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## The Limitations of Reductionist Approaches to *Thomas Wingfold, Curate*

John Docherty

George MacDonald's character Thomas Wingfold seems to exert a particularly strong hold upon the hearts of many contemporary readers, having both a fanzine and an e-mail bulletin named after him. Yet *Thomas Wingfold, Curate* has received harsher criticism than any other MacDonald novel. This dichotomy, manifested in its most extreme form in the contrasting attitudes to Thomas Wingfold, characterises nearly all modern approaches to MacDonald's fiction—except within the pages of literary journals, where some balanced explorations of his writings are still published. Both extreme approaches are crudely reductionist and utterly misleading. The adulatory approach has resulted in virtually all of MacDonald's novels being censored and rewritten to make them conform to a narrow type of Christianity which ignores his Christian symbolism. The opposite approach treats his Christian metaphor and mythopoeia as the fantasies of an unbalanced personality.

That these two extreme approaches should continue to be influential today is depressing. Since 1987 there has been no logical justification for either. In that year John Pennington drew attention to the dangers inherent in the rewrites; David Robb, in the chapter on "Symbol and Allegory" in his *George MacDonald*, provided what is still the most detailed study of the importance and extent of symbolism and allegory in MacDonald's novels; and Kathy Triggs published her extensive study of the mythical structure underpinning *Paul Faber, Surgeon*. The crucially important spiritual concepts which MacDonald explores cannot be comprehended except when presented in this way as metaphor and mythopoeia. The covert symbolism in his novels is not a mere private game.

The present paper first looks at some of the features of *Thomas Wingfold* which make it such an attractive book for many readers, and explores the aspects of MacDonald's novels which particularly seem to have attracted the rewriters. The second part analyses the claims employed by Michael Phillips, the rewriter of *Thomas Wingfold*, and then, briefly, the more extreme claims of other rewriters of MacDonald's works. The third part examines Robert Lee Wolff's criticism of *Thomas Wingfold* in his book *The Golden Key*—the most detailed criticism yet published. An introduction to the structural elements of the spiritual scaffolding of *Thomas Wingfold* is

provided in the final part of the paper.

By an interesting coincidence, a major theme in *Thomas Wingfold* is the way the two extreme dogmas of a narrow outdated Christian ideology and a radical atheism can leave little ground between them for people to work out their destinies in freedom. The struggle to escape enslavement by one or other of these ideologies is, of course, described as it presented itself in Victorian times, but the underlying assumptions are unchanged today. A vivid tableau emerges from the early chapters of *Wingfold*—a tiny figure in the great abbey church of Glaston—attempting to preach but principally aware of three of his congregation who in his imagination loom above all the rest: the heroine Helen Lingard closely flanked by the cousin whom she is expected to marry and the aunt who cares for her. Helen takes life as she finds it and is wholly under the influence of these two relatives, whom the narrator caricatures ruthlessly. The outlook **[end of page 50]** of Helen's aunt, Mrs Ramshorn, is dominated by dead stultifying High Church traditions; her cousin George Bascombe is a modern superman, a Darwinian and an atheist.

In MacDonald's earlier Marshmallows trilogy, the Revd. Walton is not only an attractive character but also the narrator of the first two volumes and father of the narrator of the third. This apparently caused many readers to regard him as an all-wise father-figure, instead of awakening them to a greater consciousness of the limitations of their own Christian beliefs (Hein, *Harmony* 123). This may be the reason why MacDonald narrates in the third-person for the *Wingfold* trilogy.<sup>1</sup> But in *Thomas Wingfold*, as in *Robert Falconer* and *At the Back of the North Wind*, the relationship between narrator and hero is not what it at first seems. In each of these books the reader discovers with a start near the end (*Wingfold* 412) that the supposedly "real" narrator has been drawing upon direct experience of the supposedly "fictional" main character. MacDonald's aim seems to be to awaken readers who up to that point have remained uncommitted, in the hope they will begin to treat the work more seriously and assimilate it into themselves. The technique permits him vary the narrator's outlook on occasion without this undermining the confidence of his readers.

The likely reason for the attractiveness of Wingfold as a character is suggested by Phillips in the introduction to his rewrite of *Thomas Wingfold*:

In each of [MacDonald's] books, different facets of his vision of God's character emerge . . . .

Wingfold possessed the one quality which MacDonald revered above nearly all others—*openness* . . . .

With this openness came an honest heart, one willing to take a thorough look at whatever presented itself . . . . And intrinsic to the open mind and heart, MacDonald clarifies the vital and necessary role of doubt. (9-10)

The attraction of this honest openness is, above all, its realism. There is no quick and easy way to spiritual felicity. In fact, as soon as Wingfold begins his spiritual pilgrimage he realises that questers are called upon to give themselves, over and over again, long before they believe they have gained anything worth giving.

Wingfold and Bascombe in some ways resemble the Anodos of *Phantastes* split into two figures. They started from the same background, but whereas Bascombe has totally espoused the rigid materialistic attitude which Anodos displays at the beginning of his adventures, Wingfold possesses from the outset the flexibility which is gradually and painfully gained by Anodos. The story begins with Wingfold as a curate who has never considered if he believes what he preaches. Challenged by Bascombe, he recognises that the modern atheistic world-view which Bascombe propounds cannot be defeated in argument because it denies the very existence of crucial regions of experience (e.g. 218-9). Soon, however, he realises that if he explores such regions *with clear thinking* he can overcome atheistic concepts. The depth of the insights he gains is well illustrated where he explains the purpose of the Atonement to the atheist doctor Paul Faber:

suppose that the design of God involved the perfecting of men as the children of God—"I said ye are as gods"—that he would have them as partakers of his own blessedness in kind—be as himself;—suppose, his grand idea could not be [51] contented by creatures perfected only by his gift, so far as that should reach, and having no willing causal share in the perfection—that is, partaking not at all of God's individuality and free-will and choice of good;—then suppose that suffering were the only way through which the individual soul could be set, in separate and self-individuality, so far apart from God that it might *will*, and so become a partaker in his singleness and freedom; and suppose that this suffering must be and had been initiated by God's taking his share, and that the infinitely greater share. (368-69)

Recognition of Wingfold's understanding of the Incarnation and Atonement as expressed here is essential to comprehension of the deeper aspects of the

book, and indeed of many of MacDonald's novels.

