

Mariana Leaves the Moated Grange: The Social Revolutionary Ethics in *Weighed and Wanting*

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In 1862 the *Cornhill Magazine* published Ruskin's essay "*Ad Valorem, Unto This Last*."¹ This was the last of a series of essays on Political Economy which Ruskin had published in the journal since 1860. They provoked a disapproving public reaction—the *Saturday Review* commented that Smith, Ricardo and Mill deserved better treatment than to "be preached to death by a mad governess,"² and the editor, Thackeray, refused the publication of any further essays.

Ruskin had a very high opinion of the essay; he thought that of all his writings this one should be preserved. His evaluation turned out to be the correct one, for by 1894 *Unto this Last* was described as the best-read work of "the most popular author who deals with political economy and sociology."³ The essay sketches the vision of a society whose production and consumption are mere components of a wholly moral economy. True wealth, Ruskin argues, is "*the possession of the valuable by the valiant*,"⁴ and:

*There is no wealth but life. Life, including all its powers of love, of joy, and of admiration . . . [T]hat man is richest who, having perfected the functions of his own life to the utmost, has also the widest helpful influence, both personal, and by means of his possessions, over the lives of others.*⁵

In the final part of the essay Ruskin demands the engagement of men whose work—contrary to the essentially restless character of business—exemplifies "the calm pursuits of peace," men who are "Peace-Creators; Givers of Calm." The creating of peace is the work of Wisdom who, as Ruskin notes, citing Proverbs 9.1 and 3.17:

"hath builded her house," and "hath hewn out her seven pillars," and even when, though apt to wait long at the doorposts, she hath to leave her house and go abroad, "her paths are peace" also.⁶

Ruskin finishes his study by referring to Matt. 20.1-16: "That bequest of peace shall be 'unto this last as unto thee.'"⁷ Here Ruskin does not only talk [end of page 25] about the utopian-eutopian "Epoch of Rest" which William Morris pictures in his *News From Nowhere* (1890),⁹ [Note: endnote

8 is missing from the original text] but also about a spiritual motif, most unusual in the contemporary discussions on political economy. An instructive parallel however may be found in the “Lectures on Divine Humanity” which were given by the Russian philosopher Vladimir Solovyov in the late 1870s at St. Petersburg. Divine Humanity, a cryptogram used by Solovyov for the figure of the Divine Sophia, he defines in a letter of 1892 as “we in God.”¹⁰ It is the unity of the true faith in God and the consequent faith in man. Solovyov opens his lecture by agreeing with “the modern opponents of religion”: “I admit that those who, at the moment, decline religion are right, because it does not appear in reality in its true sense.”¹¹ (Ruskin was one of those who declined. MacDonald did not: though he held the sceptic in high regard, he knew of “truths outstripping ratiocination” and “fought the fight that is won only by losing the life.”¹² He was in Solovyov’s view a truly faithful man.) The truth of socialism however is founded, according to Solovyov, upon appreciating the faith in man. Thus it is a faith which remains uncompleted. “But it therefore holds out and fully completes both the faith in God and the faith in man in the one full truth of the divine humanity.”¹³ Like Ruskin, Solovyov stresses a correlation between a social or economic principle and the idea of the Sophia, for according to him the rest of reality cannot be separated in any way either from religion or from the transcendent world, since the outside and the inside are one in their deepest structure.

The characteristic dynamism of this idea is shown towards the end of the 19th century in the motif of the “Aurora,” which the Russian Symbolists Belyi and Blok associate with Solovyov’s thinking. The socialist revolutionaries did the same, although they transferred the “Rising Dawn” from the dimension of a movement-into-timelessness into a time without ending—into “social security forever.”¹⁴

Solovyov—outside his own mystical experiences—continues the tradition of Böehme and the German Romantic movement, the same tradition which enabled MacDonald to interpret his own experience of reality. Ruskin, MacDonald and Solovyov concentrate upon both the wisdom tradition coming from Boehme and its social revolutionary millennial dimension. Solovyov defines it as ‘the unconditioned principal of morality’ and expounds:

