10-1-1974

David Lindsay and George MacDonald

Gary K. Wolfe
Roosevelt University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl
Part of the English Language and Literature Commons

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/ssl/vol12/iss2/5

This Article is brought to you by the Scottish Literature Collections at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Studies in Scottish Literature by an authorized editor of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact dillarda@mailbox.sc.edu.
Gary K. Wolfe

David Lindsay and George MacDonald

One of the more interesting sub-genres of fantastic literature to have emerged in the past century and a half is a mode of non-allegorical symbolic fantasy narrative that bears certain relationships to the German Märchen. Although the sources for this mode of writing fairly clearly lie in Romantic Germany, the two writers most responsible for its development in English are both Scottish: George MacDonald and David Lindsay. MacDonald's Phantastes, published in 1858, a fairly clear imitation of Novalis and other German predecessors, was followed by a series of occasionally brilliant fairy-tales (such as "The Golden Key") and finally, in 1895, by a second adult fantasy, Lilith, a flawed work in which MacDonald nevertheless takes the form of symbolic fantasy and makes it something very much his own. David Lindsay is best known for A Voyage to Arcturus, published in 1920, which has recently gained some critical attention and which, except for the little-known Blade for Sale of 1927, is the only work of his to see print in the United States (that is, until the current edition by the Chicago Review Press of two of his unpublished novels, The Violet Apple and The Witch). It has often been assumed that there is a strong literary relation between Lindsay and MacDonald, and indeed Lindsay once told his friend E. H. Visiak that MacDonald had been his greatest influence, but the nature of this relationship has never been fully explored. This is unfortunate, since there are revealing similarities not only between the works of these two men, but between their careers as well.

Both writers, for example, were predominantly fantasists and visionaries who found it increasingly necessary throughout their careers to try to reach an audience steeped in the values of "realistic" literature. Only MacDonald seemed to be able to make a success of this, perhaps because his "vision" was more narrowly moralistic than Lindsay's and hence more capable of being assimilated into traditional forms. When Phantastes appeared in 1858, the reviews
were not entirely unfavorable, but they for the most part mis-
apprehended the work as an allegory meant for children. This, for
MacDonald, was more painful than outright hostility. The presti-
gious *Athenaeum* attacked the book as “a confusedly furnished, sec-
ond-hand symbol shop,” 1 but the aspect of this review that most irked
MacDonald was the one he expressed in a letter to Mrs. A. J. Scott:
“I don’t see what right the Athenaeum has to call it an allegory and
judge or misjudge it accordingly—as if nothing but an allegory
could have two meanings.” 2 MacDonald, acutely conscious of his
debt to Tieck, Novalis, and Hoffmann, seemed clearly aware that
he had ventured into what amounted to a new genre of narrative
fiction; and he seemed, for a time, willing to defend this genre
against the narrowness of Victorian standards of taste. But a number
of factors—not the least of which may have been his own passion
for homiletics and desire to reach a wider audience—prompted
MacDonald to turn to more realistic narratives. In May 1859 he
accepted a professorship of English Literature at Bedford College in
London, and this was but one step of his entry into the literary
“establishment” of his day. His increasing lecture commitments and
his success with moralistic Scottish domestic romances that began
with the publication of *David Elginbrod* in 1863 became the bases
of his career and contemporary reputation. Although his continuing
interest in fantasy manifested itself in his substantial output of
children’s stories, most notably “The Golden Key” in 1867, *At the
Back of the North Wind* in 1868–69, and the two *Princess* books
in the 1870s, MacDonald did not return to the form of adult sym-

demic fantasy until the very end of his career, with *Lilith* in 1895.
Although his modern reputation rests very heavily on these two
visionary works, MacDonald’s career reveals that he was willing
to forgo the visionary aspect of his genius in order to achieve success
as a moralist and a regional novelist.

