

## ABSTRACT

ELLERN, HOLLY ELIZABETH. *The Phantastic Spirit: Experiencing the Real Self and the Person of God through the Imagination of George MacDonald*. (Under the Direction of Mary Helen Thuente.)

According to the philosophy of Victorian writer and preacher George MacDonald, the individual can realize his/her true identity through unity with the person of God. MacDonald believed that one experiences God unconsciously but becomes conscious of this spiritual encounter through the symbolic language of the imagination. In his novel *Phantastes* (1858), spiritual unity continually takes the symbolic form of an ideal state of oneness between a parent and child. An interpretation of *Phantastes* through the lens of Carl Jung's depth psychology reveals that literary symbols of MacDonald's unconscious can be regarded as consistent with his religious beliefs. In the novel, MacDonald communicates to the reader what he considers to be the true human identity of childhood, while also striving toward his own self-realization through the spiritual experience of creating literary art.

This thesis explores how MacDonald endeavors to bring the reader through the practice of reading and imagining into a conscious realization of the spiritual experience of God. In *Phantastes*, he uses British and German Romantic ideas of the nature and function of the imagination and combines them with embodiments of ideal spiritual unity between parent and child archetypes and the experience of reading fantasy literature to show the spiritual maturation of the protagonist Anodos. Through Anodos's development toward the identity of mature childhood, or "sonship," in relation to the divine parent, MacDonald attempts to foster the same spiritual growth toward self-realization in his reader.

The Phantastic Spirit: Experiencing the Real Self and the Person of God through the  
Imagination of George MacDonald

by  
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## **DEDICATION**

For my parents and brother.

## **BIOGRAPHY**

Holly Ellern is originally from the Pacific Northwest. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in English from Saint Olaf College. An independent research project on the Christian beliefs and fiction of the literary fellowship “The Inklings” her senior year in college sparked her interest in the works of George MacDonald and his influence on contemporary Christian culture and fantasy stories. She looks forward to further exploration of how God can be experienced through both the reading and writing of fiction.

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## INTRODUCTION

The search for spiritual identity is one of the most important motifs in the essays and fictional works of Victorian author and preacher George MacDonald. In his novel *Phantastes* (1858), he uses fantastic symbols to associate the search for spiritual identity and self-realization with the relationship of oneness between a parent and child. The following chapters will explore how MacDonald uses Romantic ideas of the nature and function of the imagination, examples of embodiments of the divine in archetypal forms of parent and child, and the experience of reading fantasy literature to convey the spiritual development of his protagonist Anodos and to foster the same type of growth and self-realization in his reader.

MacDonald was born in Huntley, Aberdeenshire, Scotland in 1824. He was a preacher, novelist, poet and essayist who wrote over fifty books during his lifetime, the most popular of which are his fantasy novels and fairytales. While studying for a Master's degree in Chemistry and Physics at the University of Aberdeen, he also studied German (in which he was fluent) and read widely among the works of the German Romantics, including E.T.A. Hoffmann, Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué and Novalis. In 1850, he graduated from Highbury College with a divinity degree, intending to become a pastor. His interest in the mysticism of the German Romantics greatly influenced the Calvinist religious beliefs he had learned from his family. Further religious influence came in the late 1850s through his friend F.D. Maurice who introduced him to Unitarianism.

Despite his academic accomplishments, MacDonald's life was often characterized by tragedy and controversy. Like the families of many of his contemporaries, his was devastated by the effects of what scholars believe to be a variant of tuberculosis. When MacDonald was eight years old, he lost his mother to the illness. Although he later had a stepmother with whom he appears to have had a good relationship, he greatly felt his mother's loss. This sense of loss, as many scholars have pointed out, is evident in the frequent appearances of the "Wise Woman" figures in his novels. MacDonald, himself, contracted the illness and dealt with its effects for most of his life, which forced his family to relocate several times for the sake of improving his health. Before his death in 1905, he would also see the illness take the lives of both of his brothers, four of his children and one granddaughter.

Much of the controversy that surrounded MacDonald during his lifetime concerned his religious beliefs. After serving as the pastor of Trinity Congregational Church in Arundel, Scotland (1850-53), he was forced by members of his congregation to resign because they considered his often unorthodox beliefs (such as the ultimate salvation of the devil) to be heretical. Attempting to support his wife and eleven children, he gave literary lectures in London and published several essays, poems, and novels. Though many of his fictional works received harsh reviews from critics, they were widely read and respected by many of his contemporaries in the Victorian literary community, including by his friends Lewis Carroll and John Ruskin and by his financial benefactor Lady Byron (the wife of Romantic poet George Gordon, Lord Byron). However, MacDonald's literary works never made enough money to lift him and his

growing family out of poverty. These life experiences, combined with his growing disillusionment with the orthodox Christianity of his native Scotland, form the basis of what would become a unique and personal theology based on his notion of the personhood of God, his belief in an ideal unity between God and the individual, and the conviction that a good God would eventually redeem all of humanity.