In perfect inner correspondence with the highest will, and by allowing to all other beings an unconditional meaning or value **[26]** (as far as the image and mould of God are present also in them), take part in the work of perfecting yourself and all things

according to the definite revelation of the kingdom of God in this world!¹⁵

Or simply: “Behave to all things in the way of God!”¹⁶

According to Greville MacDonald it was his father’s encounter with Ruskin in 1863, immediately after the latter’s experience of “the cruel reception of his economic articles,” which opened MacDonald’s eyes to the problems of industrialism and the impoverishment of the masses. “Ruskin compelled him, as he has the rest of the world, to look facts in the face, as regards machinery and industrialism.”¹⁷ MacDonald dedicated several of his novels to the problem: *Guild Court* (1868); *Robert Falconer* (1868); *Sir Gibbie* (1879); *Weighed and Wanting* (1882). It is referred to in *St George and St Michael* (1876) *Thomas Wingfold* (1876), and *Lilith* (1895). *The Princess and Curdie* (1883) and *At the Back of the North Wind* (1871) deal with the same problem, especially in MacDonald’s representations of cities full of injustice and hostility.

Although MacDonald criticises the social defects of industrialism with the radicalism of a social revolutionary, he neither produces a recipe for altering them nor drafts a political system which should, once and for all, put an end to such inhumanity. Nor does he side with any such political system. He shows great respect for the complex character of reality in regard to social organisations and is sceptical about what was regarded as feasible. Greville stresses that his father stood out against Ruskin’s pessimism:

My father’s unqualified optimism kept strong within him the faith that, when all is revealed, the ignominies of man’s industrial progress may yet prove to be comprehended within the creative Will: that man may yet become a greater being than if the forbidden fruit had never been tasted. Ruskin lacked this prophetic hope.¹⁸

MacDonald’s optimism is not to be understood as the concept of a practicable “good society.” James A. Campbell has proposed: “Does not George MacDonald rather feel that ‘Industrialism’ may be valuable because, like other oppressions, it may lead to repentance?”¹⁹ MacDonald dissociates himself, too, from the Christian Socialism of F. D. Maurice. Although he agrees with him [27] in that, “when all men are Christians, the state will inevitably be communist, or perhaps cease to exist.”²⁰ In contrast to Maurice—who, though equally radical in politics, had somewhat more hope of systems and organised charity—he stresses that the crucial attitude “will be found in an individualism conscious that liberty is won only in self-denial

and the free sharing of all things.”²¹ MacDonald’s view, represented in his novels of social criticism, may be identified with that of Solovyov, pervaded by a mystical love of mankind.²²

In *Weighed and Wanting*²³ MacDonald pictures the fateful and distressing experiences of a Victorian family, especially of the eldest daughter, Hester. At the same time—in accordance with the growing tendency to symbolism in the author’s later novels,²⁴—the Raymounts represent the Family of Man. Hester, the protagonist of MacDonald’s socio-ethical ideas, represents every thing that true humanity may be and mean: an ideal of “Sisterhood” (25). In her, feministic as well as social revolutionary ideas are clarified, and artistic and mystical-religious vocations are pictured.

Weighed and Wanting is not a pleasant book to read. Robert Lee Wolff characterises the novel as “a sermon more or less.”²⁵ The very title strikes a sinister, prophetic note:

Mene: God has numbered the days of your kingdom and brought it to an end.

tekem: you have been weighed in the balance and been found wanting.

u-pharsin: your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and the Persians. (Daniel 5.26)

The explanation of this judgement is:

You have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze and iron, of wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor know, and you have not given glory to God, in whose charge is your very breath, and in whose hands are all your ways. (5.23)

