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A “TESOL” Application of Three George MacDonald Fairy Tales

F. Hal Broome

Given George MacDonald’s fluency in German, not to mention dabbings in Greek, Italian, Dutch, even Hebrew, then it stands to reason his writings might have a place among international schools with their bilingual students. Not only does he drop the odd word here and there in a foreign language, he incorporates foreign concepts related to language: for example, the German *unheimlich*, “uncanny,” that literally means “out of the house.” Thus his characters leave their cottages and castles to encounter the uncanny world of Fairyland. It would not be difficult to come up with other examples, particularly in Greek.

The object of this article is to report how MacDonald’s writings have been used in an advanced placement English Language class populated by non-native English speakers.

1. The School and Students

Escuela Internacional Sampedrana (EIS), currently celebrating its fiftieth anniversary, is located in San Pedro Sula, Honduras, where the native language is Spanish. As a bilingual school, courses are taught mainly in English, except, of course, for complementary Spanish language courses. The students of my AP English course are screened 11th and 12th graders combined into a single class of twenty. The majority have attended EIS since pre-school, although some have transferred from other Central American bilingual schools. San Pedro Sula is the industrial capital of Honduras, and therefore a large percentage of the student body comes from the upper levels of the socio-economic classes, but it also reflects the immigrant groups drawn to the clothing factories. Thus the classroom has not only native Hondurans but second and third generations of Arabic, German and Jewish descent, as well as those who have come from neighbouring Latin American countries. Only one pupil, a son of another teacher from the United States, is a native speaker of English.

2. The Problem

An immediate cause of my devoting the first bimester of the AP English Course to MacDonald was the harrowing absence of the textbook ordered

the year before. Therefore, I turned to that precious resource, the Internet and downloaded three George MacDonald fairy tales to be copied out and distributed to the students. MacDonald was the subject of my Ph.D thesis, and I therefore had enough knowledge of him to design a course on the run. But what to teach about him?

After discussions with the students and a preliminary diagnostic essay on an unrelated subject, I perceived a weakness in their analytical abilities. Furthermore, while they were interested in “literary criticism”—due to the presence of the other AP English course in the school, AP Literature, that a large **[end of page 21]** part of the seniors had taken the year previously—their knowledge of literary criticism was confined to simple commentaries, and lacked any knowledge of mainstream critical theory. Added to this was the common failing of most Latin American schools as described by Paulo Freire in his famous essay “The Banking System of Education”: the students were so immersed in the habit of taking notes from the teachers and parroting them back that they lacked not only initiative but basic analytical abilities. They were bright, but stifled creatively. Local teachers tend to use worksheets that do not change from year to year—so the students are uneasy when actually asked to *have* their own opinions.

So I drew upon a section of my Ph.D thesis (“The Science-Fantasy of George MacDonald,” Edinburgh, 1985) in which I had analysed “Cross Purposes,” “The Golden Key” and “The History of Photogen and Nycteris,” by comparing and contrasting their common structure. These tales are not only readily accessed in their outlines but are complex enough to be amenable to most theoretical approaches of literary criticism, and Harold Bloom’s taxonomy gave me leave to work toward analysis with compare-and-contrast. Another concern, rather unfortunate, centred around plagiarism: lack of creativity, and a casual attitude among the students, made plagiarism a tempting practice; but while a great deal about MacDonald exists on the Internet (in part thanks to the George MacDonald Society and its excellent website) my work on the three tales was not there, and I would in any case recognise plagiarism of my own published work. The students therefore were forced to rely on their own resources.

The results of that first bimester were encouraging to the point that I decided to keep it in the curriculum this second year with a bit of refinement, namely the addition of another textbook, *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*, (Wilfred L. Guerin et al. 4th ed. New York: Oxford UP, 1998). But the materials in general are accessible to any teacher in an international school with Internet access. So I offer an account of my MacDonald bimester with

the hopes that others will give it a try in their own school and offer tweaks and observations of their own. Furthermore, it seems to me that this procedure would also be valid in any classroom where a teacher wants to expand students' analytical abilities, bilingual or not.

