

George MacDonald

The Urth list — 2 messages, 2 voices, 22 Jan 2003

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Nigel Price — 22 Jan 2003, 12:35

Tami Whitehead wrote:

((Honestly, I read Doors, and just sat and scratched my head for a day or so. It reminded me a bit of Lilith, by ol' what's his name, friend and contemporary of C S Lewis etc...rats, what's his name, but you know the one, Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe for adults, with a tad un-orthodox Christian symbolism...))

I suppose, strictly speaking, George Macdonald (1824-1905) and C S Lewis (1898-1963) overlapped by about seven years, but you wouldn't normally call them "contemporaries".

Years ago, I did a dissertation on Macdonald and read all his fantasy novels and stories and a chunk of his literary criticism and mainstream Victorian fiction too. To quote one of my children's favourite phrases, "it did my head in." Some of his stories were good - I liked "The Golden Key" for example - but most of his work is verbose, poorly structured and mawkishly sentimental. Some of it is also, frankly, perverse. I never did really understand what Lewis saw in him.

So imagine my horror when I read the following in Nutria's interview with Wolfe ("That's his name Jim, but not spelt as we know it!"):

JJ: Now you are reading George McDonald?

GW: Yes, Lilith. I had not read anything except Curdie and the Goblin and At the Back of the North Wind and those types, and they are quite good but they are basically fairy stories. I had read others that were about that good, but I don't think they had any great theological impact, any great feeling from that standpoint.

I agree entirely with Wolfe's verdict on the main body of Macdonald's work, but, frustratingly, he doesn't say what he thought of "Lilith". Now that you mention it, though, I can see some points of overlap for Wolfe. Other worlds, ambiguous goddess/queens...and Lilith, if I recall, has some inhuman-like characteristics...She turns into a blood sucking white slug or worm at night. As in the famous C L Moore story "Shambleau", however, MacDonald is deliberately vague...Oh dear, how do I put this?...about what it is exactly that Lilith sucks...

I do apologise for that.

Love Wolfe, don't like most MacDonald.

Nigel

Andy Robertson — 22 Jan 2003, 13:19 · follows Nigel Price

He he he . . .

I love MacDonald,

But I agree, he's DEFINITELY kinky.

But it's the Goddess, you see. Mother R*d**bt. :)

She demands the status of divinity.

And if you won't worship her, she turns into a soul/semen-sucking Lilith - or an evil Mother in the sea.

Actually Macdonald's most joyful and peaceful Fairy-Stories are the CURDIE books, which contain a wonderful image of the Lady. He was from time to time able to recognise her divinity without guilt or fear. Wolfe has never quite managed it.

Andy R

----- Original Message -----

From: "Nigel Price" <nigel.a.price at virgin.net>

T

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