The title also establishes MacDonald’s novel as a critique of contemporary society. The strained atmosphere within the Raymount family; the growing conflict of ideas between father and son, which changes from smouldering hatred into violence; the superficiality of Hester’s lover; Hester’s isolation; the social misery of the Franks family, finally vegetating in the cellar of the Raymounts’ town-house; the deaths of two children; all these things, seen [28] merely as elements of the plot, are oppressive. Almost torturing effects are produced by references to MacDonald himself and his family. There is a satirical parody of their performances of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* where Hester and her brother visit a magic-lantern performance staged by an alcoholic “like a broken-down clergyman” (17); there are elements of MacDonald in the portrayal of Mr Raymount himself; MacDonald refers to the fruitlessness of a moralising literature; and Hester’s

relationship with Lord Gartley is said to be a representation of the unhappy love story of MacDonald's eldest daughter Lilia, who refused to conform to social conventions by refraining from making public appearances as an actress (in *The Pilgrim's Progress*).²⁶

Stylistically the novel derives from MacDonald's attempt to combine fictional realism with symbolism, a combination which corresponds with his view of life and existence as being many-layered. It leads to some impressive and successful passages (such as the episode in the aquarium), but in some places the representation seems discordant.²⁷ The delineation of the characters also shows these discordant traits: some of them are conceived with a diagnostic perspicaciousness reminding one of Kierkegaard, some (such as Major Marvel) seem rather to be sketched in a Dickensian way.

As a whole, *Weighed and Wanting* is a highly complex and spiritually vigorous analysis of a society which, according to the title, venerates "gods of silver and gold" but does not venerate the God "in whose charge is your very breath." The materialistic-mechanistic world-view of that society is exemplified near the beginning. Hester's brother Cornelius, describing the low-sunk commentator on the *Pilgrim's Progress / Rake's Progress* slide-show, remarks: "Every manufacture has its waste, and he's human waste" (22). Reflecting this, when Hester mourns the ecological damage done by the waste of industrial production. Lord Gartley suggests that "the human rubbish of our great cities" is the worst waste (156). The pseudo-humanity of such remarks whitewashes over the very facts. What he calls "rubbish" is our own flesh and blood, as MacDonald stresses (20; 77; 156), and as he pictures in the rapid social decline of the Franks family of artists, whose desperate courage in the face of starvation he shows so impressively. But the corruption of this sort of society—which in promoting the idea of mechanical efficiency tends to prove that man himself is a mechanism²⁸—spreads from diverse sources. [29]

MacDonald calls the contempt of work "the worst evil of life in the judgement of both the man about Mayfair and the tramp in the casual ward" (10). He stresses the obsession with the idea of making money:

to look no more on life as the antechamber of the infinite, but as the counting-house . . . where you may, if you can, eat bread and honey, but where you must count your money!

This is an attitude which drives away family life and favours successful business over true attachment:

At the windows of the husband-house no more looks out the

lover but the man of business, who takes his life to consist in the abundance of things he possesses! He must make money for his children! (26)

He alludes to religious narrow-mindedness and spiritual arrogance in people who, when visiting the poor, follow their own pride and pharisaical self-satisfaction rather than imitating Christ (24). Moral blunting and indifference go hand-in-hand with these phenomena (26), symptomatic of the “passive nihilism” particularly present in the aristocratic circle MacDonald describes. He writes of Lord Gartley (Reginald Vavasor) and his aunt:

Vavasor was not one of the *advanced* of the age; he did not deny there was a God . . . [but he] cared more about the top of his cane than the God whose being he did not take the trouble to deny. He believed a little less than the maiden aunt with whom he lived; she believed less than her mother, and her mother had believed less than hers . . . Miss Vavasor went to church, because it was the right thing to do; God was one of the heads of society, and his drawing room had to be attended. (45-46)

The spiritual loss of sight through “that devil-fish The Commonplace” paralyses the individuals who are able to intervene helpfully, “while the tide of moral indifference [rises] fast to choke them” (26). The final lines of *Weighed and Wanting* vividly conjure up the image of the hireling who forsakes his flock:

The one who, weighed, is found wanting the most, is the one whose tongue and whose life do not match—who says: Lord! Lord! and does not the things the Lord says; the deacon who finds a good seat for the man in goodly apparel, and lets the poor widow stand in the aisle unheeded; the preacher who descants **[30]** upon the love of God in the pulpit, and looks out for a rich wife in his flock; the missionary who would save the heathen, but gives his own soul to merchandise; the woman who spends her strength on the poor and makes discord at home. (379)

MacDonald’s expositions are counter-examples to this. Like Solovyov’s, they could be called “lectures on divine humanity.” Understood as instructions to act practically, they represent a revolutionary laicised Christianity.