3. The Procedure

Upon entering the classroom the students are issued the *Handbook of Critical Approaches* and a list of some sixty “vocabulary words” (technical terms used in the AP English Language standardised test that they are required to take near the end of the school year); examples include “asyndeton,” “irony,” “metaphor” and so on). As they cast a baleful eye on the rather forbidding materials, I give a short lecture on the various schools of criticism (Psychological, including Freudian and Jungian; Formalism; Feminism; Structuralism; Marxist; and so on). In the ensuing discussion students are asked to pick an approach that particularly appeals to them. For these students, who have no previous experience of any analytical study, this at the very least keeps them from feeling overwhelmed by new and strange material. In groups, or singly, they are assigned relevant chapters in the *Handbook* that cover one specific approach, and are told to [22] prepare an oral presentation of the material to the class in the ensuing classes. They are also given appropriate supplementary material, carefully picked to highlight aspects of MacDonald's fairy tales: several Freudian essays, including “The Uncanny,” “On the Presence of Fairy-tale Material in Dreams,” and his “The Antithetical Meaning of Primal Words”; a few essays by Claude Levi-Strauss, a feminist approach to *Frankenstein*; and so on. No one student reads all these supplementary essays, just the appropriate group or single student that has chosen that approach. Two students, instead of receiving a supplementary essay, are instead each given an essay by MacDonald for their oral report: “The Imagination: Its Function and its Culture” and “The Fantastic Imagination,” both from *A Dish of Orts*. Again, these are easily found on the Internet.

The next lesson holds a small surprise. The students enter rather fearfully, dreading more technical terms and lofty concepts, but instead are told—a fairy tale. I use my own truncated version of “Hansel and Gretel” that has a basic plot:

The two children have a woodcutter father and an evil stepmother who urges her husband to take them out in the woods and lose them because they are all starving. Gretel gets her loaf of bread and leaves a trail that the birds eat, and after being abandoned

the children come across a gingerbread house with the evil witch inside. Hansel pushes her into the oven and the children run away and come across the prosperous farm of a childless couple who adopt them.

The incredulous looks of the students are increased by my very physical rendering of the tale, using different voices for the different characters and vigorously kicking the air when the witch is pushed in the oven.

After this unexpected diversion I ask the students to take out a piece of paper and “give me the meaning” of the story. This causes a bit of a flurry, as the students are not quite sure what I mean, but I refuse to elaborate. As their brows lower and their erasers rub, I stalk the rows looking at the answers but careful not to give much feedback, unless a student is truly stumped. Time up, volunteers go to the front of the class and deliver their judgements. The general assessment is invariably a moral such as “don’t trust strangers.” I can always count on this specific answer as a sad Central American reality for this group is that at least one family member (even perhaps the student) has been kidnapped and held to ransom for money. But another aspect, more universal, is that the students are eager to give me what they think I want to hear, so a few sharper students put two and two together and make a stab at a critical approach: “all the women except the farmer’s wife appear weak or bad,” “abandoning your children will leave you sad,” and so on. One student pointed out the presence of three houses —”Aha!” I finally respond. This is my chance to go up to the board and draw the three houses in a single row and discuss the similarities and differences: “the first and last houses hold a couple,” “the middle house holds a lone witch, and this, unlike the other two houses is unnatural—how many gingerbread houses are there in woods?” and so on. I am, of course, modelling for the students the comparative approach I will be foisting on them. I also point out an opposition between the natural houses of the couples and the “supernatural home of the witch. “Well,” the students will then ask, “what is the meaning?” Rather than answer I simply reply, “let’s look at the motifs and find [23] out.” I then retell the story, writing these words on the board: “starving,” “loaf of bread,” “breadcrumbs,” “birds eating the crumbs,” “cannibal witch,” and, of course, “gingerbread.”