Wingfold's sermon summarising what he has learnt after a year of spiritual struggle is a remarkable testimony to the inspirational power of the Gospels. This is particularly so of the passage:

I must not . . . convey the impression that I have attained that conviction and assurance the discovery of the absence of which was the cause of the whole uncertain proceeding. All I now say is, that in the story of Jesus I have beheld such grandeur—to me apparently altogether beyond the reach of human invention, such a radiation of divine loveliness and truth, such hope for man, soaring miles above every possible pitfall of Fate; and have at the same time, from the endeavour to obey the word recorded as his, experienced such a conscious enlargement of mental faculty, such a deepening of moral strength, such an enhancement of ideal, such an increase of faith, hope, and charity towards all men, that I now declare with the consent of my whole man—I cast in my lot with the servants of the Crucified; I am content even to share their delusion, if delusion it be. (497)

A majority of readers of *Thomas Wingfold* is likely to be uplifted by the many passages like these. A sense of spiritual uplift has become a rare experience for readers of novels. To be genuinely uplifted by what, from a conventional literary viewpoint, is a mediocre novel is more rewarding than being dragged down by the salaciousness and cynicism of works which are considered its literary superiors. Nevertheless, there is always a danger that this sensation of uplift may create a mood of uncritical admiration in the reader. For a child, few attitudes are more desirable than a (fitting) feeling of reverence. But adults are called upon to act in the world and for this a clear head is as necessary as a warm heart.

In attempting to write uplifting novels, MacDonald was caught on the horns of a dilemma. He felt obliged to console ordinary people distressed by the barbarous image of God underlying some of the conventional Christian dogmas of the period. At the same time, he wished to provide a reasoned alternative to these barbarous dogmas, expounding in metaphor and symbol a more profound Christian theology. His attempts to employ such metaphor in his early romances *Phantastes* and *The Portent* had failed, in that readers treated these books simply as picaresque (disconnected) adventure stories. His essays and sermons frequently emphasise that to gain anything more

positive from a text than mere consolation, people have to wrestle with it.

So for most [52] of his novels he created stories which provide profoundly simple consolation, but additionally challenge perceptive readers with complex moral questions and unfamiliar spiritual symbolism.

Doubtless some of MacDonald's Victorian readers participated only vicariously in the spiritual development of his protagonists. But he could confidently expect that many would strive to emulate the positive characters. Today there are less incentives for spiritual striving. Likewise, there is no longer a need in most communities to protect simple souls from barbarous Christian doctrines of the sort which MacDonald opposed. What was intended to console in his novels is now valued for the "feel-good" sensation which it induces. To maximise this sensation, nearly all MacDonald's novels have been rewritten in the past twenty years in America by writers who disregard the deeper challenges of the stories.

The term "feel-good sensation" as currently employed characterises a temporary sense of well-being. Although most commonly used in connection with the satisfaction of some lust, usually Avarice, it is even more appropriate to the generation of a sense of well-being by the temporary gratification of genuine spiritual need—the need for Faith, Hope and Love. Such gratification is superficial and thus pernicious if sustained solely by regular doses of whatever first induced it instead of being grounded in inward striving. It is not difficult to recognise when MacDonald's works are being used as a narcotic to induce escapism instead of as a stimulant to loving action in the world as he intended. If a shelf of MacDonald novels is being used much as many people use their drug-cabinet; if rewrites or anthologies of MacDonald are preferred over the unmutated originals because they contain fewer of his really challenging passages; or if his stories induce much the same sensations as the sentimental book illustrations of the later Victorian period; then his writings are being treated primarily as an escapist retreat from the world.

The publishers of the rewrites assume that "today's reader," whom they claim to address, is little different from a juvenile reader and can cope only with the simplest stories. Yet the "flatness" they demand for the rewrites actually makes them more difficult to read than the originals. When any novel is adapted for a less condensed medium, such as a play or a film, people recognise and accept that it has to be greatly simplified. A bad adaptation may temporarily reduce the reputation of the original author, but the effect is usually short lived. This is not the case with the adaptations of MacDonald's novels as novels.

Some half of the rewrites of MacDonald's novels are by Phillips. These are published by Bethany House, who have sold over four million of his books. Phillips also has his own imprint, Sunrise Books, with a programme of publishing unexpurgated hardback reprints of MacDonald's works. He realises that a range of approaches is needed to introduce MacDonald to different people and his Sunrise publications have consequently ranged from anthologies of very short quotations like *Wisdom to Live By*<sup>2</sup> to inexpensive hardback and paperback reprints of the principal critical studies of MacDonald's writings. This is a remarkable achievement for a small press and highly praiseworthy.

Small publishers cannot afford expensive promotion campaigns. So if they want the ideas of their authors to reach a larger audience they are obliged to co-operate with [53] a bigger publisher. Phillips explains this in an article titled "How the Bethany House Edited Editions of MacDonald Began" in *To the Friends of George MacDonald and Michael Phillips*. Large publishers in America today tend to demand simple, fast-moving stories, so Phillips assumed that to make MacDonald's novels acceptable to any major American publisher he would have to rewrite them. Even so, his first attempt with *Malcolm* proved unacceptable to many, but it was eventually accepted by Bethany, the religious publishing house he already used. Achieving this after many disappointments, he naturally did not pause to consider whether Bethany might differ from most large publishers and be willing to publish unedited MacDonald stories. In subsequently publishing Phillips's *The Garden at the Edge of Beyond*, Bethany have certainly demonstrated that they do not always insist upon simple and fast-moving stories. That book allows readers abundant space for contemplation. In some respects it is a good book. But what is of crucial relevance here is that, by comparison with it, every MacDonald novel is fast-moving.

In his introduction to his rewrite of *Paul Faber*, Phillips justifies his rewrites by pointing out that MacDonald approved sufficiently of a Danish work by Valdemar Thisted, translated as *Letters From Hell*, to write an introduction to accompany the English translation. However it is scarcely valid to compare a free translation of what is apparently Thisted's only well-known book with Phillips's programme of rewriting the works of a highly respected author of numerous books. *Letters From Hell* is good of its kind, but is purely didactic—it is an extended tract. That rewriters of MacDonald's novels only recognise the didacticism which he shares with Thisted, and do not distinguish the novels from extended tracts, is precisely what is most

worrying about their rewrites.

In another introduction—that to his own edition of Rolland MacDonald’s biographical essay on his father in *From a Northern Window*—Phillips justifies his rewrites on the basis that “Rolland Hein took the same approach to MacDonald’s theology” (12). This belief that drastically cutting MacDonald’s novels is little different from the application of cosmetic surgery to his sermons is likewise disturbing. What C. S. Lewis terms MacDonald’s “florid ornament” (14) was considered appropriate for Victorian sermons, but it can be removed without harming the meaning at all. It is wholly superfluous and only distracts the reader. It appears insincere to a lay person today, although that would presumably not have been the case in MacDonald’s lifetime.