The career of David Lindsay—MacDonald’s most genuine direct
heir, in literary terms—is curiously parallel yet tragically different.
Like MacDonald, Lindsay began his career with an uncompromis-

1 November 6, 1858, p. 580.
2 Undated letter quoted in Greville MacDonald, *George MacDonald
considerably less successful than *Phantastes* had been in 1858. It sold only 596 copies, and, like *Phantastes*, the reviews were unenthusiastic, with many critics regarding it as allegory. Like MacDonald, Lindsay responded angrily to the descriptions of his work as allegory. "A symbol is a mystic sign of the Creator," he wrote in his last published novel. "An allegory is a wall decoration with a label attached; if you remove the label it is just a decorative, but less illuminating; and that means that its special interest is purely literary. . . . It explains nothing of the universe. . . ." But there can be little doubt that the failure of *A Voyage to Arcturus* disheartened Lindsay. In an apparent self-portrait in his hitherto-unpublished *The Witch*, Lindsay describes his protagonist as a writer whose works are "read by few, comprehend by fewer, wanted by none." Lindsay, like MacDonald, was faced with what must to him have been the demeaning necessity of casting his vision into a narrative mode more acceptable to potential readers. Unlike MacDonald, he never succeeded in either doing this or writing successful popular novels (the sole exception being, perhaps, his 1926 historical romance, *The Enterprises of M. de Mailly*, published in the United States in 1927 as *Blade for Sale*).

The first result of Lindsay’s attempt at "containing" his vision was *The Haunted Woman*, published in 1922. Here, in the guise of a domestic love story, Lindsay tells of a man and woman who uniquely are capable of perceiving and entering a secret room called "Ulf’s Tower" in an ancestral mansion. Although this is perhaps his most successfully unified work other than *Arcturus*, sales were again disappointing, perhaps because the book’s mystical conclusion, in which illusion and reality are mixed, seemed rather unsettling to readers. Also, Lindsay was never able to master a fluent writing style, and all of his works seem somewhat rough and clumsy in terms of dialogue and character development. However, in *The Haunted Woman*, Lindsay developed the basic formula that was to characterize all his later efforts at more "realistic" fiction: a man and a woman, each gifted with mystical perception, encounter each other and somehow manage to pass into a higher plane of reality.

Here the parallels between the careers of Lindsay and MacDonald come to an end. While MacDonald was able to achieve a

---

3 *Devil’s Tor* (London: Putnam’s, 1932), p. 145. Future references will be made in the text.
considerable reputation as a novelist and lecturer, Lindsay, living largely off a small inheritance, found each book more difficult to place with a publisher than the last. In *Sphinx* (1923), he turned to the science-fiction device of a machine that records dreams, but to no avail. In his last three novels—two of which remained unpublished during his lifetime—he increasingly turned to larger and larger amounts of exposition and dialogue to express his views, and this inevitably made these books a chore to read. *Devil’s Tor* (1932) runs to nearly five hundred pages, and the unfinished manuscript of *The Witch* (severely edited by J. B. Pick for the Chicago Review Press edition) is nearly four hundred in its unedited state. He seemed to view himself somewhat as he describes Anthony Kerr, the playwright-protagonist of his other unpublished novel, *The Violet Apple*:

He had a deep mystical bent; his thoughts, doubtless, were away above the heads of the theatrical crowd, but he had conceived the happy expedient of introducing fantastic entities to his pieces to relieve the drab monotony of the characters and manners of the modern world. . . . It was a great test of artistry and brought out the best of his intelligence to translate his secret philosophy into concrete shapes of fun and mockery, which a more educated generation hereafter might appreciate at their proper worth. Not to go too closely into his creed, he soberly regarded mankind, with all its boasted skill, energy, science, law, and progress, as no more than a petty heap of blind, wriggling, three-dimensional insect-like beings, surrounded by terrific unseen forces. . . . We were separated from a whole active universe by an opaque wall of senselessness.

He brought no heavy guns to bear in his work. He introduced his extravagant figures, and left them at that. But since they were the equivalent of his theories, it necessarily followed that his art was cynical in underlying essence, inasmuch as he deliberately regulated his fancies to meet the assumed level of his audiences, whom, accordingly, he at once flattered and despised.