Weighed and Wanting draws upon an anthropology which interprets man as essentially unfathomable to himself. Typical of the sort of authorial comment throughout the novel is:

You take it for granted that you know your own heart because you call it yours, but I say that your heart is a far deeper thing than you know, or are capable of knowing. Its very nature is hid from you. (29)

According to this, MacDonald adds: “much the greater part of the being you call yours, is as unknown to you as the other side of the moon” (216). The inner history of man (his “rhythm of life”) likewise follows a law which is not rationally comprehensible:

much of every history must for the long present remain inexplicable. No man creates his history any more than he creates himself; he only modifies it—sometimes awfully. (48)

Consequently one should beware of judging one’s fellow-men: “the one thing the human faculty is least able to cope with is judgement” (156). Such comments appear in the context of an opposition to the rationally-enlightened understanding of the human soul. The Enlightenment outlook, by a more or less violent drawing-up of frontiers, closes off some of its potential dimensions: those which do not fit any accurately analysable identity—i.e. both the dimension which connects with the powers of Nature, and the dimensions of Blake’s Divine Humanity (the Logos-like imagination of Coleridge and the “God in every man” of MacDonald).²⁹ Just as Ruskin perceives a more truthful guide to the nature of man in beauty and art than in the “facts” of the theory of evolution, MacDonald comprehends imaginatively the nature of man as an unexplored continent which is yet clearly exposed to our eyes. His son Greville comments of his father and Ruskin: “Because of their vision which sees beyond the horizon of things, both were adventurers set out for an unknown yet to their eyes obvious land.”³⁰ According to the imagery of *Weighed and Wanting*, [31] the roots of the human heart reach down into the Heart Divine. This connection—“For the mere human is divine, though not *the* divine” (220)—may show itself to consciousness only as an impenetrable or mysterious darkness, Blake’s “deep and wondrous night.”³¹

In a remarkable parallel to Solovyov’s expositions, MacDonald uplifts evolutionary thinking on man’s aspiration to the realm of the divine. This, as a root and a possibility, makes the divine a human-divine reality. “Be developed into the divine idea of you” (216); or, again: “she was not yet all human, because she was not yet at home with the divine” (23).³² When that state of inner evolution defines the earthly being of man, it is characterised by need and desire:

whether the man knows it or not, his heart in its depths is ever crying out for God. Where the man does not know it, it is because the unfaithful Self, a would-be monarch, has usurped the consciousness. (29)

The real misery of society, therefore, does not exist in causes which may be understood by a rational analysis of social connections and interrelations; it concerns all those whose consciousness is usurped in the sense mentioned above. Not only the ills of the “have-nots”—poverty, cruelty, illness, and weakness—are to be combated, but also the sufferings of the possessors—stupidity and lack of sensibility (26). The service of man, that is, of God, has a meaning only if “the glory of God . . . the beauty of Christ’s face” (28) is intended:

The sole way to deal with the profoundest mystery that is yet not too profound to draw us, is to begin to do some duty revealed by the light from the golden fringe of its cloudy vast. (76)

That makes it clear that to act morally—which here and throughout the novel is related to social problems and duties—shows an esoteric spiritual dimension: the beholding of God. It may be defined as acting in harmony with the noumenal dimension of being.

