “stones of fire” in Ezekiel (28:14), they are forced to leave The Wilderness, “[their] visage . . . blacker than a coal,” for a neighbourhood where “they are not known in the streets” (Lamentations.4:8).⁶⁴ The comparison with Jeremiah's Nazirites, or consecrated ones, is by no means fortuitous, for Mrs. Coleman has a brother who is a clergyman—the person who first put the idea of going to the land at the back of the north wind into Diamond's head (*ABNW* 91). Even Miss Coleman, the daughter of the family, who makes a friend of little Diamond and is therefore the most promising of the “black crystals,” is actuated mainly by a combination of vanity and self-indulgence. Diamond's original mistaking of her for North Wind makes him give her a demonstration of apparently spontaneous affection, and “[she] was so pleased that she . . . almost knelt on the floor to receive him in her arms” (22). This is natural enough, and her liking for his frank conversation is pleasing (55). But her feelings are at the mercy of circumstances, for after the storm which ruins her family and (apparently) kills her suitor, she, like her parents, appears never to give Diamond and his family another thought—though, just as “[the] elm-tree which North Wind blew down that very night . . . crushed Miss Coleman's pretty summer-house: just so the fall of Mr. Coleman crushed the little family that lived over his coach-house and stable” (130).⁶⁵ Much must be allowed for her ill health and the double tragedy of her family's misfortunes and, most especially, of the supposed death of her suitor; but MacDonald is stern and will not temporize with selfishness even in grief. After the disaster there is no contact between the two families until Joseph, unexpectedly seeing Mrs. and Miss Coleman, takes them up as passengers (something which results directly from Diamond's defence of Nanny on their first meeting [172]). Miss

Coleman's previous fondness for Diamond now proves to have been no more than the indulgence of a weak and wounded affectivity, for she makes no move to resume her friendship with him except to tell his father that "he must come and see us, now you've found us out" (173).

Diamond correctly interprets this as a nothing-meaning remark, but this does not prevent his doing Miss Coleman a good turn when he gets the chance. One day when he is driving the cab he brings her chastened and penitent sweetheart to her door, to the astonishment of both parties—so Miss Coleman finds her heaven in Mr. Evans. At this point, however, Diamond shows that he can be hard as well as bright. Whereas his father gallantly refused to accept the fare from his former mistress, Diamond parks (with North Wind's unseen assistance [248]) outside the front door and gives Horse Diamond a well-deserved nosebag—a manoeuvre which brings Miss Coleman out, when her first transports are over, with a munificent five shillings.⁶⁶

A symmetrical plot would demand the reformation and restoration of the Colemans, and had Dickens been the author of *At the Back of the North Wind* we should certainly have heard more about them. But they are not the focus of MacDonald's attention—"Diamond . . . is my only care" (336)—and from now on we lose sight of them altogether; they presumably remain in genteel poverty in Hoxton but are not, as Diamond observes with that shrewdness which is increasingly characteristic of him, entitled to much sympathy on this score:

"Poor things!" said the mother; "it's worse for them than it is for us. You see they've been used to such grand things, and for them to come down to a little poky house like that—it breaks my heart to think of it."

"I don't know," said Diamond thoughtfully, "whether Mrs. Coleman had bells on her toes."

"What do you mean, child?" said his mother.

"She had rings on her fingers anyhow," returned Diamond.

"Of course she had, as any lady would. What has that to do with it?"

"When we were down at Sandwich," said Diamond, "you said you would have to part with your mother's ring, now we were poor."⁶⁷

In the overall context of MacDonald's work this would be a loss of enormous symbolic significance.⁶⁸ In the present case Martha is flustered by Diamond's

remark, and begins to see that her loyalty to her former employers is to some extent misplaced—or at least based on the erroneous assumption that the rich have an inherent right to stay rich: “Mrs. Coleman is none so poor as all that yet. No, thank Heaven! she’s not come to that,” she says. “‘Is it a great disgrace to be poor?’ asked Diamond” (175).

At the Back of the North Wind is steeped in biblical allusion—and in the Wilderness section the allusion of greatest significance, because of its bearing on coal, is to Ezekiel’s prince or king of Tyrus, a man who, though far more affluent, more influential and more exotic than Mr. Coleman, resembles him in some interesting particulars. To begin with, he is a merchant; a large part of Ezekiel 27 is devoted to a description of the number and magnificence of his ships and the merchandise they carry. His pride, too, comes before a great fall. No one could say of Mr. Coleman, as the Lord does of the king, that “[thou] wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee” (28:15)—and as certainly no-one would consider Mr. Coleman an “anointed cherub” (28:14). But the symbolic significance of the Lord’s lament in relation to MacDonald’s book is so great that it is worth detailed attention.

The king of Tyrus walked in the midst of “stones of fire,” or burning coals (Ezekiel 28:14), referred to as “coals of fire” in Ezekiel 10: 2. The associations of coal in *The Wilderness* are with darkness and torpor, but the allusion is nonetheless there—and it becomes plainer as the passage continues:

By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. (28:16)

The prophecy becomes more menacing as it goes on:

Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee. (28:18)

To find ashes in *The Wilderness* we need only look next door, for Mr. Dyves, or Dives, who represents exhausted potential, has burned out his *prima materia*. When Diamond suggests that Mr. Dyves’ bed would afford North Wind a better view than his own, she replies: “Nobody makes a window into

an ash-pit” (*ABNW* 8).⁶⁹

But the main importance of the Lord’s lament over the king, as far as *At the Back of the North Wind* is concerned, is in its bearing on Diamond himself. For the king of Tyrus, like Aaron the high priest, wears a “covering” of precious stones, and although one row of the Exodus jewels is missing the diamond is not:

Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius [ruby], topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold. (Ezek. 28:13).

There are only three comprehensive lists of precious stones in the Bible, and they are to be found in the descriptions of the high priest’s breastplate (occurring twice in the Book of Exodus), the adornment of the king in Ezekiel and the garnishing of the foundations of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21: 19-20. It is no accident that two of these three lists should be mentioned or alluded to in *At the Back of the North Wind*, and that the name of the central figure—not to mention that of his father’s horse—should figure in both of them. But when the garment of the fallen trader becomes incompatible with that of the high priest it is not fitting that Diamond adorn both. The appropriate symbolic setting for him is the breastplate of the high priest, as North Wind has already intimated; there was “your name in the bible,—the sixth stone in the high-priest’s breast-plate” (*ABNW* 13).

The breastplate expresses the idea of completeness, not only because the twelve stones represent the twelve tribes of Israel, i.e., the totality of the people of God, but because the four rows represent the four seasons and therefore the totality of nature: “[By] constant association with this symbolism, the high priest makes his own life worthy of the universal nature; his robe signifies that the whole cosmos worships with him.”⁷⁰ During his prolonged association with North Wind, Diamond’s own love of nature grows ever deeper and more spiritual. The lack of a natural environment in Bloomsbury causes him much suffering, although his sense of the relationship between man and animal develops considerably while he is there—and by the Mound section the tutor (the narrator as participant) believes that “little Diamond possessed the secret of life, and was himself what he was so ready to think the lowest living thing—an angel of God with something special to say or do” (*ABNW* 345).