The character Kerr is described by Lindsay as a successful playwright, perhaps in a gesture of wishful thinking, since Lindsay himself never approached such success in his lifetime. Lacking both the ability and the patience to cater to a popular audience fully, he produced a body of later work brilliant in conception but often painfully awkward in execution. Unlike MacDonald, who could write popular fictions and yet return wholeheartedly to the kind of fantasy he felt most comfortable with, Lindsay was able neither to achieve popular success nor to ignore it. Although both *The Witch* and *Devil’s Tor*
contain remarkable visionary scenes, Lindsay was never able to free himself completely enough to return to the unfettered visionary writing of *A Voyage to Arcturus*, and when he died in 1945 none of his books were in print. To this day, he remains less well-known than MacDonald, and yet more than any other writer he picked up and developed the form of fantasy that MacDonald had pioneered.

Just what is this form of fantasy, and how does it work? If we examine *Phantastes*, *Lilith*, and *A Voyage to Arcturus* in terms of narrative structure, character relations, and patterns of imagery, we discover that the same basic story, or myth, is being presented in three different ideological guises. Furthermore, we can detect elements of this myth in other works by both Lindsay and MacDonald, as well as in the work of later writers of fantasy, most notably C. S. Lewis, who followed directly in their tradition. The story is this: an unheroic character, dissatisfied with the illusory nature of the world he inhabits, is lured by some mysterious tutelary figure through a portal into another world. This other world has the surface appearance of the landscape of romance: it is predominantly rural and occupied by bizarre characters who seem either clearly good or evil. The protagonist, seeking initially to find a way home, comes under the influence of various characters in that world, and realizes that none are quite what they seem. His initial quest is to find his way back to "reality," but it soon becomes apparent that the reality he is seeking lies far deeper than the mere surface aspect of his home world. As his quest deepens, and his illusions about the nature of reality are stripped away one by one, he becomes aware of the presence of a seemingly all-powerful antagonist, a master of illusion, who appears in a number of guises. More than once he is saved from this antagonist by the intervention of the tutelary figure, who is also capable of assuming many forms. The protagonist learns from each of his experiences, and as he comes closer to discovering the truth, he himself becomes a tutelary figure, stripping away the illusions of others on that world. Finally, in an act of supreme pain and self-sacrifice, he achieves a vision of true reality, is transformed, and returns to the world of his origin.

The parallels between these works go far deeper than this brief summary suggests. Imagery of water, light, shadow, towers, the underworld, and even crystal are used in similar ways by both MacDonald and Lindsay. Both works feature characters who fall
into one of three classes: manifestations or victims of the antagonist, avatars of the tutelary figure, and uncommitted nature spirits. MacDonald introduced Lindsay not only to the form of symbolic fantasy, but to certain ontological concepts that seem almost inherent in that form as well. “No shining belt or gleaming moon,” writes MacDonald in Phantastes, “no red and green glory in a self-encircling twin star, but has a relation with the hidden things of man’s soul, and, it may be, with the secret history of his body as well.” The idea—even the very imagery—is echoed in the very conception of A Voyage to Arcturus, with the self-encircling twin star that seems to rule over Tormance with its oppressive and yet powerful lights. Both MacDonald’s fantasies, like Arcturus, involve landscapes that are projections of inner values. Illusion was as much a concern of MacDonald’s as of Lindsay’s (recall how the shadow in Phantastes seems to disillusion the fairy world), and the following passage from Phantastes, concerning the shadow, may even have been in Lindsay’s mind as he sketched out the experiences of his hero Maskull on Tormance:

In a land like this, with so many illusions everywhere, I need his aid to disenchant the things around me. He does away with all appearances, and shows me things in their true color and form. And I am not one to be fooled with the vanities of the common crowd. I will not see beauty where there is none. I will dare to behold things as they are. And if I live in a waste instead of a paradise, I will live knowing where I live” (p. 67).