It is obvious that the laws governing such behaviour cannot be restricted by either a political-revolutionary system or by any church organisation, nor by charitable contributions. MacDonald erupts (as it were) straight out of all these possibilities: **[32]**

As our Lord redeemed the world by being a man, the true Son of the true Father, so the only way for a man to help men is to be a true man to this neighbour or that. But to seek acquaintance with design is a perilous thing, nor unlikely to result in disappointment, and the widening of the gulf both between individuals, and the classes to which they belong . . . [W]e must follow the leadings of providence, and make acquaintance in the so-called lower classes by the natural working of the social laws that bring men together . . . Does any one ask for rules of procedure? I answer: there are none to be had; such must be discovered by each for himself. (76)

The social ideas MacDonald drafts do not have an ecclesiastical character. Christ spoke to us as a layman (299); Christian behaviour and Christian doctrine have nothing to do with “churchliness” Hestor explains

to Miss Vavasor, who has characterised Hester's Christian engagement as "priest ridden" and "out of date":

Do you take God for a priest? . . . Was Jesus Christ a priest? Or did he say what was not true when he said that whoever loved anyone else more than him was not worthy of him? (289)

Not "Church and its goings-on" are a serving of God, for the only way to serve him is to serve with him (28), "to stoop and lay hold of and lift the sister soul up nearer to the heart of the divine tenderness" (25). Finally MacDonald rejects the usual form of charity of giving money as:

the last and the feeblest means for the doing of good . . . to one who has not perceived the mind of God in the matter. To me it seems that the first thing in regards to money is to prevent it from doing harm. The man who sets out to do good with his fortune is like one who would drive a team of tigers through the streets of a city, or hunt the fox with cheetahs. (25-26)

MacDonald's social ethics bear the traits of the theosophic spirituality of Johann Valentin and of Jakob Böehme. Drawing upon a spiritual (Sophian) understanding of man as "God-in-us" and "We-in-God," he calls for the realisation of the true man by collaboration in the organic growth of the Kingdom of God: "Every man must be a fellow-worker with God" (302).

"Small beginnings with slow growings have time to root themselves **[33]** thoroughly—I do not mean in place nor yet in social regard, but in Wisdom" (305). Here biblical allusion—the parable of the mustard seed—joins with a philosophy of history issuing from that parable, resembling the thoughts of Joachim of Fiore, with trans-historical elements like Böehme's *Morgenrothe im Aufgang* (Rising Dawn) and Andreae's *Christianopolis*. These concepts are expanded by MacDonald in the final chapters of *Lilith*.

Such an organic working together of historical and trans-historical realities rises out of, and is understandable in the context of, an holistic concept of the world which does not separate the inner world of consciousness from the so-called outer world of phenomena. As Owen Barfield observes: "Consciousness is not a tiny bit of the world stuck on to the rest of it. It is the inside of the whole world."³⁴ **[Note: endnotes 33 and 34 out of order in original text]** Long-term changes of thought and consciousness cannot simply be understood by refinements of the history of ideas; they should rather be recognised as phenonema of "evolution-of-consciousness-changes"³³ which deeply change our perceptions and interpretations of reality. That is, there is a change of reality in itself. It is

in this sense that *Weighed and Wanting* gives evidence of a general state of consciousness and, by Hester's attitude and behaviour, points to a "rising dawn" leading to a peaceful ending of the "day," as the final image vividly shows.

MacDonald in *Weighed and Wanting*, as in his whole oeuvre, holds this Christian-millennial view which contrasts with the "modern-rationalistic" view which is changing, as he shows, into a "modern-materialistic" one. If these contrasting views of reality are interpreted as states of the soul, characteristic results are to be seen. According to the Neoplatonic-hermetic tradition, to which MacDonald belongs, the soul essentially is a mediator: it is its task to leave a mark of being on transitory things in order that "the whole reality be connected for ever."³⁵ That task can only be realised by "purely seeing the pure."³⁶ In the highest condition of the soul, symbolised by its seeing "eye," the One, the Good, may be perceived. It is this condition, the spiritual dimension of the soul, the pure mirror of God, the unfallen part of the soul according to Plotinus,³⁷ which is necessary for a successful mediation. The soul's tendency is to fall, to suffer and finally to resurrect. So if the eye of the soul is "buried in a hideous mud" (Plato's image in *The Republic* 533 d) it does not perish but is "forced to serve badness," a condition whose tormenting lack of perception seems, of course, insuperable. (MacDonald's novel makes this clear in the figure of Cornelius.) The Neoplatonic tradition contains many mythical [34] reflections of the conditions mentioned above, for example the story of the Kore (Blake's "Little Girl Lost" and "Little Girl Found") and the myth of Eros and Psyche.