A particularly desperate defence of Phillips’s rewrites occurs in his essay, “Why Do I Edit George MacDonald’s Novels?—An ‘Editorial’” in *To the Friends of George MacDonald and Michael Phillips*. There he states that: “far and away the greatest amount of mail that I receive expresses appreciation on the part of people who say they would never have been able to read the books in the original, even if they had found them.” To grasp for support at the comments of people who damn the unexpurgated texts while admitting they have never seen them would seem to show that Phillips is well aware of the weakness of his case. It also shows how effective the publishers have been in spreading the lie that the originals are difficult to read.

When the question of the rewrites comes up on the MacDonald e-mail bulletin-board “Wingfold”: ([wingfold@dial.pipex.com](mailto:wingfold@dial.pipex.com)) there are usually contributors who maintain that they turn to the rewrites because they do not have the time to read long [54] books. The only possible rational explanation for this weird attitude must be that they assume all novels contain a more or less uniform quantity of “content” and therefore any extension in length beyond the norm can only be “padding.” This view may be a consequence of habitually reading books from a computer monitor. It is disturbing for the future of literature if electronic media have this effect of making people believe that all books ought to be read at a more or less uniform speed, regardless of their level of interest, their difficulty, or the need of pauses for contemplation.

Ready acceptance of censored texts is a new phenomenon. Fifty years ago in Britain, books were routinely bowdlerised for school or “family” reading. But children who enjoyed reading soon came to realise that a hidden agenda lying behind the editing resulted in the deletion of all the most



interesting parts. When able to get hold of unexpurgated texts we equally quickly learnt that we could always carry out our own editing, omitting any sections in which we were not interested at the time. We would never have expected someone else to do this for us. In fact, it was obvious to us that different people wished to skip different passages. Moreover, most of us discovered that passages we had skipped on first reading were often the very ones we liked best when we came to reread a work.

As with all rewrites of MacDonald's books, the differences between *The Curate's Awakening* and *Thomas Wingfold* are extensive. Phillips is more efficient than other rewriters in that he identifies and discards virtually all the hero's and the narrator's most idiosyncratic or fanatical ideas. Clumsily written sentences have been reworded, and most of the abuse of people who do not appreciate Wingfold's sermons has been omitted. By further deletions and some additions, often by changing only a few words, he has achieved an immediacy of style apparently aimed at strengthening the didactic message for the readership Bethany House have in mind.

Phillips omits nearly all of MacDonald's numerous literary allusions, presumably because his editors assumed readers, would not recognise them. But MacDonald, more than any other major novelist, repeatedly emphasises how important great literature is in illuminating all aspects of life (Ankeny 2-3). A particularly striking example of this is his chapter on "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" in *There and Back*.

Achievement of immediacy appears to be behind every instance of Phillips's removal of MacDonald's subtle characterisation. Innumerable pleasant phrases have been replaced by banal alternatives. Two characteristic examples from the first chapter are: "a haze that threatened rain" (1) becoming "a cloud that threatened rain" (15) and "in tolerable plenty" (3) becoming "quite regularly" (15). The greater part of MacDonald's depiction of the personalities of the main characters is achieved by subtle touches of this type, so is entirely lost in the rewrite. The form of Christianity promoted by Bethany House, in its concern with the Godhead, seems to neglect concern for human individuality. One consequence is that a great part of Wingfold's explorations of the words and deeds of Christ is deleted. Bethany, in their publicity, refer to the "compelling characterization" of Phillips's stories, but they are not using the phrase in its usually accepted sense.

In addition to all this, Phillips, by what he terms "tightening and accelerating the plot," has reduced the story to little more than half the length of the original. He describes this shortening, however as "merely

a by-product of the . . . other [55] priorities.” He does not consistently bowdlerise in the sense of removing what he considers impure material. He instead emphasises his wish to find “a market in today’s world” for the books and, unlike other rewriters, he does not consider the originals too long. But no rewriters could reduce any MacDonald novel to such an extent without devastating its deeper themes, even if they possessed an understanding of these themes. Few of the changes made by the rewriters make MacDonald’s books easier to read—as noted, they work in the opposite direction. But as long as publishers can convince readers otherwise this is of no real relevance.

Where Phillips replaces deleted passages with material of his own the banality of these fillers can be hilarious. A typical example is where “he would generally take up his Horace” (8) becomes “he would read the poets” (17). Such “dumbing-down,” however, can be as distressing as it is hilarious. A particularly revealing example occurs where Polwarth, Wingfold’s mentor, describes being sent a new Tauchnitz edition of the English New Testament<sup>3</sup> with variant readings from newly discovered manuscripts. Polwarth tells how, although “the differences from the common version” “were few and small”:

there were some such as gave rise to a feeling far above mere interest—one in particular, the absence of a word that had troubled me, not seeming like a word, of our Lord, or consonant with his teaching. I am unaware whether the passage has ever given rise to controversy. [Wingfold interposes a query here and is answered.] . . . I had turned with eagerness to the passage wherein it [i.e. the specific word] occurs, as given in two of the gospels in our version. Judge my delight in discovering that in the one gospel the whole passage was omitted by the two oldest manuscripts, and in the other [gospel] just the one word that had troubled me [was omitted] by the same two [manuscripts]. I would not have you suppose me foolish enough to imagine that the oldest manuscript must be the most correct; but you will at once understand the sense of room and air which, the discovery gave me. (173)

For this passage Phillips substitutes:

Any person who loves books would understand the ecstasy I felt. Why, Mr Wingfold, just to hold that book in my hands—I can scarcely describe the pleasure it brought me, such a prize did I consider that gift. I suppose a cherished possession of any kind would have that same effect on anyone. But for me

there has never been anything quite like an old book or a revered edition of the scriptures. In any case, such was my reaction to the New Testament I received. [The “differences . . . few and small” sentence from MacDonald is interpolated here.]

You can hardly imagine my delight in the discoveries this edition gave me. The contents within its handsome leather covers outran the anticipation I had felt as I first held it between my hands. (91-92)

The two world-views manifested in these passages—the conceptions of what is important and unimportant in life—have scarcely anything in common. Yet in the article “How the Bethany House Edited Editions of MacDonald Began,” Phillips writes: **[56]**

The most important thing I always try to do is to make my edited version sound and “feel” as if MacDonald wrote it himself . . . —*if* George MacDonald were writing for today’s market, and *if* he were writing this same book with these same priorities in mind, would the end result sound something like this?