“Ah!” the now-excited students shout, “it’s about FOOD!” The excitement soon dies down however. “How did you know that?” “It can mean something other than that, can’t it?” “How do you know that the person who came up with the story meant that?” These are valid points, of course, but valuable in the sense that the students are beginning to glimpse that fairy tales

might have something hidden in them to be found out. Therefore, at this point, I hand out the first MacDonald fairy tale “Cross Purposes,” and give them this assignment: “hand in next week a three-page draft of what this fairy tale means. Extra credit will be given to those who use their new vocabulary of technical terms when talking about MacDonald.”

The following classes are full of doubt and despair. The students have never before written an essay of more than a page (some 250 words). Accustomed to pat answers and firm feedback, they are adrift as the class continues on to other topics: the vocabulary words (on which they are tested) and the presentations on critical approaches. I also show them a rather good two-part documentary video on Carl Jung that leaves them more mystified than mysticised. As expected, the students are also busily searching the Internet for any help toward the meaning of “Cross Purposes,” and are doing their best to pump me for further information. My replies are as cryptic as I can make them. They now know MacDonald was a preacher and wrote fairy tales, but what do a goblin and a fairy have to do with religion?

On the due date of the first assignment the students read out their findings. As adolescents, they home in on the romantic relationship between Richard and Alice easily enough, and a few even take their first steps at the critical approaches by finding archetypes here and there. I then go to the board again and refresh their memory of “Hansel and Gretel” by drawing the three houses again and asking: “what houses are in MacDonald’s story?” In their responses the students, on their own, should identify that “Cross Purposes” begins in normal homes, goes to the supernatural wood with its supernatural house, and returns to the normal houses again. Here suspicion darkens the class—“that’s just a coincidence, right?”

“Hmm,” I reply with a raised eyebrow, “let’s see.” I then hand out the next MacDonald story, “The Golden Key” and assign three more pages on the meaning of that particular story, “You might find it helpful,” I remark, “to see if you can find that same pattern in this story.”

At this stage my tactics in the daily classroom change. Current theory in TESOL (teaching English to speakers of other languages) confirms the second language learner’s need for feedback, so I make folders for each student and call them individually to bring their drafts up to my table. I avoid giving any hint as to content, but do take what they have written and cross out huge sections—usually the opening and closing of the paper. Unless I see a student is “on to something” and want to encourage it, I ignore all issues of content and grammar. [24]

The students should now have gone beyond doubt and suspicion and be on the verge of not merely trauma, but outright mutiny. “How come we have to read all these fairy tales? How can they possibly help us? Why are you not lecturing to us and making us read this silly stuff instead.” In this I like to think I am hearing echoes of the complaints that MacDonald may himself have heard, and answered in his essay on fairy tales. However, unlike his audience, mine is convinced by convention that a classroom without lectures is a classroom where they are not learning!

“Just wait and give it a chance” is about all I can offer. I do, however, start making connections with the oral presentations that are on-going, by interrupting the presenter at an appropriate moment with a Socratic question. “So, the German word for uncanny means to go out of the houses—do any of the children in these stories go out of their house?” “So, sometimes figures in fairy tales are split—do you see any such splits in ‘The Golden Key?’” Different students will glean different points at different times, but one by one they will start to express an interest. A few will proudly come before the due date with an “aha” expression and say, “I think the two children die in this story and go to heaven!” A budding feminist will protest Tangle’s condition (and in return receive a short response from me about MacDonald’s rare attempt to dare teach chemistry to young ladies. This is sure to send the young lady off to do some research on MacDonald).

When the due date of the “Golden Key” essay arrives, again I have volunteers read their analyses of the story; and again we look at the general patterns we found in the stories so far. Daring to offer more in-depth analyses, I throw out various bits such as MacDonald’s known attraction to Darwinism and even my controversial find of references to chemistry within the stories. The students are still resistant, but are beginning to begrudge the presence of all these darn patterns. In the one-to-one discussions I see more analysis, especially around the most visible feature, the famed central female highlighted by Robert Lee Wolff.

“You are doing well,” I proudly announce to the class, who still have then-doubts, “so this should not be much of a challenge—here is the last story. Instead of three pages, why don’t you take what you have written about the previous two, compare it with this last one, and combine them all into a ten-page essay in which you follow the patterns of critical approach in all three stories at once?” On their desks the long story of Photogen pllops resoundingly!