North Wind avouches almost from the beginning that Diamond is good (37), and when she leaves him behind while she goes to sink a ship she

chooses a cathedral as a suitable place for him to wait in—an experience of solitude which culminates in his falling asleep in front of the high altar, for all the world like a living sacrifice (86-87). And Diamond's goodness does not remain passive, but grows into active holiness. He becomes not only a reader of the Bible (323) but a visitor of the sick and a lover of even his drunken neighbour—who says, as Diamond takes his leave after comforting the crying baby, "I do somehow believe that wur an angel just gone He warn't wery big, and he hadn't got none o' them wingses, you know. It wur one o' them baby-angels you sees on the gravestones" (183). Small wonder that in the Mound section he inspires a "gush of reverence" (345) in the tutor, nor that the kindly but patronising nickname of "*God's Baby*" (now italicised), given to Diamond first by the cabmen and then by Nanny and Jim, should be regarded by Diamond himself as a title of dignity (375). And, child as he is, he is able shortly before his death to agree with the tutor that "there is a still better love than that of the wonderful being you call North Wind" (376).

With holiness goes wisdom, and the high priest's breastplate is not only a ceremonial garment of sanctity but the "breastplate of judgment" (Exodus 28: 15). Yet if by the end of *At the Back of the North Wind* Diamond can be described as "full of quiet wisdom" (345), this has to be learned. But North Wind is always ready to discuss and guide, and Diamond, for his part, always wants to learn and understand—and he sometimes challenges North Wind's own understanding, which, like her experience, only goes so far; as she tells him shortly before the end of the book: "There are a great many things I don't understand more than you do" (361).

Before his family leaves The Wilderness, the region of the dark crystals, Diamond, who has not been well, visits his aunt at Sandwich. Here he symbolically becomes more limpid; as St. Thomas Aquinas says, "the thing is the whiter, the less it is mixed with black,"⁷¹ and Sandwich is, metaphorically speaking, "a salt land and not inhabited" (Jer. 17:6). While he is here Diamond comes into contact with the positive side of salt, that most paradoxical white crystal—one which symbolises the contraries of fire and water, bitterness and wisdom⁷²—not in Sandwich itself but in the course of an (apparent) journey to the country at the back of the north wind. This is what Frobenius describes as the "night sea journey"⁷³ which is crucial if the hero is to make contact with his own unconscious, of which the sea is itself a powerful symbol.⁷⁴

Diamond is transformed by this dream voyage, in which the Koh-i-Noor finds another Crystal Palace—the ice ridge and its hinterland. He

shows such an increase of maturity and thoughtfulness that his parents are sometimes uneasy about him—he has descended so deeply into his own unconscious, indeed, that in terms of earthly time he has been “dead to the world” for over a week,⁷⁵ and has woken to find his mother crying over him (more salt). ““Oh, Diamond, my darling! you have been so ill!’ she sobbed;” but instead of continuing, as one might expect, “I was afraid you would die,” she says “I thought you were dead” (126).⁷⁶

It is not altogether surprising to find, at the end of the book, that the land Diamond visits is only a picture of the real country at North Wind’s back—the best she is able to project (364). For the real country is the New Jerusalem, and, as St. John says in the Book of Revelation, “I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea” (21:1). What is described in Revelation, as Cope points out, is the bringing of the total self into consciousness.⁷⁷ No sea, or unconscious, is necessary any longer, and Diamond need make no voyage to arrive at the New Jerusalem; he must only “consent to be nobody” (*ABNW* 102). After his sojourn in the supposed country at North Wind’s back Diamond still has much to do in order to attain the state of ultimate development, completeness and integrity of the *lapis*, or symbol of the totally integrated self. But it is noteworthy that he never again mentions the sea and becomes almost obsessively interested in rivers—particularly the river at the back of the north wind whose songs he frequently sings as best his memory will allow (his interest in music and poetry matures from this point).⁷⁸ He has not seen the river of the New Jerusalem—only the impression of it which North Wind has tried to give him—but he is yearning for the “pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb” (Rev. 22:1), which stands for the total consciousness of full self-realisation.

When he and his family move to Bloomsbury, Diamond renews his acquaintance with a different source of salt—Nanny, for whose sake he once dismounted from North Wind’s hair to help the little girl get home in a storm. Nanny’s salt is not found in the sea but under the earth, for she lives in Old Sal’s cellar—a salt-cellar. Diamond never actually sees or hears Old Sal, whose name is extremely suggestive, but her presence is so powerful that Arthur Hughes makes her the central figure in one of his illustrations (*ABNW* 47). Salt, as Jung points out in *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, pervades everything, like the world-soul (par. 322), and in Nanny, who considers herself Sal’s granddaughter and is locally known as “Sal’s Nanny” (*ABNW*

206, et al.), it should appear in its character as the representative of “the feminine principle of Eros, which brings everything into relationship, in an almost perfect way” (*MC* par. 322). But Nanny’s femininity cannot fully develop while she lives with Old Sal, for the feminine can only differentiate itself in relation to the masculine. In the milieu of Paradise Row, where Old Sal’s cellar is located, a child with a father is considered a “natural curiosity” (*ABNW* 45), and although she has had long-term ‘maternal’ contact with Cripple Jim, they cannot have a peer relationship until Nanny has finally been separated from her “grandmother.”

In Old Sal herself the deadly quality of salt is paramount. Her cellar is a “dreary place” (204); it is “very dark, for the window was below the level of the street, and covered with mud, while over the grating which kept people from falling into the area, stood a chest of drawers, placed there by a dealer in second-hand furniture, which shut out almost all the light” (205). It looks almost as if Old Sal’s neighbours want to shut her in—and she does seem a terrifyingly chthonic figure. Certain it is that in the dark, salt might as well be black as white (and coal is kept in cellars too). Old Sal’s immediate predecessors are Widow Walker, the “guardian” of Nancy Kennedy in *Robert Falconer* (1868), who drinks herself to death in six months on the proceeds of selling the girl (*RF* 440), and Mrs. Flanagan, the sometime accommodator of Poppie in *Guild Court* (also published in 1868), who precipitates the loss of her ‘charge’ by hitting her on the head with her gin-bottle (*GC* 207). Old Sal is not, however, a minor character, as they are, but a powerful symbolic presence indissolubly linked to the earth. She is ruled by the instincts of her unconscious, as her habitual drunkenness shows; the duality of fire and water in her is represented only by gin—no doubt from the nearby Adam and Eve pub, which aptly corresponds to her fallen nature. She has never sought the illumination of consciousness and has therefore failed to become individuated.⁷⁹

Nanny’s whole environment, Old Sal included, has made her “rough, blunt in her speech, and dirty in her person,” and her face is coarse, “partly from the weather, partly from her living amongst low people, and partly from having to defend herself” (*ABNW* 254).⁸⁰ Paradoxically, she has escaped fundamental contamination by Old Sal because the mainspring of their relationship has simply been survival—and Old Sal’s shutting her out of the cellar from time to time makes it plain that even her hold on survival is precarious in that situation. There has been little emotional investment by Nanny to prevent her from “moving on,” and no-one knows better than she

that her grandmother's capacity for feeling has almost been exhausted. Old Sal can no longer even work up a good spate of swearing unless someone first puts her into a passion of rage, her last remaining emotion: "It's no good till you do that," says Nanny, "she's so old now" (186).