Doubtless MacDonald would have written some parts of this novels differently if writing for present day readers, even though his themes are eternal ones. He might well have abbreviated some of his themes, but he certainly would not have left many of the most important elements of his books as mere two-dimensional caricatures of what he actually achieved, or as tattered fragments, yet both these practices are routine with the rewriters. Their approach has much in common with what MacDonald in his essay “The Imagination: Its Functions and its Culture” terms skimming a book. He insists that this is “worse than waste” (*Dish* 39-40). Moreover, if the criteria employed by the scholars who have attempted in the past century to create a canon of Western literature are accepted, then the way MacDonald’s novels have been rewritten removes them completely from the category of “literature.”

Bethany’s blurb on the cover of *The Curate’s Awakening* proclaims that: “With deep sincerity and commitment, young Thomas accepts the responsibility of his first parish . . .” This is wholly unrelated to the text—MacDonald states that Wingfold “had taken no great interest the matter” (7). It is thus no surprise to find that the map of Glaston which Bethany provide on page 14 reverses its orientation, depicting Osterfield Park to the east; despite Phillips (86) and MacDonald (159) describing it as lying west of the

town. Orientation is of crucial symbolic importance for MacDonald.

The tall handsome red-haired curate pictured on Bethany's front cover likewise bears no resemblance to MacDonald's description of Thomas Wingfold. The cover of the Victorian, Kegan Paul edition of *Thomas Wingfold*, however, is not wholly dissimilar in this respect: the homely little church depicted there bears no resemblance to the "great abbey church" of Glaston. Both covers represent cynical attempts by the publishers to maximise the feel-good factor.

The titles given to rewrites of MacDonald's novels are similarly exploitative: publishers choose new titles which imitate sentimental Victorian titles. It has become standard practice for these publishers to market the rewrites, as original works by MacDonald, listing them as such in the standard lists of books in print. This deception is reinforced by the way the rewrites are displayed as works by MacDonald in the majority of bookstores. As a consequence, critics have begun to blame their titles upon him. John Goldthwaite, for example, in *The Natural History of Make-Believe*, published by the prestigious Oxford University Press, asserts that MacDonald's novels "have long since been forgotten, as their titles—*The Maiden's Bequest*, *The Minister's Restoration*, *The Curate's Awakening*—suggest they might" (171).

The dumbing-down of MacDonald's books apparently began in 1963 with Elizabeth Yates's rewrite of *Sir Gibbie*.<sup>5</sup> Yates begins her introduction with lavish praise:

it implored constant reading, and from the moment it caught me up I was conscious of a breadth and depth and height of feeling such as I had not known for a long time. It moved me in the way books did when, as a child, the great [57] gates of literature began to open and first encounters with noble thoughts and utterances were unspeakably thrilling . . . I could not bear to come to its end. (v-vi)

Her Puritan conscience then seems to catch up with her. Her indulgence of her feelings was, she seems to feel, escapism—something permissible only in small doses. She therefore decides that the book, is "enormously long," and must be cut "almost by half." And she believes she can do this and yet leave "the core of the story—the shining wonder . . . untouched" (vii): *Sir Gibbie* contains so much "shining wonder" that some of it will remain even after drastic editing like this. So the ignorant reader can easily be conned into believing that what has been removed is all "pages that [a]re a digression from the story" (vi). In fact, none of the story is a digression. Even

MacDonald's authorial interventions, which she particularly mentions in this connection, are nearly all repetitions of what has already been expressed by the actual characters.

Yates introduces the claim that readers are "put off by the Scotch dialect"—a claim taken up by the later rewriters, most of whose rewrites are of novels which never had any Scotch dialect. The dialect is not particularly difficult to comprehend if spoken aloud. It's rejection points to a human failing underlying all the rewrites—an unwillingness to accept people, real or fictional, as individuals. This is the outlook expressed by MacDonald's egotistical protagonist Anodos when at his lowest moral ebb in *Phantastes*: "to feel I was in pleasant company, it was absolutely necessary for me to discover and observe the right focal distance between myself and each [person] with which I had to do" (108). It is an outlook which precludes any possibility of real understanding of people, as is emphasised by Anodos's use of the word "which" here in place of the anticipated "whom."

Rewriting MacDonald's out-of-copyright stories involves little effort and can be represented as motivated by evangelical- or political-correctness. By the tenets of evangelical-correctness rewrites are "stronger and purer" than the originals.<sup>6</sup> Phillips would not make such a claim for his rewrites, but it is specifically made by the other principal rewriter, Dan Hamilton. Hamilton also claims that his rewrites are "edited for maximum understanding" (8). How mutilation of much of MacDonald's spiritual scaffolding is conducive to "maximum understanding" of his novels is not explained. Hamilton's summarises MacDonald's "favorite messages" as:

First that we should turn to God because He loves us and wants us safely back in His arms.

Second, that the way we may discover the entire will of God is to obey the commands He has already given us. Only we who take the first step of duty in obedience to the revealed will of God can come to know His larger will. God's ordinances as revealed in Scripture were given us that we might first obey them—not that we might first speculate, theorize, or analyze them, and obey only later, if at all.

Third, that death under God is simply more life. (7)

The reductionism of this approach is wholly alien to MacDonald's thinking. Much of it is the reverse of what Wingfold learns in *Thomas Wingfold*. The first "message" is in [58] direct opposition to Wingfold's view of man ultimately becoming "a partaker in [God's] singleness and freedom," as he

express it to Paul Faber (368-69, quoted above). The second “message” is contrary to MacDonald’s regular practice of careful analysis to gain deeper understanding of the Bible; not accepting morally questionable passages until he had carefully compared different source manuscripts. The same is done by Wingfold’s lay mentor Polwarth (e.g; 173, quoted above). And the idea in (he third “message” of God’s will being expressed as “ordinances” stresses the believer’s subjection to God, a concept crucially different from MacDonald’s.

A key doctrine of political-correctness—that everything must be fully accessible to the disadvantaged—“justifies” all the rewrites. It has been most enthusiastically taken up by rewriters of MacDonald’s fairy tales. Some of these rewriters leave nothing that would seriously interest any intelligent child. The elimination of his Christian metaphor from the fairy tales is likewise done in the name of political-correctness. This is most conspicuous in the video adaptations.