If the soul's divinatory and poetic faculties are progressively reduced through the growing emphasis upon enlightened rationality as the one essential faculty, conditions of stagnation and isolation occur which manifest in literature (since a work of literature is the testimony of a trans-individual state of consciousness) particularly in the image of the desolate house, with its clandestinely discovered attic. Isolated in such a context there is usually a female figure—in such an attic, or in a lonely tower or dungeon of her loneliness. She is often declared to be a ghost, or thought to be mad—"the madwoman in the attic."³⁸ She is, as it were, a symptomatic symbol of the reduced visionary faculties of the soul. Everywhere in MacDonald's oeuvre the image of the deserted house is to be found. It is revealing to place even the great-grandmother of the Curdie books here! It seems that the "spacious residential building" which Kant³⁹ wanted to erect in place of the "tower" of earlier philosophy tends to become a haunted house.

It is difficult to imagine a more insistent depiction of this condition than the one MacDonald's contemporary Tennyson gives in his poem "Mariana." It is the image of a waxing mute despair of the vain hope for meaning, and of disillusionment. Characteristically "the location of this poem was 'no particular grange, but one which rose to the music of Shakespeare's words.'"40 ("There, at the moated grange, resides the dejected Mariana"—*Measure for Measure* III, 1.)

With blackest moss the flower-plots
Were thickly crusted one and all:
The rusted nails fell from the knots
That held the pear to the garden-wall.
The broken sheds look'd sad and strange:
Unlifted was the clinking latch;
Weeded and worn the ancient thatch
Upon the lonely moated grange.⁴¹

The poem, currently understood as the portrait of a Victorian woman condemned to passivity, is most impressive, and it achieved a powerful resonance—as Millais's painting of 1851 attests. As an image of the psyche [35] isolated in the non-human realm (the absence from Mariana's environment of any human noises is vividly conveyed) it has a near-prophetic effect. The classical symbols of life are distorted: the water has become black and foul, the sunbeam is dusty, the night is without mystery, the cock crows without hope. Things which, in the context of a meaningfully-led life, would form an organic whole, here add up to a sum of senseless ciphers, and, as such, are detestable:

. . . but most she loathed the hour
When the thick-moted sunbeam lay
Athwart the chambers, and the day
Was sloping toward his western bower.
Then, said she, "I am very dreary,
He will not come," she said.

Mariana's isolation corresponds to the inert condition of the soul, to the paralysis of its creative-spiritual powers, a consequence of being bound to a world of mere surfaces, where it is obliged to exist inadequately.

But Hester Raymount, though in many exterior ways a Victorian lady, manifests a changing consciousness. Her soul awakens to itself, it departs from isolation to its true tasks—the integration of contemplation with life-creating, healing action. In her, Mariana leaves the moated grange. *Weighed*

and Wanting shows Hester Raymount as the protagonist of MacDonald's wish to heal society. Realising her vocation, she develops into "God's image of her," a development which leads to the breaking-up of her marriage plans with Lord Gartley, and the estrangement from her brother and from the social class to which she belongs. But in the course of the novel it gives her an undreamt-of experience of meaning, of fulfilment, and enables her to rescue many people (including her own brother) and to awaken their souls. Hester is not a characteristic Victorian lady.⁴² She is a feminist who refuses to be "moulded" by a husband (287) and she insists on having a calling (131); she is not politically conservative—Gartley thinks her radicalism "not of the palest pink" (62); she is highly gifted as an actress and she does not think it eccentric to appear publicly, dedicating her art, however, exclusively to the poor. She is courageous in that she doesn't separate thinking and doing. MacDonald especially stresses her lively pity for her fellow human beings (with whom she feels a strong blood-relationship), and her magnanimity: "she found the whole human family hanging upon her, and that she could not rise [36] except in raising them along with her" (20). Pity—a basic aspect of ethics according to Solovyov—because it includes truth and justice,⁴³ is recognised by MacDonald as an essential human trait, inherited from God—the inherited pity of God. In achieving such "pity," Hester becomes Christ-like when, without taking her own health into consideration, during an epidemic of small-pox she comforts the inhabitants of a slum, easing their sufferings with music. She recognises in the example of Christ, whom His Father did not protect from the consequences of His obedience, the quietest aspect of the good, that neither defends nor protects itself. In this she recognises "nature naturing nature" (239).⁴⁴ This is the supreme source of actuality, the cause of the continued existence and the passing on of life; it subsists in transcending self.⁴⁵