Even before she meets Diamond, Nanny has begun to reject Old Sal's influence. She dislikes the mud (earth as filth) in which she works, and it is significant not only that her job as crossing-sweeper involves a rudimentary form of cleaning but that the task she dreams of is cleaning the windows of the moon (305-06). What keeps her interested in life is hope. When Diamond says that, given her circumstances, he would kill himself (an extraordinary remark in a Victorian, or indeed in any children's book), Nanny replies: "Oh no, you wouldn't! *When I think of it*, I always want to see what's coming next, and so I always wait till next is over" (51; italics mine).⁸¹ And Nanny draws away from Old Sal not only because of her love of life but because of her capacity for affection, or fire. Diamond discovers that Nanny is saving food and, when she can, pennies, to give to cripple Jim—"He's a good boy, is Jim, and I love Jim dearly" (189). Her name, too, suggests the nurse's role which she later adopts.

But Old Sal's cellar is unhealthy, and fire in Nanny turns to fever. Salt symbolises bitterness as well as wisdom, and for Nanny, who has never had the chance to become more than street-wise, the bitterness of salt can mean death. Diamond's task is to get her away, and his gift of a lump of barley sugar (another white crystal) symbolises her need of sweetness to redress the balance. As MacDonald says in *Sir Gibbie*, "no human consciousness can be clean unless it lies wide open to the eternal sun and the all-potent wind; until, from a dim-lighted cellar it becomes a mountain top" (SG 293). So Diamond, a white crystal compounded of fire and water, rescues another such crystal, homely but essential to life, and restores it to the light which makes its whiteness apparent. When Mr. Raymond tells the story of Princess Daylight he is in effect recounting what happens to Nanny: "I can't wake," murmurs Daylight when the prince asks why she cannot see the sun (ABNW 276), and, like her, Nanny needs a "prince" to bring her into consciousness by showing her love when she has reached her weakest point.

Jean Webb describes Diamond as an "agent for change,"⁸² which he certainly becomes during the course of the book. But if Nanny needs Diamond, Diamond also needs her, for the fire in the salt calls forth the fire in the precious stone. What in Nanny has been excessive pugnacity—"I'll box your ears," she threatens him at one point (51)—in Diamond becomes

an increase of physical courage. North Wind has already begun teaching him the courage of endurance by leaving him to walk alone in the cathedral on the night when she sinks the ship (83); later Diamond takes a more proactive role by helping Nanny fight off the louts who are trying to grab her broom, getting a bloodied nose for his pains. Although his efforts are not very effectual—it is Joseph who finally routs the foe—what counts is that Diamond can say “I couldn’t let them behave so to a poor girl—could I, father?” (171).⁸³

Strange as it may seem, Nanny also has something to teach Diamond about love—namely forgiveness. It has never occurred to him that anyone might need his forgiveness and so he has never forgiven. This has allowed him, through an over-zealous partisanship of Nanny (he too is capable of being led astray by misplaced loyalty) to dismiss Old Sal with a general criticism on the grounds that her behaviour is stereotyped and predictable. Nanny sets this right, for as her characteristic hopefulness begins to revive she not only forgives Old Sal but expects her eventually to be redeemed. When she says that moving to Diamond’s home sounds “too good to be true,” he replies:

“And how . . . can anything be too good to be true?
That’s like old Sal—to say that.”

“Don’t abuse Grannie, Diamond. She’s a horrid old thing, she and her gin bottle; but she’ll repent some day, and then you’ll be glad not to have said anything against her.”

“Why?” said Diamond.

“Because you’ll be sorry for her.”

“I am sorry for her now.”

“Very well. That’s right. She’ll be sorry too. And there’ll be an end of it.” (296-97).

Nanny never returns to the cellar to see Old Sal or makes any inquiries about her, but her letting go of negative feeling is important. Furthermore, it is a very good thing that she teaches Diamond to forgive, for he in turn forgives both Nanny and Jim for patronising and neglecting him.

“Perhaps the precious things of the earth, the coal and the diamonds, the iron and clay and gold, may be said to have come from [God’s] hands,” says MacDonald (*USS Series Three*, 613)—and it is interesting that he brackets coal and diamonds together. Coal and salt, rubies and diamonds, all come from the earth, and coal and salt are precious too. But they lack the impact of symbols with strong visual properties; such allusions as the implied

association between Mr. Coleman and the prince or king of Tyrus are likely to register, even where the reader is familiar with the Bible, on the subconscious rather than the conscious level. Nevertheless these associations are important, and by bringing them out MacDonald shows the significance of the Primary World in the realm of spirit and imagination. More vital still, he is creating a context in which Primary and Secondary Worlds, and therefore all levels of human experience, are not only harmonious but integrated.

Diamond, as the central mandala, is the fullest expression of this integration—so much so that throughout the book he is preparing for the transition from this world to eternity. Does he really leave his body behind during the Sandwich episode? Apparently. After his revival he still needs transport, feels cold, gets tired and climbs trees. But his experience radically alters Diamond’s attitude both to life and death:

The fact was he had lived so long without any food at all at the back of the north wind, that he knew quite well that food was not essential to existence; that in fact, under certain circumstances, people could live without it well enough. (136)

What this means is that Diamond believes there is a different kind of life after death—and, child though he is, he can now discuss death with equanimity. As for starving people, “They—they—what you call—die—don’t they?” he says to his mother (134); and as for the birds who fall dead on the ground in winter: “They must die some time. They wouldn’t like to be birds always” (135).

In spite of his wisdom and maturity, Diamond remains a child. He has to deal with misfortune, but not with evil (though one feels, by the end of the book, that he could do so if necessary). His experience of descending into the Thesean labyrinth is, unlike that of Curdie or Irene in *The Princess and the Goblin*, restricted to going down into a cellar—and even then the Minotaur (Old Sal)⁸⁴ is absent, while a policeman (yet another father figure) is maintaining a protective watch and gets rid of the “monsters” who are trying to steal Diamond’s clothes. This does not balance the other side of his “hero myth” experience—but then, he *is* a child. The other side, of course, is climbing the tower, or the place of perspective; this, begun, with North Wind’s help, when he visits the cathedral and walks round the lofty clerestory, comes to fruition in the Mound section when he develops a great love of climbing trees—though it might be truer to say that North Wind herself is his tower and his place of perspective.

The Koh-i-Noor Diamond, once on display in the Crystal Palace,

was eventually set in a royal crown; MacDonald's Diamond has a different destiny. When he is still in London, and has just driven the cab for the first time, Diamond dreams of the stars; they repeatedly call him by name (234-35), and to a child's consciousness they themselves resemble diamonds:

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are;
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky.