Acceptance of spurious arguments in favour of the rewrites is having a serious negative effect upon MacDonald’s reputation as a novelist worthy of critical attention,<sup>7</sup> and *critical regard for MacDonald’s writings is essential if his work is to become widely known again*. The feel-good factor has given his novels “cult status” and thus assured them of a sizeable readership, but currently none of them has a *wide* readership.

Humanist criticism of MacDonald has largely been directed at his fairy tales. In these the spiritual symbolism cannot easily be ignored and is always of immediate practical relevance. G. K. Chesterton succinctly characterises this relevance where he refers to *The Princess and the Goblin* as the “most real, the most realistic” of all the stories he has ever read; a book which had “made a difference to [his] whole existence” (9). MacDonald’s psychological insights can, however, be detached from their spiritual roots (even though, like any living thing broken off in this way, they will then be incapable of growth and will soon fade). Some humanist critics who do this contribute much to our understanding of the power and subtlety of MacDonald’s fairy tales. These critics could, if they wished, dismiss the spiritual roots of his imagery as merely a product of his desire to conform to a popular but outdated belief. Yet, instead, they either treat his Christian spirituality as a meaningless creation of his fancy, or interpret it in terms of personality deficiencies which they analyse by techniques which in essence are crudely Freudian.<sup>8</sup> Misrepresentation of MacDonald’s intentions in this way has been particularly serious because most of it has appeared in books aimed as much at the intelligent general reader as at an academic readership.

A recent example is U. C. Knoepfelmacher's *Ventures into Childhood*.

In MacDonald's novels, his symbolism is not particularly overt. But he emphasises in his essay "The Imagination" that readers should always seek to understand the hidden "spiritual scaffolding" and "intellectual structure" of the books they read (38). It was apparently the increased importance of the spiritual scaffolding in *Thomas Wingfold* and its sequel *Paul Faber* by comparison with his earlier novels which caused him to regard these books when they were first published as the very best of his novels (Hein, *MacDonald*. 280; 305); Despite this, Wolff not only mistakes MacDonald's spiritual scaffolding for straightforward fictional narrative, but he also [59] neglects the intellectual structure. In part this occurs because he expects MacDonald to adhere to conventional literary codes. But he should have noticed that MacDonald disparages theories of "artistic duty" at the very beginning of *Thomas Wingfold* (2-3).

Wolff's approach to *Thomas Wingfold* is an unrelievedly literal-materialistic one. He claims outright that the book is "genuinely immoral" (297):

Helen Lingard, a gently-nurtured girl, hides from justice her half-Hindu half-brother Leopold, who has murdered his flirtatious sweetheart, daughter of a nouveau-riche manufacturer. Helen nurses him through interminable fevers of remorse and delirium to an edifying deathbed. The pious curate, Wingfold, in love with Helen, makes himself an accessory: he actually blackmails the mother of the murder victim into silence. She knows that it was Leopold who killed her daughter, but Wingfold keeps her quiet by threatening to reveal a damaging fact in her own past which he has accidentally learned. MacDonald tries in several ways to cloud the issue: the victim, Emmeline, he portrays as so heartless that she almost deserved death; the murderer, in addition to being an emotional half-oriental, takes drugs, and so has deadened his conscience. Wingfold actually does advise Leopold to confess, and succeeds in convincing him to do so, but plot machinery prevents it.

Yet none of this really conceals that in this book MacDonald, the preacher, was preaching evil. Helen Lingard is not wholly moved by pure affection for her brother: "We should, be the talk of the county—of the whole country," she says. Nor



can we share Wingfold's opinion when, in answer to Helen's question, "You don't think very badly of my poor brother, do you, Mr Wingfold?" he answers "I think I never saw a lovelier disposition." When Wingfold confronts the mother of the murdered girl, and refers to Leopold as "the poor youth whom your daughter's behaviour made a murderer of," and the mother protests that "The villain took her precious life without giving her a moment to prepare for eternity," we feel that the mother has much the better of the argument.

In *Thomas Wingfold* MacDonald carried to their ultimate highly un-Christian extremes his convictions that flirts deserve anything they may get, and that parvenus are generally criminals. If he were just the ordinary writer of Victorian sensation novels, one might not find this worth comment. But *Thomas Wingfold* is also permeated through and through with MacDonald's usual preaching: Wingfold has doubts of his calling, exacerbated by an agnostic cousin of Helen's, and allayed by a particularly loathsome pair of pious hunchbacks named Polwarth, uncle and niece, who are gatekeepers at a great house. Against the background of violence and illegality, which MacDonald almost excuses, the sentimental vaporings of the curate and his deformed advisers about the study of Christ's life as an incentive to faith seem particularly offensive. (297-99)

There is special pleading here. Phrases such as "we feel," and "[n]or can we share," intended to win over the reader to Wolff's viewpoint, confirm his lack of confidence in his approach. That he can think of "the study of Christ's life" as "sentimental vaporings" is understandable. But it is less immediately understandable why, holding this view, he should have had any wish to publish a study of MacDonald's novels, particularly a study which, despite many fine insights, abounds in hasty and [60] unconsidered conclusions. Richard Reis, however, has published evidence showing that Wolff's probable motive was that of securing priority of publication ("Revival" 20-21).

Wolff mocks the "plot machinery" that prevents Leopold being put on trial. But Wingfold and Polwarth have wished to avoid acting precipitately, and when Leopold has reached the stage of wanting to confess it is realised that he is dying and far too ill to stand trial. "The poor boy had done as much



as lay either in or out of him in the direction of duty” (414). Such a resolution of the situation is not wholly satisfactory. Yet MacDonald characteristically uses this defect in the plot to stimulate the consciences of his readers in a way that otherwise would scarcely have been possible

Wolff’s confident assertions notwithstanding, the Christian attitude to Leopold’s crime is so contrary to the conventionally accepted one that we cannot expect total consistency in Wingfold’s, or even Polwarth’s, responses. Had Leopold been given up to the law, society’s response would have been no different from Emmeline’s mother’s “cherished vengeance” (446). When Dickens wishes to make a point about society’s vindictiveness towards an assumed transgressor he does so overtly. MacDonald here relies upon readers *activating their true conscience*—in contradistinction to the reflex response to social conditioning which usually passes for “conscience” and even manifests occasionally in Wingfold’s thinking. From the beginning, however, Wingfold can be blunt where necessary. In his sermon on “I came not to call the righteous . . .” he observes that: “There is not one in this congregation who has a right to cast a look of reproach at the worst felon who ever sat in the prisoner’s dock” (341).