There are strong suggestions in Phantastes that this view is in fact itself an illusion, that the shadow is arbitrarily blocking out the beauties of fairyland in the name of a constricting reality. It is also doubtful that these suggestions were lost on Lindsay, who repeatedly reveals disillusionment to be but another form of illusion. Crystalman, the powerful antagonist in A Voyage to Arcturus, reveals himself only in a hideous grin which appears on the faces of his victims at the time of death. And each time a new figure teaches the protagonist Maskull the “truth” in the early part of that book, this figure soon dies with the Crystalman grin. The only reality that either MacDonald’s or Lindsay’s characters can be sure of is the “inward music” that Anodos feels in fairyland in Phantastes and

"Phantastes and Lilith" (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), p. 83. Future references will be to this edition.
that is manifested in *Arcturus* as the mysterious drumtaps that guide Maskull until he realizes they are the beating of his own heart. The reality principle of all these works, therefore, is based on individual experience and a refusal to succumb to appearances. "The first preliminary for all metaphysical thinking," wrote Lindsay, "is to produce within oneself the sense of reality." 5

Specific details indicating the influence of MacDonald on Lindsay abound. Just as Anodos in *Phantastes* must undergo death to experience the union with nature that is his goal, so must Maskull undergo death to achieve the reality of Muspel, which is his goal. Raven, the tutelary figure of MacDonald's *Lilith*, speaks of a "crystal self" that represents a lower stage of the protagonist's being, and of course crystal becomes one of the central images of *Arcturus*, with the crystal torpedo that takes Maskull to Tormance and the figure of Crystalman. The sympathetic but insubstantial fairies who taunt Anodos with ambiguous songs and sayings in *Phantastes* are echoed in Lindsay's equally sympathetic but insubstantial character Jowind, whose song "seemed to be always just on the point of becoming clear and intelligible." 6 Maskull's first clear vision of the reality of Muspel takes place in Matterplay, a land of great fertility and change that he arrives at through a river journey reminiscent of the river journey that takes Anodos to the fairy palace in *Phantastes*, where he glimpses the alabaster maiden that is a major object of his quest. It is Anodos' magical power of song that twice awakens this alabaster lady from her frozen state; similarly, it is Maskull's magical kiss that brings the character Sullenbode, representing sexual will, to form in *Arcturus*.

Some of the larger parallels between the works of MacDonald and Lindsay may be traced to the fact that both were fond of German literature and philosophy, and the epigraph from Novalis that MacDonald chose to introduce *Phantastes*, in which the German poet speaks of narratives without Zusammenhang or coherence, that work like dreams by means of association, and whose final effects are like those of music, comes very close to describing the manner in which this sort of symbolic fantasy works. Lindsay himself was especially fond of Beethoven, and the organization of each of his

---


works, with its greater dependence on themes and motifs than on narrative development, might even be described as musical. The importance of the image of crystal can be traced back to the German physiologist Johann Christian Reil's system of organic evolution, in which he suggests that the process of crystallization is the lowest manifestation of the same "vital force" that is responsible for the highest evolution of consciousness in man. The idea was developed further by Schopenhauer:

... the idea that reveals itself in any general force of nature has always one single expression, although it presents itself differently according to the external relations that are present; otherwise its identity could not be proved, for this is done by abstracting the diversity that arises merely from external relations. In the same way the crystal has only one manifestation of life, crystallisation, which afterwards has its fully adequate and exhaustive expression in the rigid form, the corpse of that momentary life.

This passage might very well be the key to much of Lindsay's elaborate use of the imagery of crystal in A Voyage to Arcturus.

With Schopenhauer, however, we come to a major difference between MacDonald and Lindsay. Whereas MacDonald (who must be given the bulk of the credit for establishing the form of symbolic fantasy) was attracted to the German Romantic poets and novelists for poetic devices and mystical notions (elemental spirits, the idea of nature as an externalization of the soul, the form of the Kunstmärchen, medievalism, and a kind of utopian optimism), Lindsay was more attracted by the somber intellectual system of Schopenhauer. Herein lies the chief difference of the two closely related authors. Earlier, I wrote that Phantastes, Lilith, and A Voyage to Arcturus were all the same basic myth presented in three different ideological guises. The myth, as we have seen, is a modern literary variation of the old Christian concept of via negationis: the discovery of God or reality by the progressive stripping away of the veils of illusion. In each of these works, the nature of that reality, and the accompanying organization of the images surrounding it, differs. Phantastes is the one work of the three that most closely approximates the German Kunstmärchen in its philosophical