Going beyond that clearly symbolic portrayal of Hester's essence and actions, MacDonald interprets her figure too in terms of the Platonic-hermetic tradition. When he has Hester wonderingly pause at "the watery cage"⁴⁶ of an aquarium inhabited by ugly fish, symbols of the cruel and greedy men of her society, the image reminds us of the descent of Psyche into the corporeal world to scoop water from the river of death. The poem which Gartley dedicates to her has a clear symbolism:

Lo! Beauty climbs the watery steep
Sets foot on many a slimy stair;
Treads on the monsters of the deep

And rising seeks the earth and air.

MacDonald shows Hester as a Sophia figure when he portrays her against the stars of an azure-coloured evening sky: “azure disc, shield of tranquility” (15). Azure is the symbol Solovyov uses for a quality which is not sense-perceptible, an “element of the transreal world.”⁴⁷ The Sophia, in her three appearances to Solovyov as described in his poem “Trisvidanja” glows each time with “golden azure”:

Glowing with golden azure
Holding a flower from a world not-from-here
You stood there with a beaming smile;
You saluted me and vanished into the mist.⁴⁸

MacDonald emphasises the spiritual “setting” when he adds: **[37]**

[U]p to the clear spaces above, stung with the steely stars that began to peep out of the blue [c]lope of heaven. Thither Hester kept casting her eyes as they walked, or rather somehow her eyes kept travelling thitherward of themselves, as if indeed they had to do with things up there (15).

Here a motif is discernable that MacDonald had encountered earlier when he translated Novalis’s “Hymns to the Night:”

More heavenly than those glittering stars we hold the eternal eyes which the night hath opened within us. Farther they see than the palest of those countless hosts. Needing no aid from the light, they penetrate the depths of a loving soul that fills a loftier region with bliss ineffable.⁴⁹

Later on MacDonald unfolded this motif in the figure of “The Lady of the Silver Moon” (*The Princess and Curdie* 1883): she is the image of primordial night, the conception of universal man in God, the pure creation in which God is mirrored without distortion.

Hester has the thought:

what if she too were intended to be a doorkeeper in the house of God, and open or keep open windows in heaven that the air of the high places might reach the low swampy ground? (28)⁵⁰

But in the eyes of Cornelius she is merely ‘star gazing as usual!’ (20) and she promptly sprains her ankle:

“There now, Hester!” said Cornelius, pulling her up like a horse that stumbled, “that’s what you get by your star-gazing! You are always coming to grief by looking higher than your head!” (15)