Should you have missed the previous doubt, suspicion or hostility, I guarantee you will notice its presence here! Yet something has changed. No

longer are students protesting that fairy tales do not have hidden themes; rather, they are finding all sorts of astonishing parallels and cranking out more crackpot theories than a graduate English seminar. My job now as a teacher is to keep them from going too far afield in speculation, and to highlight the valid observations. But the fact that the many approaches yielded different results (sometimes on the very same words) allowed them to see the multiplicity of meaning and the actual density of works they wanted to dismiss as “juvenile” at first. They remarked how “new” it felt to actually read deeply into a work.

I [25] expected some argument over meaning, but they seemed so enthralled over this new richness that there seemed to be room for everyone’s opinion.

As it is a bilingual classroom a check also has to be made on the idiomatic appropriateness of the wording the students use. Another bilingual issue is confronting a title such as “Cross Purposes vs. The Golden Key vs. The History Photogen and Nycteris.” This is a comparison, I gently respond, not a battle. I am finding better structuring of the papers as a whole, and so the student protesting my cutting his paper up is now protesting “you didn’t cut my paper up!” This assures me that in the next bimester I can start addressing usage more and structure less. Another gain!

The due date of the last paper features an end-of-the-bimester surprise. Having sharpened their teeth on MacDonald, I do not want them to think that what they are doing is merely confined to him, or even to literature. So against the expected groans I assign one more one-page paper. “I am taking you to the library to see a movie, please give me your thoughts on what you see in this movie compared to what the fairy tales contained.” The movie? The classic *The Wizard of Oz*. Most, but not all, have seen this movie; but now they are looking at it with different eyes, and from a MacDonald perspective. “There’s a witch in a castle!” “Look, the glass globe of the humbug that she sees before entering Oz is repeated many times within Oz, like Glinda’s travelling globe, the mighty Oz’s face in the globe, and the witch’s globe!” “Hey, she’s singing about a RAINBOW like in “The Golden Key!” A few are even excited to note for the first time that the actors who play the farm hands have become Dorothy’s companions in Oz. To my (pleasant) surprise, rather than a begrudged one-page paper, many of the students extended their analyses on their own initiative to several pages.

Having worn down the students with this crash course in literary criticism, I also encountered an unexpected result. ‘Mee-ster!’ a student may address you as she did me. “Why did you do all this to me? Now I can’t read a fairy tale *without seeing all this stuff*” A valid point maybe. But I refer such

a student to MacDonald's comment that people see different things in a fairy tale because they bring their own unique perspectives and development to the tale; she should find comfort in the fact that she is now seeing more: she has grown.

Some of the Results

[Editorial comment: It is not possible, of course, to print all the essays here, only extracts illustrating the range of the students' approaches to the MacDonald stories. There is considerable variation amongst the students in their command of the English language, and the extracts are printed as they were written except for correction of obvious accidental typos. As Dr Broome has mentioned above, the students had fallen into "the habit of taking notes from the teachers and parroting them back [so] that they lacked not only initiative but basic analytical abilities. They were [. . .] stifled creatively." Under no circumstances could this have been rectified completely for all the students in one bimester. New approaches, moreover, as Dr Broome mentions, are at first taken up uncritically, their limitations only gradually becoming recognised over a long period of time. When this background is recognised, and the obligation for Dr Broome to work within the guidelines of the Advanced Placement English Language Course, it is evident [26] that his experiment has been very worthwhile. We hope to publish a further sample from the essays on the MacDonald Society website.]

i. a student from a background where English is regularly spoken

Nature is the binding element in *The History of Photogen and Nycteris*, *The Golden Key*, and *Cross Purposes*. It is the omnipresent theme that entwines these three stories together. Nature does not limit itself to be the scenario where these tales take place; it in fact converges with the characters' lives, influencing, motivating and affecting them. Nature may be rendered in different ways depending on the story, but it is always the quintessential force that drives the three tales.