Wolff totally misrepresents Wingfold’s encounter with Emmeline’s mother (454-57). Wingfold is instantly ashamed of his opening remark to her which Wolff quotes. She is the antithesis of Helen. The murder has immeasurably intensified Helen’s maternal love, whereas she has converted the little maternal love she had into a lust for revenge. Wolff pretends to approve of her use of the belief that “as the tree falls, so it shall lie,” but this belief was anathema to MacDonald. Wingfold has been meditating upon the story of the woman taken in adultery (John 8.1-11), comparing the known texts and looking at some profound interpretations; notably one in “one of the old miracle plays” (420) where her accusers realise that Christ is inscribing their own sins in the very earth, just as he subsequently does with her sin (419-20). Now that Wingfold realises Emmeline’s mother is an adulteress, he seems to perceive her as the inverse of the woman in the Gospel story. His action is intended by MacDonald to reflect Christ’s response to the accusers of the woman taken in adultery. It is instructive that Wolff makes no protest about a similar incident in *The Marquis of Lossie* (365), where the woman “blackmailed” by the hero is not even the bigamist herself, but a victim of her father’s unknowing bigamy.

Wolff reveals himself most completely in his comment on “deformed advisers about the study of Christ’s life.” There is no hypocrisy in the way the

Polwarths find their deformities a source of spiritual strength, nor indeed in any aspect of their thought and behaviour. And, as they are scrupulous in their respect for individual freedom, there are no valid grounds for him to describe them as “a loathsome pair.”

Wolff recognises that *Thomas Wingfold* is written in the popular “sensation novel” style of the period. Yet much of his misunderstanding of its intellectual structure arises [61] because he fails to recognise that MacDonald is parodying the conventions of murder-stories written in this style. MacDonald made “subversive incursions into so many different nineteenth-century literary forms” (U. C. Knoepfelmacher, *MacDonald* ix) that it would have been surprising had he not submitted the sensation novel to this process. Already in his first novel, *David Elginbrod*, an account of the hero Hugh Sutherland’s spiritual development is combined with sensation-novel devices akin to Gothick supernaturalism, and MacDonald parodies these as deftly as Jane Austin parodies Gothick horrors in *Northanger Abbey*.

*Thomas Wingfold* is organised around the response of the principal characters to a number of crucial events. At first all these characters except the Polwarths are in a dull, vegetative state, so events have to be dramatic to stir them. But as their spiritual faculties develop they become more receptive. By the end, the murder has turned out to be “the best shape [of] the best good” for all the people involved, to use the phrase which closes *Phantastes*. It is scarcely necessary to mention that this is not the case in ordinary sensation novels. Such works tend to ignore the really important spiritual changes likely to occur in the characters as a consequence of the dramatic events they experience. MacDonald places his primary emphasis upon these spiritual changes. The upward progression of his characters is dependent upon their own efforts. Thus Helen’s aunt and cousin are not greatly improved, whereas Leopold makes enormous progress. Wingfold’s openness facilitates all-round spiritual development and it is he who makes the most progress—despite a tendency towards authoritarianism deriving from his restricted image of God the Father.

What some critics; such as William Raeper (“Missing” 9), have interpreted in MacDonald’s novels as “jarring juxtapositions” are in most cases examples of his subversion of the conventions of one or other popular literary form—most often sensation-novel conventions such as absurdly improbable coincidences and extreme challenges to the social norms of the period. Wolff pretends to be unaware that murder victims in novels are almost invariably portrayed as unattractive personalities, even though that particular

convention has persisted into present-day detective fiction. Modern readers, however, are likely to be astonished that MacDonald makes Leopold a half-caste and a drug taker. MacDonald, of course, is not being racist. One of the devices of sensation-novels for subverting conventional prejudices is wrong-footing readers into assuming that a half-cast is the murderer.<sup>9</sup> MacDonald daringly subverts this subversion by making the half-cast the murderer. Wolff dismisses the stages of Leopold's subsequent redemption as "interminable," but the resurrection of the soul of a murderer is no simple matter.

A few genuine stylistic weaknesses in *Thomas Wingfold* are not noted by Wolff. MacDonald's concern for his readers apparently leads him to feel that many will lose heart where wrongs cannot quickly be rectified. In such "cases he makes an early authorial intervention to confirm that all will be well, weakening the essential tensions of the plot. The interpolated poems are another stylistic failure. Wingfold very sensibly composes these to help him digest his experiences, but most of the poems are so bad that unless readers have attempted this technique themselves they are likely to feel he must have digested very little. Sometimes Wingfold or the narrator recognise and admit the poor quality of the verses (e.g. 209; 219), but the narrator goes on to include more. [62] In *Sir Gibbie*, MacDonald remarks that in as much as creating such poetry helps anyone "to be a better man, it is of value to the whole world; but it may, in itself, be so nearly worthless that the publishing of it would be more for harm than good" (153). He seems to evade this truism in *Thomas Wingfold*.

There are other aspects of *Thomas Wingfold* which might have been expected to arouse comment from Wolff. Despite his own aversion to Wingfold he ignores Bascombe's similar aversion. Even Bascombe's taking Leopold to a magistrate to confess his crime because he genuinely believes it best for him (358) is not mentioned by Wolff. Although quick to condemn Wingfold's unconventional Christian behaviour, Wolff is too astute to show approval for an atheist like Bascombe, whose outlook is repeatedly mocked in the book. Similarly, although he condemns Rachel Polwarth's unconventional Christianity, he is too astute to show approval for Helen's initial near-atheism. Earlier in his book, Wolff responds in the same way to a comparable moral dilemma in MacDonald's children's story "The Giant's Heart." He avoids siding with the ultra-respectable giant, apparently because the giant transgresses MacDonald's moral codes. Yet he feels he is safe in strongly condemning the two unconventional children opposed to the giant, quite unjustifiably describing them as "little sadists" (125).

When the spiritual scaffolding of *Thomas Wingfold* is examined, Wolffs analysis is seen to be as misplaced as an analysis of *The Pilgrim's Progress* would be which took no account of Bunyan's Christian allegory. MacDonald already employed extended spiritual metaphor in *David Elginbrod*—most obviously in the contrasting settings of the Elginbrod's home in Scotland and the false heroine's home in southern England. By the time he came to write *Thomas Wingfold*, such symbolism had become fully as important an element in his novels as the consolation. The symbolism in *Thomas Wingfold* is extended and elaborated in *Paul Faber*. Spiritual symbolism appears, however, to be greatly reduced in the third volume of the Wingfold trilogy, *There and Back*, where MacDonald depicts the painful working out of the Christian-Socialist ideals of A. J. Scott and F. D. Maurice in what seems to be intended as an alternative to William Morris's Communist fantasy *News From Nowhere*.