So goes the nursery rhyme⁸⁵—and if proof be needed that MacDonald was familiar with it, one has only to turn to his friend Lewis Carroll's parody of the rhyme in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), where he compares the star to a tea-tray. Diamond's dream of the stars, in Bloomsbury, has to do with birth. In the Mound section of *At the Back of the North Wind*, his love of climbing trees and looking at the stars—real stars this time—indicates that he is increasingly drawn towards eternity and willing to leave nature behind: “The earth is all behind my back,” he tells the tutor (345).⁸⁶ His “crystal-self,” as Mr. Raven in *Lilith* describes it (*L* 43), has always been in front, and during his last journey with North Wind it becomes apparent that the symbolic purification of Diamond's body, begun when he visited North Wind's image of the country behind her back, has made him not only the *lapis aethereus* but the *lapis invisibilitatis* (*Psychology and Alchemy*, par. 343).⁸⁷ During his first journey with North Wind he could be seen by the guests in the house they visited (*ABNW* 35); during his last, he is quite imperceptible to the suffering woman to whom he sings about resurrection and eternity:

“Didn't the lady hear me?” asked Diamond, when they were once more floating down the river.
“Oh, yes, she heard you,” answered North Wind.
“Was she frightened then?”
“Oh, no.”
“Why didn't she look to see who it was?”
“She didn't know you were there.”
“How could she hear me then?”
“She didn't hear you with her ears.”
“What did she hear me with?”
“With her heart.” (*ABNW* 371-72)

As Job says to God in what MacDonald describes as “the most daring of poems:”⁸⁸ “Thou liftest me up to the wind; thou causest me to ride upon

it, and dissolvest my substance” (Job 30: 22). Diamond has now reached a stage which is not susceptible to further development in this world. Jung tells us that in Chinese alchemy “this state is called the “Diamond Body” ... which is identical with the *corpus glorificationis* of Christian tradition, the incorruptible body of resurrection.”⁸⁹ And although the mystery of resurrection is only foreshadowed, not explored, in *At the Back of the North Wind*, it is evident from the tutor’s remarks which close the book that Diamond has attained the ultimate transcendence of eternity:

I walked up the winding stair, and entered his room. A lovely figure, as white and almost as clear as alabaster, was lying on the bed. I saw at once how it was. They thought he was dead. I knew that he had gone to the back of the north wind. (378)

Endnotes

1. *At the Back of the North Wind*. (London: Strahan & Co., 1871), 9 (this edition reproduced from the 1883 edition of Blackie & Son, London, by Johannesen, Whitethorn, California, 2002). All references to MacDonald’s works are to the Johannesen editions.
2. Carl Jung defines the mandala as “the psychological expression of the totality of the self” (*The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, par. 542. Vol.9i of the *Collected Works*, 2nd ed., translated by R.F.C Hull and ed. by Sir Herbert Read, Michael Fordham and Gerhard Adler). All future references to Jung will be to volume title and paragraph number.
3. In “Sorrow the Pledge of Joy” in *The Hope of the Gospel* (1892), 97. In *At the Back of the North Wind* MacDonald says that “to know a person’s name is not always to know the person’s self” (*ABNW* 9)—but on the symbolic level this may mean that one does not always realise how fully the name expresses the person’s self, or, depending on the character, that the self has not yet fully grown into the name (*pace* Jean Webb, who argues from MacDonald’s words that he is “creating a child protagonist who will mean more than the materialistic associations with his name;” see “Realism, Fantasy and a Critique of Nineteenth Century Society in George MacDonald’s *At the Back of the North Wind*,” in “*A Noble Unrest*”: *Contemporary Essays on the Work of George MacDonald*, ed. Jean Webb, 19).
4. Edmund Cusick, in “MacDonald and Jung,” in *The Gold Thread: Essays on George MacDonald*, ed. William Raeper, discusses the applicability of Jung’s theory to MacDonald’s work in general and reviews some of the critics who

have taken a psychological and particularly a Jungian approach to it (57-58, 59-61). See also Joseph Sigman, "The Diamond in the Ashes: A Jungian Reading of the 'Princess' Books," in *For the Childlike: George MacDonald's Fantasies for Children*, ed. Roderick McGillis, esp. 184-86; and Bonnie Gaarden, *The Christian Goddess: Archetype and Theology in the Fantasies of George MacDonald*, esp. 10-15, 74-75.

5. *Psychology and Alchemy*, par. 43. Colin Manlove points out that MacDonald was familiar with alchemy through his reading of Paracelsus and especially of Jacob Boehme; see "A Reading of *At the Back of the North Wind*" in *Behind the Back of the North Wind: Critical Essays on George MacDonald's Classic Children's Book*, ed. John Pennington and Roderick McGillis, 162, and 173 n.4. Manlove compares the three stages of the book (The Wilderness and Sandwich; Bloomsbury; The Mound) to the three stages of alchemical transformation, the nigredo, albedo and rubedo states.
6. Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, par. 263.
7. "The Inheritance," in *Unspoken Sermons*, Series Three (1889), 612.
8. "He was the family's own Diamond," says William Raeper in *George MacDonald* (345). He notes that Maurice also inspired Mark Rayment in *Weighed and Wanting* (GM 326). Kathy Triggs, in *The Stars and the Stillness: A Portrait of George MacDonald*, cites a review of one of MacDonald's lectures which appeared in the *Pittsburgh Methodist Recorder* in February 1873 and which included the information that Louisa MacDonald had identified Maurice as "the lad who suggested . . . by his quaint sayings, that weird writing, 'On the Back of the North Wind'" (122).
9. *Dombey and Son* was first published serially between 1846 and 1848. See also Robert Trexler, "Dombey and Grandson: Parallels Between *At the Back of the North Wind* and *Dombey and Son*," in *North Wind: A Journal of George MacDonald Studies*, 29 (2010), esp. 71-74, where he compares Ch. 8 in *Dombey and Son* with Ch. 13 in *At the Back of the North Wind*. MacDonald's sense of the inspirational quality of Dickens is spelt out in "The Butcher's Bills," when he says of the Dempsters, an unsatisfactory couple in an unsatisfactory marriage: "If only they would have read Dickens together! Who knows what might have come of it!" (*Stephen Archer and Other Tales*, 1883 [originally *The Gifts of the Child Christ and Other Tales*], 165).
10. Tolkien, "On Fairy-Stories," in *Tree and Leaf in The Tolkien Reader*, 52 et al.
11. See "The Great Exhibition" online in *Wikipedia: the free encyclopedia*, and Deirdre David in *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel*, 6.
12. One delighted visitor was Lewis Carroll: "[His] eye was immediately drawn

to some of the ‘ingenious pieces of mechanism’ on display . . . The whole exhibition, he declared, was ‘a sort of fairyland,’” says Robert Douglas-Fairhurst (*The Story of Alice: Lewis Carroll and the Secret History of Wonderland*, 58). Charlotte Brontë was delighted too, as Clement Shorter records in *The Brontës’ Life and Letters*: “It is a wonderful place. . . . Whatever human industry has created you find there, from the great compartments filled with railway engines and boilers, with mill machinery in full work . . . [to] the most gorgeous work of the goldsmith and silversmith, and the carefully guarded caskets full of real diamonds and pearls” (see <http://www.mytimemachine.co.uk/greatexhibition.htm>). Charles Dickens was unenthusiastic, partly because of his dislike of crowds: “He forced himself to visit the Exhibition, found it a muddle and told [an associate] he had always had an instinctive feeling against it,” says Claire Tomalin (*Charles Dickens: A Life*, 233). But an article in *Household Words* (which he “conducted,” but in which authorship was not acknowledged) begins: “Nothing which has occurred for years has been more calculated to gratify the pride of an Englishman than the Great Exhibition” (“A Pilgrimage to the Great Exhibition from Abroad,” *Household Words* Vol. 111, 321, in *Dickens Journals Online*). “The Great Exhibition and the Little One” spoke of “the extraordinary display of enginry and machinery” and of what “sturdy old England” had to say, through the Exhibition, about what continental nations with their revolutions could achieve “by works of peace, by studious observation and by steady persevering resolution” (*Household Words*, 357).