basis (it even includes an imitation Kunstmärchen in the interpolated story of Cosmo): this basis is nature, and the final goal of Anodos’ quest is unity with the natural world. Although the work clearly reveals the moralistic nature of MacDonald’s own training and inclination, it is not merely a Christian myth retold. Lilith, coming at the end of MacDonald’s career and when he was perhaps freer of the German influence, is more clearly Christian in outlook. It is, in fact, the myth of the redemption of Lilith, told in symbolic fantasy terms, and its moral basis is more that of Victorian England than of Romantic Germany. Lindsay’s A Voyage to Arcturus is philosophically quite different from either of these. Its basis is neither romantic nor moralistic, but rather rigidly dialectic. A stern, Schopenhauerian notion of the essential “nothingness” of reality lies at its center, and for this reason it may seem to lack the charm of the MacDonald works. What it lacks in charm, however, it more than makes up for in added power. “Schopenhauer’s “Nothing,”” wrote Lindsay, “which is the least understood part of his system, is identical with my Muspel; that is the real world.” 9

In Lindsay’s later works, he retained this essential dialectical basis, but, perhaps as part of his attempt to reach a wider audience, also attempted to incorporate more familiar mythic structures. Probably the chief advantage in literary terms that A Voyage to Arcturus has over the fantasies of MacDonald is that its ideational basis is largely sui generis, while MacDonald’s have clear fictional antecedents. But this very strength may have proved a weakness in terms of sales, so Lindsay turned to more familiar notions in which to couch his visions. In Devil’s Tor, perhaps prompted by Lindsay’s reading of Rider Haggard, this is the White Goddess myth. Very much aware of what this myth portends, Lindsay even titled a chapter of that novel “The Great Mother,” but the concept is never fully integrated with the basic idea of illusion and reality that is Lindsay’s forte. Like MacDonald (although probably not influenced by him in this case), Lindsay here turns to the Romantic countryside for his setting. A violent thunderstorm breaks open an ancient rock known as Devil’s Tor, revealing an even more ancient tomb beneath. An earth tremor quickly seals the tomb, but not before one of the

characters has picked up a mysterious hemisphere of black stone, with a broken edge. The rest of the massive narrative consists of bringing this half of the stone to its mate, and of the transformation of the two major characters that takes place then. For the first time in Lindsay's works, conventional religious overtones are clearly present: the missing half of the stone proves to be a legendary talisman bearing the Minoan inscription "That which unwillingly flees from its bride in the West. . . . That which the seer has said shall know no change until that it has united another man and another woman, of whom shall be born a son greater than they, greater than all mankind, who shall be the saviour" (p. 224). Perhaps Lindsay felt that a suggestion of the Second Coming might appeal to his readers by addressing their illusions more directly. The novel seems to represent a period in Lindsay's career similar to that represented by _A Portent_ (1864) in MacDonald's. Each calls clearly to mind the greater fantasies of its author, but each also partakes of the more sensational aspects of "popular" supernatural fiction. But, unlike MacDonald, Lindsay is unable to contain himself in this mold. _A Portent_ was a fairly good Victorian ghost story, and stands up as such today, but _Devil's Tor_ gets out of hand both in terms of the ceaseless exposition and in its ending, in which a spectacular visionary passage has one of the characters disappear and two others transformed into the divinities who know they will give birth to the new saviour. But the nature of this new saviour, never clearly Christian, is vague, and the ending inconclusive in terms of that aspect of the plot.

Nevertheless, Lindsay continued to move toward this kind of pseudo-Christian mythology in his last two novels, neither of which he was able to publish and one of which remains unfinished. _The Violet Apple_, now being published in its entirety for the first time by the Chicago Review Press, is the most nearly Christian of all Lindsay's works. Anthony Kerr, the protagonist, inherits an ancient glass snake supposed to contain a seed from one of the original fruits in the Garden of Eden. When a friend accidentally breaks the figure, Kerr half-jokingly plants the seed, and the rest of the narrative consists largely in watching it grow while a relationship develops between Kerr and Haidee Croyland. The tiny plant finally sprouts violet apples and dies; Kerr and Haidee partake of these apples and, like the man and woman in _Devil's Tor_, are transformed into a
higher plane of reality. The novel is short and rather readable, but again one feels that the Christian imagery is not well integrated into the basic dialectic of the book, and neither are fully integrated with the romantic story of the character relationships.