Literary criticism of MacDonald's fictional works is dominated by two methods: the religious and the psychological. For years after the loss of his pulpit, MacDonald wrote essays that communicated his religious beliefs directly to what he considered to be a literary congregation. He also mentions or alludes to God and the spirit frequently in his novels, which indicates that he placed great importance upon communicating his religious beliefs to readers. Journals like *North Wind: The Journal of the George MacDonald Society* tend to focus primarily on the religious aspects of MacDonald's works. From a psychological standpoint, some scholars like Edmund Cusick in "George MacDonald and Jung" believe that the symbolism in the fantasy novels in particular lends itself well to a psychological interpretation through the lens of Jungian and/or Freudian psychology. Cusick, however, considers the theories of Carl Jung, rather than those of Sigmund Freud, to be more in agreement with the symbolism and personal philosophy of MacDonald. He claims:

I believe that Jungian models are far more suited to MacDonald's work. In Freudian psychology the unconscious is seen as the repository of conscious content that has been repressed, while in Jungian psychology the collective unconscious affords access to a spiritual realm which has never been conscious.

The difference between the two psychological schools is, very crudely...that one views the unconscious as biological, deterministic, and negative, while the other sees it as positive, spiritual and timeless. By 'negative' I mean that Freudian psychology is primarily concerned with unconscious manifestations in so far as they are pathological. The Jüngian (who also proceeds from the starting-point of the neurosis) sees the unconscious as a source of energy, perception and creativity, that may usefully be sought by any individual, not just the neurotic or schizophrenic. (58)

In his sermon "The Truth" MacDonald asserts his belief that "we learn God unconsciously" (379). Based on this statement, I believe that we may combine the religious and Jüngian analytic methods to explore the ways in which MacDonald attempts to lead both the reader and the novel's protagonist in *Phantastes* into a spiritual experience through an imaginative encounter with the unconscious.

For the purposes of this thesis, I will apply Jüng's characterization of "spirit" to my analysis of *Phantastes*. In "The Phenomenology of the Spirit," Jüng describes the spirit as follows:

To put it in modern language, spirit is the dynamic principle, forming for that very reason the classical antithesis of matter—the antithesis, that is, of its stasis and inertia. Basically it is the contrast between life and death. The subsequent differentiation of this contrast leads to the actually very remarkable opposition of spirit and nature. Even though spirit is regarded as essentially alive and enlivening, one cannot really feel nature as unspiritual and dead. (210)

He goes on to explain later in the essay that the spirit is characterized by, “firstly, the principle of spontaneous movement and activity; secondly, the spontaneous capacity to produce images independently of sense perception; and thirdly, the autonomous and sovereign manipulation of these images” (212). Using these descriptions of the spirit, I will explore how MacDonald combines the Romantic concept of the imagination with his own idea of God as the benevolent parent in *Phantastes* to create a spiritual experience for the protagonist Anodos and the reader that will foster the realization of their identities as children in relationship to the divine.

## CHAPTER ONE ROMANTIC THEOLOGY

In his essays, “The Imagination: Its Functions and Its Culture” and “The Fantastic Imagination” from *A Dish of Orts* (1893), George MacDonald establishes his views on the spiritual nature and function of the imagination. He similarly outlines his idealization of childhood in the sermon “A Child in the Midst” and the essay “A Sketch of Individual Development.” Writing in the philosophical and literary tradition of the British and German Romantics whose works greatly influenced him, he portrays imagination as a medium for the spiritual experience of the divine by the self through its symbolic language, its personal, individualistic nature, and its association with childhood. This chapter will focus primarily on MacDonald’s debt to Romantics Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Novalis, William Blake and William Wordsworth for his ideas concerning the nature and function of the imagination and the characteristics of the figure of ideal childhood.

In both British and German Romantic philosophy, the imagination serves as a vehicle for spiritual experience. It explores the inner reality of the individual through the development of introspective insight. In *The Romantic Imagination*, C.M. Bowra says:

...the Romantics obeyed an inner call to explore more fully the world of spirit. In different ways each of them believed in an order of things which is not that which we see and know, and this was the goal of their passionate search. They wished to penetrate to an abiding reality, to explore its mysteries, and by this to understand more clearly what life means and what it is worth. They were convinced that, though visible things are the instruments by which we find this reality, they are

not everything and have indeed little significance unless they are related to some embracing and sustaining power. (9)

According to this passage, the spirit in Romanticism is an autonomous entity separate from the forms of the physical world. It does, however, permeate every aspect of the physical world and the imagination of the individual to such an extent that, whenever the individual encounters a physical form in nature that inspires imagination, he/she participates in a spiritual activity.