13. See William Raeper, *George MacDonald*, 83, 86.
14. As MacDonald’s grandfather, an uncle and his beloved and revered father had at various times run a linen-weaving factory, a thread factory, a bleachworks and meal mills (Raeper, 18-23), MacDonald would not have found fault with the Crystal Palace Exhibition for being, as *Wikipedia* puts it, “a celebration of modern industrial technology and design” (“The Great Exhibition,” 1). He had nothing against business as long as it was neither greedy nor dishonest. Nor is it likely that MacDonald thought the Exhibition vainglorious on the score of Empire—he would have been unlikely to do so, since at one point he even envisaged the possibility of a “re-conquest” of Ireland (*An Expression of Character: The Letters of George MacDonald*, ed. Glenn E. Sadler, 318). Twenty-eight countries exhibited and the Great Exhibition was the first of several World’s Fair exhibitions of culture and industry; Paris would host one four years later. In its second incarnation in another part of London (from 1854) the Crystal Palace was an important cultural centre, hosting exhibits ranging from ancient history to dinosaurs as well as concerts and other public

entertainments. And the MacDonald family interest continued; as Kirstin Jeffrey Johnson tells us, some of the MacDonald daughters belonged to the Handel Choir of the Crystal Palace (“Curdie’s Intertextual Dialogue: Engaging Maurice, Arnold, and Isaiah,” in *George MacDonald: Literary Heritage and Heirs*, ed. Roderick McGillis, ref. archived letters in note 9, 173).

15. *An Expression of Character: The Letters of George MacDonald*, 51.
16. *George MacDonald and His Wife*, 543. A passage in *Castle Warlock* (1882) makes clear MacDonald’s preference for diamonds above all other jewels: “All the gems were there—sapphires, emeralds, and rubies; but they were scarce to be noted in the glorious mass of ever new-born, ever dying colour that gushed from the fountain of the light-dividing diamonds” (*CW* 342). As for symbolism: “Your honesty, my son, is a diamond in my heart,” the dying laird tells Cosmo (289).
17. See his introduction to the Oxford World’s Classics edition of *The Moonstone*, xxiii. Sutherland says that this happened after the abolition of the last “taxes on knowledge.” Taxes on newspaper advertisements were abolished in 1853 and stamp duty in 1855; see Llewellyn Woodward, *The Age of Reform, 1815-70*; 2nd ed. (Vol. 13 of *The Oxford History of England*), 179 n.2. The new rail services and the speed of steam printing presses were also factors in the expansion of the press (Sutherland xxiii).
18. *The Moonstone* was originally published in weekly instalments in *All the Year Round* from January-August 1868; *At the Back of the North Wind* began its run in *Good Words for the Young* in Nov. 1868. The fascination exercised by the Koh-i-Noor persists to this day; a 1983 episode of the BBC series *Bergerac* revolves largely around an enormously valuable diamond, and the auctioneer in the drama joked that it had not belonged to an Indian maharajah and reputedly accursed.
19. Alison Milbank speaks of his (and Kingsley’s) “defamiliarising both this world and the life to come” (“Imagining the Afterlife: The Fantasies of Charles Kingsley and George MacDonald,” from *Dante and the Victorians*, repr. in *Behind the Back of the North Wind: Critical Essays on George MacDonald’s Classic Children’s Book*, ed. John Pennington and Roderick McGillis, 91).
20. Diamond the horse is, with Mr. Raymond’s horse Ruby, the literary progenitor of Strawberry, the London cab horse in C.S. Lewis’s *The Magician’s Nephew*; they endow him with his profession and, in Ruby’s case, his colour. Though not an angel like Ruby, his descendant becomes a flying horse (“Fledge”) in Narnia.
21. See Carl Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, par. 396: “The soul . . . rules the mind and this rules the body.” In *Symbols of Transformation*, par. 460, he says of the hero that “the totality of his being . . . is rooted in his animal nature

and reaches out beyond the merely human to the divine.” Fernando Soto, in a discussion of the derivation and significance of Diamond’s name, makes a fascinating case for Spenser’s *Faerie Queen* as a source of it; he points out that in Book 4, Cantos 2 and 3, Spenser tells the story of the three sons of Agape, Priamond, Diamond and Triamond, whose individual strengths are complementary. Soto also notes that Ch.20 of *Phantastes*, in which elements of their story appear, begins with an epigraph from The Faerie Queene (“Cosmos and Diamonds: Names and Connoting in MacDonald’s Work,” in *North Wind: A Journal of George MacDonald Studies*, 20 [2001], 34-37).

22. Perhaps a pre-birth memory—in contradistinction to his later birth into a preview of death by going through North Wind in the ice cave (on which point see also *Wilfrid Cumbermede* [1872], esp. 142, 163-64). “The Cave and the Rock are . . . ancient symbols of motherhood: Lazarus emerging from a cave or ‘little house’ is easily seen as a birth symbol,” says Gilbert Cope in *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*, 103. See also Carl Jung, *Alchemical Studies*, par. 156, where he says that the mother archetype can be attached to (among other things) a cave.
23. See Cope, *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*: “As a mother encloses her young, so the cradle confines the baby” (36). Cope adds that a boat is also one of the main symbols of a feminine ‘container’ which provides safety—and North Wind, in one of her most maternal moments, tells Diamond before his sea voyage to the North Pole: “The yacht shall be my cradle, and you shall be my baby” (*ABNW* 105).
24. In *Symbols of Transformation*, par. 421, Jung says that in the context of the visions he is analysing “the hero and his horse seem to symbolize the idea of man and the subordinate sphere of animal instinct.” See also *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, where he comments as follows on a patient’s dream: “The sky-woman is the positive, the bear the negative aspect of the ‘supraordinate personality’ [the total self], which extends the conscious human being upwards into the celestial and downwards into the animal regions” (par. 341).
25. Which MacDonald doesn’t want to do, though he comes close; Diamond’s parents, for example, are not Joseph and Mary but Joseph and Martha. The name “Martha” sounds like “mother,” but it does not suggest that there has been a divine birth—and the biblical Martha is the worrier of the family (see St. Luke’s Gospel, 10: 38-42), a role to which Diamond’s mother may lay some claim.
26. And see Jung, *Psychology and Religion: West and East*, par. 267: “We are no more than the stable in which the Lord is born.”
27. While Diamond was driving Horse Diamond in his father’s cab, Lucy Burton,