Some elucidation of MacDonald's spiritual symbolism is necessary today because the great traditions of Christian symbolism upon which he draws are largely forgotten. Spelling out the spiritual structure of a MacDonald novel, however, is comparable with revealing the end of a detective story in that it deprives readers of a great part of the pleasure which can be obtained through their own efforts. But whereas discovering the identity of the murderer is the be-all and end-all of the standard detective story, with genuine spiritual scaffolding the reader's imagination is not narrowly and sordidly confined. The spiritual scaffolding of *Thomas Wingfold* is too complex to be capable of elucidation in a brief account. But once a reader recognises a few elements of its structure, each rereading should yield numerous new and profound insights.

The first characteristic of any genuine spiritual scaffolding is the harmony it imparts to the themes and episodes of a story. The second characteristic is that it imbues with spiritual significance the whole setting of a story, all the characters in it, and all the deeds of these characters. In the Bible, as with the works of the great writers [63] whom MacDonald most admired, numerically significant structure is always of cardinal importance,<sup>10</sup> being an outwardly visible indication of the underlying spiritual harmony, which is closely akin to musical harmony. The turning point of *Thomas Wingfold* occurs where Helen decides to speak to Wingfold about her brother's problem. This is emphasised by the chapter structure: there are seven times seven chapters up to this turning-point and seven times seven after it. That MacDonald is not the sort of writer who would introduce

regular structure into his chapter-sequence as a mere whim scarcely requires mention, yet it is the first thing demolished by the rewriters. Other elements of musical structure in MacDonald's stories include the numerous reflections, recapitulations and modifications of key themes. Some of these embrace the whole Wingfold trilogy. Wingfold's sermon on animal welfare which Triggs (27-29) shows to be the keystone of *Paul Faber* can be seen as the keystone to his role in all three books.<sup>11</sup> And Helen's decision to express her difficulty to Wingfold at the centre of the first book is reflected at the centre of *There and Back* by the heroine Barbara Wikler's decision to speak to him about her problem.<sup>12</sup>

David Robb has drawn attention to the subtle significance of places and of invented place-names in MacDonald's novels (56). Some of the few invented place-names in *Thomas Wingfold* and *Paul Faber* seem to be of little importance. Halystone, for example, where Helen's aunt formerly lived, is apparently no more than a humorously apt name for a place where her husband preached of God's displeasure falling upon the just and the unjust alike. Less obvious in meaning is the name of the river which almost encircles the great park and then flows through the town—lingering a moment to embrace the church (6). It is called the Lyme, a word MacDonald uses elsewhere in its sense of "a shelter from cold blasts" (the O.E.D. quotes *Robert Falconer*, volume 2, page 195). Wingfold, when first encountered, is sufficiently sheltered by the deep and narrow valley of the river to be able to sit and read outdoors on a late autumn day. Yet reading Horace's poetry provides very poor shelter indeed from spiritual cold, and this detail reminds us that the word "Lyme" is close to "Lethe."

For the town which is the setting for the first two Wingfold books, MacDonald uses not just a real word but a real place-name—Glaston is the old name for Glastonbury. It possesses a "great abbey church" and lies at the edge of hills not far from the sea. Otherwise, however MacDonald invents most of his topography, making it in some ways even more symbolic than the landscape around the actual Glastonbury.<sup>13</sup> For some details of Glaston, he seems to draw upon his memories of Arundel: Glaston seems to be near the South Coast and its river is tidal. But, unlike the Arun, the Lythe is not tidal in the deep valley above the town. In places he seems to distort English geography deliberately, in order to hint that he is employing it symbolically.

Glaston's great park, Osterfield Park, is like the world of Faerie in MacDonald's fairy tales (and like the Scottish Celtic conception of Faerie) in being somewhere people ignore most of the time but into which they are free

to wander. When they do, they usually come back changed. After Emmeline's mother has wandered through, the park she is able to recognise Leopold as the murderer (446-47). The topography of the park is particularly closely delineated. It contains two houses. The "new house" on a knoll, never visited by any of the characters except Polwarth, is intermittently being [64] built yet never approaches completion. It bears a manifestly polar relationship to the "old house" in a deep hollow. In the garden of the latter is an allegedly bottomless pool which sometimes floods it. The modern gatehouse to the park is a little cottage with "a very thick, wiglike thatch, into which rose two astonished eyebrows over the stare of two half-awake dormer windows" (67), a more or less overt image of the human head. It is 'covered with roses' (67), an image which MacDonald uses again in *Lilith* to symbolise life ever springing anew. Polwarth is the gatekeeper of the park, but his ancestors owned it (82). This was apparently before the time when it belonged to the manor house which has become the dwelling of the Lingards. The manor house has retained a private entry to the park via a meadow which used to be part of the park.

Suspicious about the real nature of the park, built up in the minds of perceptive readers by numerous hints like this, are amply confirmed when the dying Leopold is carried into the meadow. The gates to and from this meadow powerfully recall the lower and upper gates of Beulah repeatedly emphasised by Blake.<sup>14</sup>

People's names in *Thomas Wingfold* and *Paul Faber* are as symbolic as Bunyan's Worldly Wiseman or Blake's Theotormon, but as they do not stand out from everyday names this is not immediately obvious. Rachel Polwarth, the daughter of Joseph's brother Robert, is renamed Ruth in *Paul Faber*. This would seem to allude to Ruth 4 11: "And all the people that were in the gate said, We are witnesses. The Lord make the woman that is come into thine house like Rachel and like Leah, which two did build the house of Israel."<sup>15</sup> Rachel-Ruth is "like Rachel and like Leah" in being both beautiful and uncomely.

Wingfold gradually unfolds his spiritual wings and uses them to shelter vulnerable souls. His faith, as noted, is soundly grounded in doubt, hence his Christian name of Thomas is inevitable. Faber's faith is at the seed stage, and he still thinks of himself as an enemy of Christianity, like the unconverted Paul. Some of the other names are more subtle, although in many cases they simply indicate the predominate personality traits of

their holders. One or two characters come close to being personifications of an abstract state: Emmeline, for example, is on the borderline of being a personification of disharmony. Her mother, who is unnamed, is closer to a Blakean symbolic figure, with affinities to Albion's emanation Vala in *Jerusalem*, and also to the Lilith of cabalistic legend.<sup>16</sup> In these circumstances, Wolff's pose of sympathy for her is misplaced.