While, as Bowra points out, each individual Romantic writer had his/her own unique views concerning the nature of this abiding spiritual reality, some writers like Coleridge associated spirit with the Christian God of their own religious beliefs. Some Christian Romantics considered the imagination to be a human replica of the very same divine faculty with which they believed God created the world. Bowra says, “Since for them [the imagination] is the very source of spiritual energy, they cannot but believe that it is divine, and that, when they exercise it, they in some way partake of the activity of God” (3). We see this view in Coleridge’s *Biographia Literaria* where he asserts that the human imagination creates in the same way that he believed God’s divine imagination creates:

The Imagination then I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary Imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM. The secondary Imagination I consider as an echo of the former, coexisting with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the

*kind* of its agency, and differing only in *degree*, and in the *mode* of its operation.

It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create: or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify.

(145-46)

Thus, when Coleridge imagines, he believes he perceives the mysteries of God and human existence with his primary imagination and translates the unutterable reality of the spiritual experience into symbolic forms using his secondary imagination. By dreaming or imagining, he participates in the act of creation and makes a work of art in his mind by embodying the spirit in symbols.

In Coleridgean Romanticism, symbol assumes the coexistence of two separate realities: the human and the divine. Of course, this assumption was not restricted to Coleridge. It characterized the philosophy of many other British and German Romantics as well. In *The Shape of German Romanticism*, Marshall Brown attributes this vision to the literary and philosophical influence of German mystic Jakob Böhme (1575-1624). He states:

For Böhme had already become the romantics' chief ally in their advocacy of a new, organic dualism. In his works they were able to find an explanation of evil and of the dynamic opposing forces of experience as emanations of a single divinity. Böhme's doctrine of two centers, in which nature is seen as a force (or center) independent of God yet still subordinate to Him, exercised a constant fascination for the romantics, and from the moment of his rediscovery Böhme's

conceptions largely dominated the romantic understanding of nature, even in the (relatively exceptional) cases where his influence was not acknowledged. (133)

An example of this philosophy's influence on other Romantic writers can be seen in Blake's poem, "The Lamb" from *Songs of Innocence* and its corresponding poem, "The Tyger" in *Songs of Experience*. In these poems, Blake contrasts the innocence, docility and peace of the lamb with the wildness and ferocity of the tiger, and asks the question that unites them both as creations of the same divine maker: "Did he who made the Lamb make thee?" ("The Tyger" ll. 20). Like Böhme, Blake struggles to reconcile these two opposing forces of innocence and experience, also seeing them as "emanations of a single divinity."

Coleridge's philosophy was likewise based on the same reconciliation of opposites. Böhme's influence on Coleridge can be seen at the beginning of Chapter Thirteen in *Biographia Literaria*:

...the transcendental philosopher says: Grant me a nature having two contrary forces, the one of which tends to expand infinitely, while the other strives to apprehend or *find* itself in this infinity, and I will cause the world of intelligences with the whole system of their representations to rise up before you. (141)

Like Böhme and Blake, Coleridge not only conceives of the world of spirit and matter in dualistic terms, he also categorizes them into a two-tiered hierarchy of existence with matter in a subordinate relationship to spirit. We may compare this view to Brown's observation that, in Böhme's philosophy, "Matter is potential divinity, spirit is actual divinity" (139). Thus, for Böhme, as for Coleridge, the human being, as the synthesis of

both spirit and matter, is in the constant process of attempting to realize the potential divinity of his humanity—to move from potential divinity to complete, actual divinity.

According to Coleridge's philosophy, symbols produced by the imagination provide the means by which the individual can experience the spiritual reality of his/her own existence. In *The Symbolic Imagination: Coleridge and the Romantic Tradition*, J. Robert Barth, S.J., says of Coleridge's ideas concerning the function of the imagination: "Deeper and more comprehensive than the understanding, the imagination is, in fact, a faculty of the transcendent, capable of perceiving and in some degree articulating transcendent reality—the reality of higher realms of being, including the divine" (21). As indicated by Barth, the individual, in Coleridge's view, perceives the spirit with his/her primary imagination, but is unable to articulate this experience using words or logical reasoning. Therefore, the imagination produces, or "creates" symbolic forms that embody the spirit, thereby making it perceptible to the human/material aspect of the individual without robbing it of the mystery of its divinity. Barth asserts:

In short, one can claim, in Coleridgean terms, that it is only imagination that can bring us to the full encounter with religious reality, because it is only symbolic language that resists the human drive for clarity and determinateness. The divine, the numinous, the transcendent, can never be encompassed by the clarity of "consequent Reasoning." It can only be intimated, guessed at, caught out of the corner of the eye; and for this, only the ambiguity of symbolic utterance will serve. (28)

The imagination, as the mediator between the spirit and the human, provides the individual with a spiritual experience in which he/she participates through the medium of symbol.