- in *Guild Court* (published in 1868 and previously serialised in *Good Words*) was commuting to work as a music teacher six days a week on the London Underground (not then formally so called; *GC* 33). The first passenger-carrying underground railway (built on a cut-and-cover system) opened in London in 1863 (see Paul Atterbury's *Wonder Book of Trains*, 95). Work had begun on it in 1854 (see "Chronology" in *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel*, xiii).
28. Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo* (Vol. X111 of *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*), 56.
 29. "I do not write for children, but for the childlike," says MacDonald in "The Fantastic Imagination" (*A Dish of Orts*, 1895 ed. [for 1893], 317).
 30. Daniel Gabelman notes that MacDonald made Wordsworth's line "The Child is father of the Man" the motto of *Good Things for the Young* when he was editor (*George MacDonald: Divine Carelessness and Fairytale Levity*, 99).
 31. The divine association is clear; see, e.g., "The Salt and the Light of the World," in *The Hope of the Gospel*, 162-75. Jesus applies these words to his disciples: "Ye are the salt of the earth . . . Ye are the light of the world" (Matthew 5: 13, 14), and in John 8: 12 and 9: 5 he says "I am the light of the world." MacDonald says that "God alone is the light, and our light is the shining of his will in our lives" (*The Hope of the Gospel*, 166).
 32. See Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, par. 188: "The appearance of Diana necessarily brings with it her hunting animal the dog, who represents her dark side." The dog in Nanny's dream does not appear until the moon has been darkened by clouds: "When the moon shines in her fullness the "rabid dog," the danger that threatens the divine child, is chased away" (par. 154). What Nanny does is to shut the door of the summer house in the dog's face, but it comes to the same thing—and the dream dog corresponds to Jung's "rabid dog," for it comes into the dream garden "yelping and bounding"; so Nanny thought that "if he caught sight of me, I was in for a biting first, and the police after" (*ABNW* 297). Jung notes that the moon-goddess sometimes appears in children's dreams and cites that of a little girl who was going through a difficult time (*The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, par. 344).
 33. In *Robert Falconer*, serially published a year before *At the Back of the North Wind*, there are two significant horses in corresponding colours, Black Geordie and Reid Rorie. In *Paul Faber, Surgeon* (1879), the surgeon owns a red horse, Ruber, and a black horse, Niger. Ruber is definitely the dominant one, and the reader meets him before he meets the hero: "Just in front of [them], in the air, over a high hedge, scarce touching the topmost twigs with his hoofs,

appeared a great red horse” (*PF 2*) which the rector momentarily took for the mount of destruction in Revelation 6:4, temporarily ridden by Death (Rev. 6:8). Horse Diamond in *At the Back of the North Wind* is presumably black, though MacDonald does not say so—and Arthur Hughes, as Coleman Parsons points out, makes him black in the August 1870 number of *Good Words for the Young*; see “The Progenitors of Black Beauty in Humanitarian Literature,” *Notes and Queries* April 19th 1947, 156.

34. See Jung, *Aion: Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*, par. 351: “Psychologically . . . three—if the context indicates that it refers to the self—should be understood as a defective quaternity or as a stepping-stone towards it. . . . The complement of the quaternity is unity.” In *Psychology and Religion: West and East* he says: “If the Trinity is understood as a process . . . then, by the addition of the Fourth, this process would culminate in a condition of absolute totality” (par. 290).
35. Jung, *Psychology and Religion*, par. 292.
36. Symbolically the ruby is very well suited to symbolise an aspect of the self, since, as a carbuncle (which used to mean any kind of red precious stone) it too can be the *lapis*; see Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, par. 552 n.86.
37. Cf. Luke 2: 49: “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?”
38. My italics. Surely a foreshadowing of *The Princess and the Goblin*; why should there be a lamp *inside* the moon?
39. On the occasional association of bees with the Great Mother archetype, see Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, par. 312 n., and Cope, *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*, 157-58: “There was often an association between the Great Mother and the Queen Bee of the honey hive” (Cope’s bees, however, have to do with fertility rather than storms). When Diamond, at the end of the book, is pondering his experiences, he refers to Nanny’s dream not just as her dream about the moon but as her dream about “the moon and the bees” (365)—and *Brewer’s Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* says that the Greeks consecrated bees to the moon (98).
40. *Psychology and Alchemy*, par. 449. Jung refers in part to the casting of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego into the “burning fiery furnace” in the Book of Daniel (3: 20, 21, 23) where they are joined by a fourth person—“and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God” (Dan. 3: 25).
41. Presumably they will begin their own family eventually, as is suggested at one point by the unusual (and never corrected) slip of Cripple Jim’s being referred to as Joe (255)—the name of Diamond’s father and also that of the archetypal father in the New Testament.

42. See "On Fairy-Stories," where Tolkien says that "the desire to converse with other living things" is the basis of "the talking of beasts and creatures in fairy-tales, and especially the magical understanding of their proper speech" (66; italics mine). There certainly are elements of the fairy tale in *At the Back of the North Wind*; but of course, if one accepts Leslie Fiedler's dictum that "[in] the fairy tale, bliss and misery are not equated with Christian Salvation, Hell and Heaven—but with Getting Married and Being Eaten," *At the Back of the North Wind* would be utterly beyond the pale of faerie anyway—even though Diamond, at the very beginning of the book, has a few anxieties on the subject of being eaten (introduction to *Beyond the Looking Glass: Extraordinary Works of Fairy Tale and Fantasy*, xiv).
43. The lion, eagle and bull are the emblems of three of the four evangelists--Mark, John and Luke respectively, according to St. Jerome's attribution.
44. Perhaps a reference to Jack Sprat and his wife.
45. Lending itself is rather problematic, since lack of ownership by the possessor opens the way to negative possibilities. Black Geordie and Reid Rorie, in *Robert Falconer*, are "borrowed" by Robert and Shargar in an attempt to rescue Mysie Lindsay from the clutches of their owner (367f); he might have thought the term a euphemism.
46. Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, pars. 200, 664 and elsewhere.
47. *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, par. 660.
48. *Aion*, par. 45. And see Ursula K. Le Guin: "[When] you have followed the animal instincts far enough, they must be sacrificed, so that the true self, the whole person, may step forth from the body of the animal, reborn" (*The Language of the Night: Essays on Fantasy and Science Fiction*, 57).
49. *Psychology and Alchemy*, par. 334.
50. In *The Seaboard Parish*, which appeared in 1868, just before the serialisation of *At the Back of the North Wind* began, MacDonald describes the baby found abandoned in the vicarage garden as "God's baby" (59)—in this case in the sense of God's gift.
51. Nanny's name suggests her eventual role. In the episode of *At the Back of the North Wind* published on July 1st 1870 in *Good Words for the Young*, her name is given as "Nannie," which is much more like a name or nickname; this is pointed out in the comparison between the serial version and the first edition of *ABNW* in the Broadview *At the Back of the North Wind*, ed. Roderick McGillis and John Pennington, 37.
52. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* gives "ducky diamond" as a synonym for "darling." The term "diamond" comes from London slang and is still in fairly

common use in England, particularly in the expression “Diamond Geezer” (‘a really great guy’). Not long ago a washing-machine repairman called me a diamond for offering him a cup of tea! The word *duck* has a long and honourable history of expressing friendliness or appreciation in cockney English (the Scottish equivalent is ‘hen’).