If Emmeline's mother, at one level of meaning, is Albion's emanation, then Drew **[65] [Note: image not available]**—the linen draper and her real husband—is, at this level, Albion. Nineteenth century Britain was regarded as a nation of shopkeepers. Blake associates his Albion imagery with Glastonbury where he recalls the legend of Jesus visiting there as a youth in the company of Joseph of Arimathea and Joseph's subsequent return as the bearer of Christianity to Britain (Erdman 216). Robert Polwarth is described as having identified himself totally with the Wandering Jew of legend. So an important function of the apparently extraneous chapters 77-79 on Robert's adventures in that persona<sup>17</sup> seems to be to confirm that Joseph himself is an avatar (reincarnation, symbol, or what-you will) of the most famous *other* wandering Jew of legend—he of Arimathea, the first Grail-guardian.

The modern onslaught against MacDonald's fiction has come about because both the humanist left and the evangelical right recognise the power of his radical Christian writing as a serious threat. From the Christian evangelical camp, his novels have suffered a far more extensive onslaught of rewriting than those of any other important author. The closest parallel is probably the once famous *Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare*. The relative values of the originals and the rewrites is much the same in both cases.

MacDonald's admirer C. S. Lewis has had poor work of doubtful authenticity attributed to him, and this deeply concerns many people, who fear that it will diminish the influence of his Christian writings.<sup>18</sup> This is a serious matter, but only a few of Lewis's works currently in print come into this category. Moreover it is not a category which is excessively promoted. By contrast, many times more copies of the rewrites of MacDonald's novels are now sold than of the unexpurgated versions. This is not a consequence of readers exercising their free choice. Because of massive promotion, very many bookstores in America only stock or supply the rewrites, and most readers do not realise the ready availability of the unexpurgated editions of Johannesen and of Michael Phillips (Sunrise) from good bookstores or direct from the publishers



## Notes

1. MacDonald's aims with his Wingfold trilogy are examined in outline by Rolland Hein in *George MacDonald: Victorian Mythmaker* (280-82, 305-07, 375-77).
2. *Wisdom to Live By* is one of Phillips' second-generation MacDonald anthologies, where a large number of the very brief quotations are from his own rewrites of MacDonald's words.
3. A speciality of Baron Tauchnitz's publishing house at Leipzig was publishing first editions of English works in Germany, primarily for copyright purposes.
4. Polwarth is speaking colloquially and concisely to a friend who shares a similar outlook and in its context the meaning of the passage is perfectly clear. The added words may be helpful for understanding it out of context. Raeper observes that: "Comparing versions and commenting on different Greek texts was a pursuit [MacDonald] enjoyed" (246). **[66]**
5. One revised edition of *Sir Gibbie* is justifiable. A large part of most of MacDonald's Scottish novels is devoted to the hero's boyhood. These adult novels can be abridged into fine stories for children, and this has been done by Kathryn Lindskoog in her prize-winning adaptation of *Sir Gibbie*.
6. The fanatical equation of "purity" with sterility is challenged by C. S. Lewis in many of his writings, most powerfully in his depiction of the Italian Futurist scientist Filostrato in *That Hideous Strength*. Interestingly, an abridged version of this book has been published. But the original does not possess an internal structure which precludes such condensing and, equally importantly, the (reluctant) abridger was the author himself.
7. William Burnside claims that "MacDonald's world view, his values, and his unique style are preserved intact" in rewrites (117). The present author has seen most of the rewrites, and Burnside's astonishing claim is not justified for any of them.
8. "Freudian" is used here in its popular everyday sense where it is applied to interpretations based almost wholly upon assumed sexual inadequacies.
9. See, for example Wilkie Collins's short story "Mr Policeman and the Cook."
10. The symmetrical structure, of biblical chapters and its importance is particularly brought out in a work such as Bullinger's *The Companion Bible*.
11. This sermon is a very curious keystone indeed. As Triggs shows, a central theme of the sermon and the book is the Great Chain of Being. This concept was revived in England in the Renaissance by John Dee, who was the teacher of Sir Philip Sidney—one of MacDonald's heroes. Wingfold, however, incorporates concepts, such as that of metempsychosis, which Dee and Sidney would never have countenanced. A study of the development of Wingfold's character subsequent to the events described in *Thomas Wingfold* must be left for a future paper.
12. MacDonald uncharacteristically derives Barbara, one of the most attractive of all his heroines, from another author's novel. This "tiny" "resolute" New Zealander resembles the "tiny" "resolute" Australian, Nettie Underwood, of Margaret Oliphant's story "The Doctor's Family." MacDonald splits Nettie into two characters.



Nettie's forbearance towards her "couch-potato" sister is powerfully reflected in the altitude of MacDonald's hero's half-sister towards her couch-potato mother. One of MacDonald's reason for making Barbara such a very attractive character, seems to be so that she can endorse with enthusiasm some highly questionable behaviour of Wingfold's.

13. MacDonald did not possess the trust in the details of a actual symbolic landscape exhibited by his friend Lewis Carroll in describing Alice's spiral journeys through Oxford in *Through the Looking-Glass*, nor that displayed by John Cowper Powis, who, in *A Glastonbury Romance*, is faithful in his every topographical detail to the actual Glastonbury.

14. Blake in turn derives this imagery of the gates, via Porphyry, from the Cave of the Nymphs visited by Odysseus. J.R.R. Tolkien, in *The Lord of the Rings*, describes a strikingly similar private gate opening into the Old Forest, part of the marches of Faerie (124-25).

15. MacDonald's character Mara in *Lilith* alludes to the Book of Ruth. Mara is the name Naomi temporarily adopts when she returns to Bethlehem after her husband and [67] two sons have died (Ruth 1.20). MacDonald's Mara ambiguously explains: "Some people take me for Lot's wife, lamenting over Sodom; and some think I am Rachel, weeping for her children; but I am neither of those" (79).

16. MacDonald's *Lilith* is based, of course, upon this figure from the Cabala. At the end of *Lilith* he makes a covert allusion to Blake's Vala in her role of guardian of the false New Jerusalem (Erdman 332) where he describes the guardian of the gate to the Holy City (261, 387). Other figures too can be recognised in Emmeline's mother. For example she seems to display traits borrowed from Mammon's daughter in *The Faerie Queen* (2.7.44-50).

17. Richard Reis ("Wandering Jew" 10) shows that the Wandering Jew episodes are to some extent integrated into the overt plot of *Thomas Wingfold*, even though they at first appear to be a wholly arbitrary digression into fantasy.

18. The evidence for Lewis forgeries is explored in Lindskoog's *Light in the Shadowlands*.

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