Is Nature in these three tales real or imaginative? Is it figurative or literal? In *Cross Purposes* and *The Golden Key*, Nature exists as Fairyland; a mystical world where anything is possible. Fairyland is a dream world, therefore Nature is attributed with fantastic and supernatural qualities. Restrictions of the earthly world are not applicable to Fairyland, thus, Nature is oblivious to time and space—obliviousness the characters indulge in when entering the Fairylands of *Cross Purposes* and *The Golden Key*. Characters in this fantastic Nature are able to sleep underwater, watch mountains vanish

and rise, and speak to animals.

Unlike the idyllic nature portrayed in *Cross Purposes* and *The Golden Key*, *The History of Photogen and Nycteris* depicts a realistic Nature. Its characters are not in a dream world but in the real world. Nature is seen objectively; and although its elements are sometimes personified: “The wind came howling after him, filled with screams...”, these are mere rhetorical devices. The characters in this tale, like Nature, are affected by time and space; the day is the day and the night is the night. Magic in Nature in *The History of Photogen and Nycteris* exists solely through the characters admiration of it, unlike magic in *Cross Purposes* and *The Golden Key*, where it is ever-present.

One can either dominate Nature or be surrendered to it. The characters in *Cross Purposes* and *The Golden Key* lose themselves in the fantastical luring of Nature as the Fairyland. Nature in fact plays with them, leading them through a journey dominated by her. Nature only exists in an imaginary and dreamlike fashion and runs its own course. In *The History of Photogen and Nycteris*, on the contrary, it is Watho who dares to play with Nature. She uses Photogen and Nycteris to experiment with day and night. Watho is like a modern Prometheus, experimenting with Nature as the Titan had done with fire. Science is beginning to emerge in this tale, for example the telescope and Watho’s experimentations.

Characters are not only affected by Nature in the three stories, they sometimes represent it. In *The History of Photogen and Nycteris*, Watho contains within herself a werewolf, which can be deemed as a natural impulse. The wolf represents that animal instinct present in all of us, that instinctual impulse so often mentioned by Sigmund Freud in his works. In Watho’s case the wolf is an evil force, which she attempts to control. Watho has had the wolf repressed, just as humans repress their natural impulses, but in the end, the wolf takes a hold of her, just as humans, according to Freud, regress to their natural instincts...

An indisputable theme in the three stories is the discoveries all the characters make, not only of Nature, but due to Nature as well. In *The History of Photogen and Nycteris*, both characters discover worlds they have been kept from. Photogen discovers the night, with all of its terrors and darkness, Nycteris discovers the outside world that existed apart from her cave, and she then discovers the sun. In *The Golden Key*, Mossy and Tangle discover the life and death. In *Cross Purposes*, Alice and Richard discover love. Now these discoveries are made because all the characters,

consciously or unconsciously, longed for an escape from their reality. They escaped through and to Nature. Photogen and Nycteris escaped from their controlled environments to the unruly Nature. In doing so, they unveil aspects of themselves and confront their own weaknesses. Richard escapes his reality of poorness, and enters a supernatural world where this does not matter. Alice escapes her prosaic, boring life when deciding to enter Fairyland In The Golden Key, however, Mossy and Tangle are not really escaping, just searching for something. Whatever their motives are, all the characters embark upon the adventure of Nature, whether this Nature is an earthly one or a fantastic one; this [27] adventure is the one responsible for their discoveries of not only nature itself, but discoveries of themselves as well.