The Witch is of value largely because of its detailed presentation of Lindsay's philosophical notions. In the early pages of this novel, Lindsay also reveals the depth of the cynicism he had developed concerning success in literature:

A woman who forgot her dignity was no longer respected; a literature which neglected its height and authority reaped the reward in a reading proletariat that arrogated to prescribe the rules of writing. Thus had books come to be written by persons according to the judgment, as conceived, of other persons, entailing the extinguishment of the fire of the spirit. No books, gave forth the high priests of literature, might survive their birth to enter the public world but only such as were framed to win the favour of the voices.

Perhaps by this time Lindsay had come to accept his failure as a novelist and felt somewhat more free to give play to his natural cynicism.

The Witch was apparently intended by Lindsay to be the definitive treatment of the same basic story he used in The Haunted Woman, Devil's Tor, and The Violet Apple—the bringing together of a man and woman by some vast cosmic force and their mystical translation to a higher reality that presumably lays the groundwork for the birth of a new humanity. For this novel, Lindsay returns to the quasi-allegorical Blakeian nomenclature that he had used in A Voyage to Arcturus: the central characters are Ragnar Pole and Urda Noett, both suggesting Lindsay's fondness for Germanic myth. Urda is revealed to be the "witch" of the title, and this is yet another example of Lindsay trying to adapt a popular belief to his own purposes. Pole's friend Gasparo explains his use of the term thus: throughout history, civilization has been advanced on a purely material level by scientists and inventors, who work has concerned only the surface aspect of man's existence—what in Arcturus would be called Crystalman's world, and what in the symbolic fantasies of both Arcturus and MacDonald's works is represented by the everyday world from which the protagonist must travel to have his adventures. But against this tradition of science and invention has worked a far older tradition—the "wise women" of folklore, who
have preserved the knowledge of a deeper reality, who have been called witches and punished, and who have become associated in the popular mind with hysterics and charlatans. "The witch has been an unsocial type," explains Gaspary. "She has set herself against the journey of civilization just described—the journey ending in a prison." 10 This notion of the wise woman as the guardian of deeper reality is a far more common one in MacDonald's work than in Lindsay's own earlier works, and while the figure of Urda Noett is a somewhat modernized and glamorized version of the figure, it seems likely that MacDonald may be Lindsay's immediate source for this use of the familiar folklore notion. There are a variety of wise women in Phantastes, most notably the old woman in the cottage who warns Anodos against opening the door that releases his nemesis Shadow, and the old woman of the island whose cottage has four doors, each of which reveals to Anodos an aspect of self-knowledge. In Lilith, this figure is manifested in the character of Mara, the cat-woman; and in the character of Eve herself. In The Witch she also appears in two guises: Faustine, an intermediary tutelary figure who guides Pole to the mysterious Morion House (the name is supposed to be a corruption of the original Norse name for the site, meaning "sea-witch-wood") where he meets Urda, and Urda herself. Morion House, like the observatory in Arcturus, Ulf's Tower in The Haunted Woman, or Devil's Tor in that novel, is the portal to the next reality—here called, in yet another return to Christian iconography, heaven. But heaven in this novel is much closer to the Muspel of Arcturus than to any traditional notions of a Christian paradise.

Once Pole enters Morion House, very late in the narrative, the structure of the novel begins once again to resemble the symbolic fantasy form. A corridor gives way to a dream-landscape that is more abstract than any we have encountered before in either Lindsay or MacDonald. In this landscape he encounters first Faustine, who announces "I am the world!" and explains to Ragnar that he is to experience the journey of the soul after death—the same journey, presumably, that Anodos experiences following his death near the end of MacDonald's Phantastes. Pole is to pass through three "musics":

10 All quotations from The Witch are taken from the transcript made by J. B. Pick from Lindsay's original typescript, which remains in possession of his daughter.
"The first music is passion, the second rests on the passion, but itself is calmness. The third, I think, is the soul's longest journey through heavens and spaces, to its own wisdom of loneliness." Like Dante's Vergil, Faustine can only guide Pole for part of the journey. She seems to represent will, using the term much as Schopenhauer used it. After transcending will, which is the first music, the soul passes into nothingness (the Muspel of Arcturus), which is the second, and finally achieves its own reality in the third music of heaven, which is represented by the now-divine figure of Urda. Lindsay's manuscript ends here, although it seems likely that Lindsay intended to retain the conventional closure of symbolic fantasy with an image of cyclical rebirth such as the one which ends Arcturus.

