

George MacDonald in Germany

Gisbert Kranz

George MacDonald was well-read in German literature. He translated poems by Novalis and other German poets and was deeply influenced by E. T. A. Hoffmann, Jean Paul, Klopstock and other German authors. It might well be asked whether his own literary works are read in Germany. In his lifetime, only one novel was translated: “David Elginbrod von George MacDonald. Aus dem Englischen übersetzt von Julie Sutter. Autorisierte Uebersetzung. Frankfurt a. M. Verlag von Heyder & Ziramer 1873.” The dialogues in Scotch dialect are not given an equivalent in some German dialect, but translated into High German like the rest of the text. The lady who did this translation is otherwise unknown; it is perhaps her only literary work, and she dedicated it to George MacDonald. There is an inaccurate article on George MacDonald in “Brockhaus’ Konversations Lexikon,” 14th edition, vol. 17, Leipzig 1904; the German version of “David Elginbrod” is not mentioned there. Some of George MacDonald’s novels came out in English in Tauchnitz editions in Leipzig, e.g. “Alec Forbes of Howglen,” 1865. The English text of “Wilfrid Cumbermede” was published by Asher at Berlin in 1872. The histories of English literature, written by German scholars during the 20th century, keep silence on MacDonald.

Not earlier than 1981 and after, some interest in MacDonald arose in the German speaking countries. The following translations came out: “Phantastus. Ein Feenmärchen,” translated by Hans Günter Holl, Frankfurt: Robinson 1984; “Die Lichtprinzessin und Das Herz des Riesen. Phantastische Märchen,” with an afterword by H. G. Holl, Frankfurt: **end of page 38]** Robinson 1984; “Hinter dem Nordwind,” translated by Sybil Gräfin Schönfeldt, Wien: Betz 1981; “Lilith,” translated by Uwe Herms, 3 Stuttgart: Klett³ 1983; “Tagjunge und Nachtmädchen,” translated by Werner Schmitz, in the Anthology “Aufstand der Elfen” by Jack Zipes, Köln: Diederichs 1984.

C. S. Lewis’s MacDonald Anthology was translated by M. Gisi and Hans Urs Kardinal von Balthasar and came out in 1986 under the title “Die Weisheit meines Meisters” at Einsiedeln in Switzerland. Gisbert Kranz selected and translated gleanings from MacDonald’s works in *Inklings-Jahrbuch*, vol. 4, 1986, pp.57-62. Some of the shortened and retitled MacDonald editions of Bethany House, Minneapolis, came out in German

versions in the publishing house Francke in Marburg an der Lahn; of course, these maimed editions are not a literary, but a purely devotional enterprise.

In May 1983, the “Inklings-Gesellschaft für Literatur und Ästhetik e.V.” was founded at Aachen. Its articles of association state that it is the aim of this literary society to foster scholarly investigation into the works of C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Charles Williams and George MacDonald. Till autumn 1989, the Inklings-Gesellschaft published 22 newsletters and seven volumes of Inklings-Jahrbuch. This annual comes out every autumn with 190 to 370 pages; it contains articles, papers and book reviews, either in German with English abstracts, or in English with German abstracts. Each volume offers material about MacDonald, and several aspects of MacDonald’s life and work are studied by Prof. Hans Hollander, Adelheid Kegler, Dr. Gisbert Kranz, George Sayer, Dr. Josef Schreier, and Prof. Giorgio Spina.

Works of MacDonald are read by an Inklings discussion group, which [39] meets regularly at Aachen, with Dr. Hans Altmann in the chair. A MacDonald Exhibition was shown and MacDonald Lectures were given by Passau in Bavaria, at the Evangelische Akademie Lorkum in Niedersachsen, at Wiesbaden, the capital of Hessen, and at the Episcopal Academy of Aachen in Nordrhein-Westfalen. All these activities were organized by the Inklings-Gesellschaft, which numbers 320 members in twenty countries all over the world. The address is: Inklings, Erster-Roter-Haag-Weg 31, D-5100 Aachen.

Members of the Inklings-Gesellschaft have free access to the Inklings library which is the only library on the continent that owns *every* book by and on MacDonald and a lot of articles about MacDonald in periodicals (complete sets of *NorthWind*, *Mythlore*, and *Seven*). German MacDonald articles include: Andreas Malessa, “Ein goldener Schlüssel zu MacDonaldis Werk,” in: Pack’s, 1982; Volker Klotz, “George MacDonald,” in: *Das europäische Kunstmächen*, 1985; Gisbert Kranz, “E.T.A. Hoffmanns Einfluss auf George MacDonald,” in: *Mitteilungen der E. T. A. Hoffmann-Gesellschaft*, 33, 1987; Gisbert Kranz, “Dante im Werk von George MacDonald,” in: *Deutsches Dante-Jahrbuch*, 1989. A printed systematic catalogue of the Inklings-Bibliothek, 71 pages, is available from Inklings, Aachen. [40]