One tends to consider Nature as just the stage where lives occur, but in the three fairy tales there is a palpable force that intervenes with the characters; it is ever-present in all aspects of characters' journeys. Nature is not just the surroundings in these journeys, it is not a mere stage, it is the journey itself. The History of Photogen and Nycteris, The Golden Key, and Cross Purposes not only revolve around nature, but Nature consists a world in itself. A world where everything is related to life, and to death as well.

ii. focusing upon the oppositions in the stories

...It is so, that by teaching unfamiliar concepts through the use of familiar opposing concepts MacDonald is able to spread the 'good word' that comes from "the hand of the Father of lights" (p. 99), or "The one good that is invisible and everywhere" (p. 82) as MacDonald names a higher entity in his fairytale "The Day Boy and the Night Girl". So it is perfectly safe to state that George MacDonald's goal is none other than the philanthropic goal of communicating salvation, which is more obvious in the fairytale "the Golden Key". Being this true, one can appreciate the moral value of the fairy tales in a more abstract sense rather than what to many seems to be a catastrophic flow of imagination put down on paper. To fully appreciate what George MacDonald writes, one must pursue the theme, deep within the lines where the unnatural and the supernatural meet.

When building his fairytales, MacDonald uses one same structure hidden behind his works. In all his fairytales MacDonald pairs opposites that he separates inside of his fairytales, giving them a polarity set up through equal, but opposing thoughts. MacDonald usually pairs the male realm with the female realm, which play a governing role in his fairytale "Cross Purposes". He also pairs the good and the bad, which is the overlying theme

in the fairytale “The Golden Key”, and many other pairs as the supernatural with the natural, or the conscious mind and the unconscious mind, just as he does pair many others. Through all these pairs, Gorge MacDonald teaches about love, salvation, and God’s role in our lives, within the three fairytales at discussion.

The first fairytale is called “Cross Purposes”. This fairytale tells the story of two kids (one male and one female) whose imperfect nature is sought to amuse the perfect beings in fairytale land, thus framing the first two oppositions, Two agents that resemble their subconscious nature, hereby stating two other oppositions, lure the two kids away from their natural world into the supernatural fairyland. Both opposites come together in fairyland and are forced to develop a mutual feeling of care between them while withstanding obstacles in an endeavour to come back to reality. A reality which they so willingly left in a search for a better place, fact that creates an opposition between ideas, and also indicates development of the same. While enduring difficulties and misfortunes the guiding force between the little kids is that mutual feeling that did sprout in times in times of need. At the end, the two kids return back to their normal, natural state of life, at the same instant they left, which leads into thinking that their entire journey to fairyland was a dream, or a journey to the subconscious. The only factor that differs from the time they left is that when the kids come back, they find themselves bonded by love...

iii. focusing upon love and upon the author

The main theme that I found in the three essays written by George MacDonald was love. He uses different types of love in each story, and different ways to express the love. My paper is on the different types of love MacDonald uses in his story. The different types are sexual, forbidden, newly found, and introduced love.

Before I start my actual paper, I would like to give a little background about the three stories. First I will start with the author George MacDonald. George MacDonald was once in love with a woman that he “was not good enough for.” She was in a higher social class than Richard, and it were not well looked upon to marry a man in a lower class than you. I believe [28] that it is because of this one love that he writes these stories. His stories are dreams or wishes about getting that one girl he could never get He later got married to his wife that he was married to until his death.

MacDonald’s first love story, “Cross Purposes” was written about forbidden love. [. . .] While the two characters are in fairyland, or rather a

dreamland, Richard falls in love with the beauty of Alice. At first Alice did not want anything to do with Richard because he wasn't her type of guy. Later after she becomes dependant upon Richard to get her home she begins to fall in love with him. It is at the end of the trip that you find out that the love they have for each other is forbidden. You find this out when the two characters end up back in their hometown and tell each other that they cannot be seen together in town, only in fairyland, also known as dreamland...

iv. consciousness and unconsciousness

...When we try to gaze for similarities we find that Richard was conscious, Mossy and Photogen were also conscious as well. Another similarity these stories have is that the masculine protagonists got lost searching for something material; an umbrella, "the golden key", searching for a prey, maybe a tiger. They all tried to attain their goals in a conscious state.