Each of the major symbolic fantasy narratives I have discussed—Phantastes, Lilith, A Voyage to Arcturus—begins with a short introductory section in the "real" world followed by the transition to the landscape of fantasy where the bulk of the action takes place. This "realistic" introduction serves the function of giving the reader some immediate access to the work and establishing at once his identification with the central character. It seems clear that what Lindsay has attempted in his later novels, almost certainly in the hope of retaining more readers, is to expand the brief introductory section to virtually the entire length of the narrative, and to present the bulk of his ideas in conventional exposition during this section in order to prepare the reader for the miraculous visionary episode that represents the transition into the landscape of fantasy. In doing this, Lindsay deliberately abandoned his remarkable gift for visionary writing in favor of a rather plodding and often dull technique of presenting his ideas through endless conversations and exposition. Like MacDonald, he had a strong didactic impulse; unlike MacDonald, he was never able to present this didacticism convincingly in a more conventional framework. As a result, his novels are interesting failures that come to life only in those rare moments in which action overpowers words, while his symbolic fantasy remains a supreme example of its genre.

Although MacDonald and Lindsay are primarily responsible for introducing this genre to English literature, they are not the only ones who have experimented with it. Their most notable heir is C. S. Lewis, who wrote that MacDonald "had done more to me
than any other writer,” 11 with Phantastes in particular fulfilling for the young Lewis the role of a devotional book. While the influence of MacDonald is most often remarked in connection with Lewis’s Narnia stories, one might also profitably analyze his “science fiction” trilogy (which is really fantasy), especially Out of the Silent Planet, in terms of the structures we have already found in both MacDonald and Lindsay. Out of the Silent Planet especially owes a particular debt to Lindsay. “The real father of my planet books,” wrote Lewis, “is David Lindsay’s Voyage to Arcturus . . . it was Lindsay who first gave me the idea that the ‘scientifiction’ appeal could be combined with the ‘supernatural’ appeal.” 12 “He is the first writer to discover what ‘other planets’ are really good for in fiction. No merely physical strangeness or merely spatial distance will realize that idea of otherness which is what we are always trying to grasp in a story about voyaging through space: you must go into another dimension. To construct plausible and moving ‘other worlds’ you must draw on the only real ‘other world’ we know, that of the spirit.” 13 Out of the Silent Planet remains the most familiar “modernization” of the symbolic fantasy form, bowing as it does to certain conventions of Wellsian science fiction, but there are still writers today who seem aware of the possibilities of this mode. Robert Silverberg’s science fiction novel Son of Man bears certain close resemblances to A Voyage to Arcturus, and other science fiction writers, such as Philip José Farmer, have acknowledged the influence of Lindsay on their work.

Both MacDonald and Lindsay seem to be undergoing a mild rediscovery in recent years, with A Voyage to Arcturus, Phantastes, Lilith, and several MacDonald fairy tales being reprinted in mass-market paperbacks by Ballantine, with two of MacDonald’s stories being reprinted in Jonathan Cott’s massive Victorian fairy-tale anthology Beyond the Looking Glass, and with the current publication of The Violet Apple and J. B. Pick’s edited version of The Witch by the Chicago Review Press. But the relationship between these two remarkable writers and the genre of fantastic writing that they evolved deserves further exploration. In this article I have

attempted to point out some of the more important connections between Lindsay and MacDonald, but I have not gone into depth concerning the German influences on each writer, the relationship between MacDonald's realistic fiction and his fantasy, the philosophical or rhetorical implications of the symbolic fantasy form, or the larger question of how this form fits into the history of fantasy. Nor have I addressed the more limited question of the extensive use of Scottish landscapes and nomenclature by these two writers. Symbolic fantasy remains a rich field for study, and George MacDonald and David Lindsay are two writers whose works deserve closer scrutiny.

_Roosevelt University_