53. *The Oxford Dictionary of English Etymology*, ed. C. T. Onions.
54. Cit. in Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, par. 378. See also 1 Peter 2: 4, in which Jesus is compared to a “living stone.”
55. Kirstin Jeffrey Johnson, in “Curdie’s Intertextual Dialogue,” asserts the importance of considering MacDonald’s work “contextually” (153ff); her focus is on the literary, theological and biblical context of *The Princess and Curdie*. Fernando Soto, in “The Two-World Consciousness of *North Wind*: Unity and Dichotomy in MacDonald’s Fairy Tale,” in *Behind the Back of the North Wind*, situates *At the Back of the North Wind* in the context of Greek mythology (128-47). MacDonald himself is very much aware of the importance of contexts, both ‘outside’ and (in *At the Back of the North Wind* especially) ‘inside’ the book, i.e. in the depiction of Diamond’s character.
56. “We cannot fully reconcile the two realms,” says Stephen Prickett, in *Victorian Fantasy*, 167. Roderick McGillis, in “Language and Secret Knowledge in *At the Back of the North Wind*,” says: “The centre of serenity . . . is clearly evident both in the noumenal world of fantasy and in the phenomenal world of London” (*For the Childlike: George MacDonald’s Fantasies for Children*, 147); and Colin Manlove, in “A Reading of *At the Back of the North Wind*,” points out that Diamond is a “dia-mond or two-world soul” (*Behind the Back of the North Wind*, 172).
57. See Llewellyn Woodward, *The Age of Reform, 1815-70*, 42. MacDonald himself first travelled to Huntly by train in 1855; the train ran past his family home to the nearby station (see William Raeper, *George MacDonald*, 126-27). The beginning of the railway era had a tremendously energising effect. Hannah Furness, Arts Correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, quotes Philip Hook, a senior international specialist at Sotheby’s, as saying that it helped inspire the Impressionist Movement; it was probably no coincidence that the movement began just when railways were enabling people to travel more easily (“How dawn of the railway left a lasting impression,” *DT* Jan. 26th 2015). John Ruskin, in *The Ethics of the Dust* (1866), is caustic on the subject, but cannot deny the impact of the railways: “I heard an orator, and a good one too, at the Working Men’s College . . . make a great point in a description of our railroads; saying, with grandly conducted emphasis, ‘They have made man greater, and the world

less.' His working audience were mightily pleased . . ." (*The Ethics of the Dust*, 22). Poorer passengers were not alone in benefiting from train travel; Lewis Carroll met the Drury sisters and their governess on a train and entertained them with puzzles, paper toys and games ("Carroll and a Tale of Three Sisters," by Will Bennett; *Daily Telegraph*, Nov. 2nd 1999), while in Tenniel's illustration of Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass* no less a person than Disraeli is caricatured as a passenger (see Martin Gardner's note in *The Annotated Alice*, 218). Two railway stations were opened to serve the Crystal Palace in its second incarnation at Sydenham, and the Crystal Palace pneumatic railway was exhibited there in 1864 (see *The Crystal Palace* in *Wikipedia*). Train travel could, however, be hazardous. On Sept. 2nd 1865 Charles Dickens was involved in a serious crash on the South Eastern Railway (the line, though not the route that Diamond would have used); some people lost their lives and it almost cost Dickens part of the manuscript of *Our Mutual Friend*, as he discloses in the postscript to that novel. According to Michael and Mollie Hardwick in *The Charles Dickens Encyclopedia*, a favourite dog belonging to Dickens died in another railway accident later the same year.

58. "George MacDonald: A Personal Note," in *From a Northern Window*, 103.
59. *The Age of Reform*, 47-49.
60. Luke 16: 19-31. He is not named in the Gospel but is always known as Dives.
61. In 1866 John Ruskin, a great friend of MacDonald's, published *The Ethics of the Dust*, ten lectures to "little housewives" on the elements of crystallization originally delivered at a girls' school (see *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature*, ed. Humphrey Carpenter and Mari Prichard, 357). In it he points out that diamonds and charcoal are closely related (*The Ethics of the Dust*, 10 [he also mentions the Crystal Palace, 22-23]). George MacDonald was presumably familiar with this work, for the phrase "valley of diamonds" occurs in his essay "The Government of Nature" in *The Miracles of Our Lord* (1870), 417; Ruskin's first lecture is entitled "The Valley of Diamonds." Lisa Hermine Makman, in "Child's Work is Child's Play: The Value of George MacDonald's Diamond," in *Behind the Back of the North Wind*, notes that in MacDonald's day coal was dubbed "black diamond" (110). She refers to an article published by Hugh Macmillan in the Dec. 1868 issue of *Good Words for the Young* in which he explains the origins of coal; Makman argues that Coal (the hero of Macmillan's scientific story) resembles MacDonald's Diamond in being precious, being associated with the magic of childhood, having a positive effect on people and producing magical stories (122). Interest in geology was widespread in Victorian times, particularly following Charles Lyell's publications on the subject in the

1830s. Charles Kingsley’s “Madam How and Lady Why, or, First Lessons in Earth Lore for Children,” which appeared in early issues of *Good Words for the Young*, “persuades readers that the natural world is a material manifestation of God’s ways” (John Pennington, “Connections: Charles Kingsley and *Good Words for the Young*” in *North Wind: A Journal of George MacDonald Studies*, No.33, 2014; 93). Kingsley also wrote an essay about coal—“The Coal in the Fire,” in *Town Geology*, 1872—in which he says: “We may consider the coal upon the fire as the middle term of a series, of which the first is live wood, and the last diamond” (7). MacDonald had studied chemistry at King’s College, Aberdeen, and, as Michael Phillips says, “[He] remained a scientist all his life, interested in technical advances, new discoveries, and the latest theories in philosophical and scientific knowledge” (*George MacDonald: Scotland’s Beloved Storyteller*, 231). Phillips adds that MacDonald’s wide reading included Darwin and scientific journals and he cites Greville MacDonald on his father’s scientific interests (231; *GMHW* 216-17).

62. “Speculation” is the key word here. MacDonald tells us that “no man can make haste to be rich without going against the will of God, in which it is the one frightful thing to be successful” (*ABNW* 247)—and the man who was so set against gambling that he would not allow anyone who had so much as set foot in Monte Carlo to visit the Casa Corragio (Raeper, 354) disapproved strongly of the behaviour of Miss Coleman’s unworthy suitor, Mr. Evans: “[It] was in a measure through his influence that [Mr. Coleman] entered upon those speculations which ruined him” (*ABNW* 246).
63. See Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy*, pars. 425, 426ff.
64. “Hoxton, where [Mr. Coleman] would be unknown” (*ABNW* 130).
65. “I will smite the winter house with the summer house; and the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end, saith the LORD” (Amos 3:15).
66. Though MacDonald is aware of the limitations of money, he is far from seeing it as an evil thing: “Money was the token of service rendered, and like all symbols must be treated reverently,” says Greville MacDonald of his father’s attitude to it (*GMHW* 346), and, in a letter to Mrs. A. J. Scott, MacDonald claims “a sense of the sacredness of money, and . . . a conviction that it is only the vulgar mind that regards it as an unclean thing—because in secret it worships it” (cit. in *GMHW*, 440). Diamond is perfectly aware of the practical necessity of earning a living and he is being more sensible than his father. His scrupulousness in working out the correct fare for an old gentleman has already demonstrated his responsible and businesslike attitude to money (*ABNW* 224)—and dishonesty and greed, the

two vices frequently associated with it, are not in his nature.