Endnotes

1. The Jays (Jay, Elizabeth and Richard Jay, eds. *Critics of Capitalism: Victorian Reactions to Political Economy*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1986. 137) attribute this to the *Cornhill Magazine*; yet Greville MacDonald, (*George MacDonald and His Wife*. London: Unwin, 1924. 328) names *Fraser's Magazine*.
2. Jay 140-61. **[38]**
3. Jay 140-61.
4. *What London Reads* (19 Apr. 1894): 243.
5. Jay 146.
6. Jay 155.
7. Jay 160. Cf. Andreae, Johann Valentin. *Christianopolis*. dtv, W.R. 4117, S. 156. “. . . and to give quiet to the dumb animals.”
8. Andreae 161.
9. Morris, William. *News From Nowhere*. London: Routledge, 1970.
10. Waage, Norman Peter. *Der Unsichtbare Kontinent: Wladimir Solowjow der Denker Europas*. Stuttgart: Verlag Freies Geistesleben, 1988. 85. Waage points to the edition of letters by S. M. Solovyov (Brussels 1977).
11. Szykarski, Wl. et al, eds. *Deutsche Gesamtausgabe der Werke von Wladimir Solowjow*. Freiburg and Munich. 1953-78. vol. 1. 537. Subsequently cited as *Werke*.
12. MacDonald, Greville. *GM&W*. 175.
13. Solovyov. *Werke*. vol.1. 565 etseq. Cf. Solovyov's essay “*Die Idee der Menschheit bei Auguste Comte*” in which he compares the idea of the Sophia with Comte's “*grand être*.”
14. De Rougemont, Denis, *Die Zukunft ist Unsere Sache*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1980. 132.
15. Solovyov. *Werke*. vol.5. 268.
16. Solovyov. *Werke*. vol. 5. 267.
17. *GM&W*. 328-29. **[39]**
18. *GM&W*. 329-30.
19. *GM&W*. 330n.
20. *GM&W*. 402.
21. *GM&W*. 401.
22. Wolff, Robert Lee. *The Golden Key*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1961. 314 argues that MacDonald's later works exhibit a hatred of humankind and that he loved animals more than men. The same has been said of Emily Brontë.
23. First edition 1882. All quotations are from the edition of 1889, London: Sampson Low.
24. Robb, David. *George MacDonald*. Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1987. 59.
25. Wolff 435.

26. Raeper, William. *George MacDonald*. Tring: Lion, 1987. 348.
27. It is interesting to compare Solovyov's essentially similar technique in "Trisvidanja." Here the everyday is deliberately contrasted with the symbolical statements. The dissonance is intended.
28. *GM& W* 338.
29. MacDonald, George. *The Flight of the Shadow*. San Francisco: Harper. 1983. 226.
30. *G.M&W* 339.
31. Raine, Kathleen. *Blake and Tradition*. London: Routledge. 2. 278.
32. Solovyov. *Werke*. vol.1. 565. ". . . for the divinity belongs to both, God and man."

[40]

33. Barfield, Owen. *History, Guilt and Habit*. Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 1979. 48.
34. Barfield 32.
35. Plotinus. *Ennead IV*. 8 (6) 35.
36. Kruger, Gerhard. *Einsicht und Leidenschaft*. Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1983. 270.
37. Emily Brontë's "Prisoner" shows the prisoner "above" as an onlooker as well as "below" in fetters.
38. Gilbert, Sandra and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1979.
39. Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason* B 735.
40. Ebbatson, Roger. *Tennyson*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1988.
41. *Tennyson's Poetical Works*. London, 1899. 7-8.
42. MacDonald, Greville. *Reminiscences of a Specialist*. London: Unwin, 1932. 111. As well as being a portrait of Lilia, Hester surely shows traits of Octavia Hill, and, in some respects, of Rose La Touche.
43. Solovjov *Werke*. vol. 5.
44. This is possibly a quotation from Coleridge.
45. In *GM& W* 200, Greville tells how his father went to see a friend who was suffering from smallpox but had no fear: "It was his, personal embodiment of the sixth beatitude that made him not only fearless of . . . danger, but regardless of any accusation of improvidence."
46. This seems to suggest Blake's "watery cave" and "watery grave" as images of matter in Night 2 of "The Four Zoas." [41]
47. Knigge, Amim. "*Die Lyrik VI: Solowjow und Hire Nachwirkung bei A. Belyi und A. Blok.*" diss. Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1973. 16.
48. Knigge's German translation translated by A.K.
49. MacDonald, George. *Exotics*. 1876; rpt. in *Rampolli*. 1897. 4.
50. Plotinus. *Ennead IV*, 8 (6) 7, 39. "[the universal soul] is able to do both: to receive from above, to give into this world." [42]