Alternatively the female characters had also their similarities and differences. Tangle, the female character in "The Golden Key", had a disorderly life at home; they did not take good care of her. Meanwhile Alice, from "Cross Purposes", had a nice life, she had a high position in her social class and was treated well. Finally Nycteris had a gloomy life by being threatened like a kind of "bat" who could only enjoy the dark night. On the other hand both Cross Purposes and The Golden Key had very similar beginnings. Alice was staring at her wall at night wishing that there would never be a sunset, desiring to go some place, and a fairy told her she could take her there. In The Golden Key, Tangle was in her bedroom also at night, thinking as if she was hearing "bear voices", so she decided to escape from her room and headed to "somewhere", she just ran. In "The History", Nycteris escaped from her room following the great lamp (moon), which she thought of like God, she loved it more than her life. Finally what occurred was that they got lost searching for something "spiritual" during the night; the girls were totally lost, they had no idea where they were or where they were going to...

v. relating the Old Men of "The Golden Key" to the Trinity

...These three men are a symbolic representation of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. MacDonald as a preacher wished to transmit his teachings to the children through his tales. The Old Man of the Sea is the Holy Spirit because it brings ease and tranquillity to Tangle with the bath that symbolises baptism. Then, the Old Man of the Earth is the Father. He always had

something to do so was the father when he created the Earth. Finally, the Old Man of the Fire is the Son, Jesus Christ. He had a deep heart just like Jesus had. He also took away Tangle's feeling of burning which could be symbolised as purifying her and cleaning up her sins...

vi. the Freudian *id*

...The *id* also forms part of the stories of George MacDonald. For example, in "The History of Photogen and Nycteris", Photogen is driven by this *id* to look for something that is unknown to him, to look for something that Watho has prevented him to see, it is an impulse to obtain satisfaction. The same happens to Nycteris. Nycteris keeps going out of her room and does this with a lot of cunning so she cannot get caught and be prevented to see this strange round object which gives her satisfaction or pleasure.

In "The Golden Key", Mossy is in the search of a key. He finds the key but is not satisfied until he finds the keyhole that while fit the key. Mossy spent a lot of years looking for this [29] inaccessible hole, but he had an impulsion that made him move forward and keep looking for it.

In "Cross Purposes", both Alice and Richard are driven to look for an exit of that horror place in which they are. They are impulse by the sense of wanting to live.

vii. sexual stereotyping of women

...Also, in Photogen and Nycteris. Watho, the witch, desired to know everything, "...The wiser a witch is, the harder she knocks her head against the wall when she comes to it Her name was Watho, and she had a wolf in her mind. She cared for nothing in itself—only for knowing it. She was not naturally cruel, but the wolf had made her cruel." Here MacDonald criticizes the interest and desire of women to learn and describes this desire as a wolf which eventually makes her become upset because it is not acceptable to society's norms for her, a woman, to learn. Society's norms and ideals are portrayed here as a wall, a barrier, something that blocks or makes it hard for her to learn. This crashing unto the wall are also the collisions of society's norms with the disobedience of rebel females who want to learn. [...]

In Cross Purposes, [...] Alice is entrapped in her rose colored world which she keeps wanting since the beginning of the story This desire of a rose colored world is what convinces her to go with Peaceblossom to fairyland, because she promises her a rose colored world. This rose colored world is the typical female stereotype of how they should act and live at home. Alice wants to live in this

rose colored world because it is safer, here MacDonald again criticizes society's norms towards women by making Alice drown in her wishes of staying away from trouble. Staying away from trouble meaning that not going against society's stated norms. [...]

In The Golden Key the lady represents more power than Tangle, but when the golden key appears she is no longer as powerful as the man who holds the key, the man being Mossy, Here the key represents power, more power. MacDonald here depicts the idea that women might be gaining power, but they will not be more powerful than men still. [...]

Later on in the story [...] when we see the running wild horses' shadows, one can assume at that shadow represents the anxiety of [repressed] ideas to be expressed clearly and but are stopped by society's norms and morality and its rights and wrongs.

Our surroundings usually have a great role in forming our personality and ideals and they have a great influence on everything that we do and say. All the ideas and movements that were flowing at the time influenced MacDonald when he wrote his stories. MacDonald had the need of expressing his opinion indirectly towards these issues that surrounded his daily life; issues that were meant to redefine the accepted ideas of masculinity and femininity. **[30]**