67. Paul Dombey, in Dickens's *Dombey and Son*, has a similar discussion with his father (who is similarly wrongfooted). "What's money after all?" Paul asks him. "I mean, Papa, what can it do?"... "Money, Paul, can do anything."... "If it's a good thing, and can do anything," said the little fellow, thoughtfully... "I wonder why it didn't save me my Mama." He didn't ask the question of his father this time. Perhaps he had seen, with a child's quickness, that it had already made his father uncomfortable" (Ch. 8).
68. To give but two examples from work of the same period, the ring Queen Irene gives Princess Irene, in *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872), is in fact Irene's mother's ring, as her king-papa attests (PG 165). In the earlier *Guild Court* (1868) Lucy Burton's ring ("a good-sized rose-diamond" [GC 365]) is "her mother's jewel" (309) and an important factor in the plot.
69. MacDonald uses the same metaphor in relation to Mr. Dempster in "The Butcher's Bills": "Dempster . . . was not yet a clinker out of which all the life was burned" (*Stephen Archer and Other Tales*, 153).
70. *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*, ed. Buttrick, George Arthur and others; 904.
71. St. Thomas is recalling a saying of Aristotle. Cit. in Jung, *Aion*, par. 92.
72. See Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, pars. 329, 330 et al.
73. Cit. in Jung, *Symbols of Transformation*, par. 308.
74. See Cope, *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*, 93.
75. The episode of Diamond's supposed visit to the land at North Wind's back is somewhat reminiscent of St. Paul's experience of having been caught up into the third heaven, "whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell" (2 Corinthians 12: 2ff).
76. This echoes Greville MacDonald's reaction to the sight of his sick father being carried up to his bedroom after his voyage on the *Blue Bell*—"I thought he was dead" (GMHW 394)—and as the voyage took place in June 1869 and Diamond's mother greeted her sick son in the December 1869 issue of *Good Words for the Young* (see Broadview *ABNW*, 36) the echo is surely deliberate.
77. *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church*, 94.
78. Though it has been prepared for earlier in childhood. Left alone in the cathedral while North Wind sinks a ship, "he thought he could sing. . . . at home he used to sing, to tunes of his own, all the nursery rhymes he knew. So he began to try *Hey diddle diddle*, but it wouldn't do. Then he tried *Little Boy Blue*, but it was no better. Neither would *Sing a Song of Sixpence* sing itself at all. Then he tried *Poor old Cockytoe*, but he wouldn't do. They all sounded so silly! and he had

never thought them silly before” (85-86).

79. In the twentieth century, Old Sal the cellar-dweller (whose name, ‘sal,’ is often used for salt in alchemy) has kindred—possibly descendants—in Ursula Le Guin’s *The Tombs of Atuan* (Victor Gollancz, 1972), the second of the *Earthsea* books, in which the menacing Nameless Ones of earth, foes to individual consciousness and freedom, are inseparably linked with their subterranean element—and further removed from individuality than Old Sal, for no-one ever sees them, even “offstage” like Nanny and other characters in *At the Back of the North Wind*. Ursula Le Guin is familiar with MacDonald’s work, as is clear from her having written a brief introduction to the Puffin Classics edition of *The Princess and the Goblin* (ed. of 2010).
80. Nanny owes something to Nancy Kennedy, in *Robert Falconer*, and to Poppie in *Guild Court*. Maggy, in Dickens’s *Little Dorrit* (1855-57), may also have helped shape her; certainly they both experience hospital as paradise (presumably the reference in both cases is to the Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children, still flourishing to-day). Robert Lee Wolff points out Nanny’s debt to Jo the crossing-sweeper in *Bleak House*, which was published in 1853 (see *The Golden Key: A Study of the Fiction of George MacDonald*, 157). Cripple Jim is referred to at one point as Joe (*ABNW* 255).
81. The topic was certainly on MacDonald’s mind—and indeed in the second sentence of *At the Back of the North Wind* he makes a humorous reference to a Greek writer’s account of people who lived there “and were so comfortable that they could not bear it any longer, and drowned themselves” (*ABNW* [1]). In *Wilfrid Cumbermede* (1872) there is a detailed treatment of the subject, including a chapter entitled “A Talk About Suicide” (*WC* [346]-60) and the suicide of one of the main characters, Charley Osborne. As early as *Alec Forbes of Howglen* (1865) Kate Fraser apparently drowns herself (*AFH* 364-65). In *Robert Falconer* (1868) there is a discussion of the issue (see esp. *RF* 549-50). The subject recurs in many of MacDonald’s later books, from a shockingly casual mention in *Weighed and Wanting* (1882)—“[Vavasar’s] elder brother would have had [the earldom], but he killed himself before it fell due” (*WW* 316)—to Isy’s attempt to drown herself in his last novel, *Salted With Fire* (1897). She is prevented from doing so by a man who, to deter her from future attempts, threatens her with being hanged! (*SF* 68).
82. Jean Webb, “Realism, Fantasy and a Critique of Nineteenth Century Society in George MacDonald’s *At the Back of the North Wind*,” in *A Noble Unrest*, 17.
83. Poppie, in *Guild Court* (1868), is tormented by boys who throw dirt at her when she is sweeping her crossing. This is how she reacts: “I looks up at St. Pauls’,

and I says, 'Please, Jesus Christ, help me to give it 'em.' And then I flies at 'em with my broom, and I knocks one of 'em down" (*GC* 267).

84. In the chapter headed "The Human Sacrifice" in *Mary Marston* (1881), MacDonald describes the pressure on Hester to accept Mr. Redmain's proposal of marriage as the "evil . . . that to-day played the Minotaur" (*MM* 80). Her mother's boudoir is the labyrinth.
85. Published by Jane Taylor in *Rhymes for the Nursery*, 1806, and originally called "The Star." By about 1860 it had been set to music and about ten years later it formed the basis of a pantomime (see *The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature*, 547). In *David Elginbrod* (1863) MacDonald says that "the stars were sparkling overhead like diamonds that had been drinking the light of the sun all day" (*DE* 314).
86. "From ancient times any relationship to the stars has always symbolized eternity. The soul comes 'from the stars' and returns to the stellar regions," says Jung (*The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, par. 343).
87. And see *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, par. 247: "I may define 'self' as the totality of the conscious and unconscious psyche, but this totality transcends our vision; it is a veritable *lapis invisibilitatis*."
88. "The Voice of Job," in *USS 2* (1885), 328. And see Lesley Smith, "Old Wine in New Bottles: Aspects of Prophecy in George MacDonald's *At the Back of the North Wind*," in *For the Childlike*, 167, and *Behind the Back of the North Wind*, 37.
89. *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, par. 637.

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