We also see several of these assumptions concerning the nature of the imagination in MacDonald's essay, "The Imagination: It's Functions and Its Culture," where he echoes many of Coleridge's assertions from *Biographia Literaria*. Like Coleridge, he claims that the human imagination is a replica of God's divine imagination:

The word ["imagination"] itself means *imaging* or a making of likenesses. The imagination is that faculty which gives form to thought—not necessarily uttered form, but form capable of being uttered in shape or in sound, or in any mode upon which the senses can lay hold. It is, therefore, that faculty in man which is likeliest to the prime operation of the power of God, and has, therefore, been called the *creative* faculty, and its exercise *creation*. (2)

MacDonald goes on to assert later in the essay that the imagination's function of "[putting] thought into form" (7) partakes of the divinity of God and reveals the divinity in the individual because, as he says in the essay "Opinion and Truth": "we are not *merely* human—we also are divine" (213). This belief in the dual nature of humankind mirrors the similar belief of Coleridge in its assumption that the individual is made up of both matter and spirit. It also assumes the necessity of imagination as a means of self-revelation because through it the individual becomes aware of his/her own spirituality. Without the imagination, as MacDonald indicates in this passage, the individual would possibly be left unaware of his/her divinity and would therefore be lacking in self-

knowledge since he/she would know only half of his/her nature. For MacDonald, symbols are one of the forms imagination gives to thought and are therefore vehicles for spiritual experience and self-realization by virtue of their connection to the divine in the human being.

MacDonald also follows the philosophies of Böhme, Blake and Coleridge in his beliefs concerning the ultimate source of symbolic forms. In his belief, any symbol that arises in the imagination appears because God puts it there, whether it is beautiful or horrific. He says in “The Imagination: Its Functions and Its Culture”: “a man no more *creates* the forms by which he would reveal his thoughts, than he creates those thoughts themselves” (5). Instead, he asserts, that “a man is rather *being thought* than *thinking*, when a new thought arises in his mind. He knew it not till he found it there, therefore he could not even have sent for it” (4). As MacDonald indicates in this passage, the imagination functions in this way because the purpose of its existence is to find the meaning of the individual’s own life and his/her relationship to that transcendent spiritual realm where God resides. To MacDonald, the language of symbols is naturally divine because it was placed in the imagination by God. He claims, “To inquire into what God has made is the main function of the imagination” (2), and he follows later in the essay with “the duty of the imagination [is] that of following and finding out the work that God maketh. Her part is to understand God ere she attempts to utter man” (12). From this passage, we can deduce that MacDonald considered this imaginative “following and finding out” of the divine a prerequisite for the realization of human identity. In “A Sketch of Individual Development,” he says, “Through the higher individuality [a person]

becomes aware of his own” (47). It is in seeking out the nature of the divinity within his/her own being that MacDonald believed the individual comes to a greater understanding of both God and him/herself because both share the same spirit.

MacDonald makes the reconciliation of the opposites of spirit and matter an important motif in his fantasy novels as well, portraying it as an essential aspect of Anodos’s personal journey in *Phantastes*. At the end of the last chapter in the novel, he says, “What we call evil, is the only and best shape, which, for the person and his condition at the time, could be assumed by the best good” (185). In this statement, MacDonald emphasizes his belief that, while the various symbolic figures Anodos encounters can be considered positive (the Beech tree) or negative (the Ash and Alder trees), all are ultimately put into his imagination by the same divine source and conspire to reconcile him with the divine parent, who is symbolized by maternal and paternal archetypal figures throughout the novel. Whether the symbolic figure is portrayed as good or evil has no bearing on its ultimate function. The ogress, for example, can be seen as an evil character because it is through his visit to her house that Anodos becomes aware of the infantile shadow of his ego (57). But the appearance of the shadow does not bring wickedness to Anodos. Rather, it reveals characteristics that are already a part of his nature. The visibility of the shadow makes growth and self-realization possible because it forces Anodos to recognize the duality of his own nature and his potential for greater maturity.

The imagination’s ability and tendency to create fantastic forms, both good and evil, operates according to the same principles in MacDonald’s philosophy as the aspect

of the imagination that calls forth symbols of elements in the waking world. The fantastic aspect of the imagination springs from the human need to reconcile opposites of spirit and matter, good and evil, within oneself.

One of the most influential literary figures on MacDonald's view of the fantastic imagination is German Romantic writer Friedrich Philipp von Hardenberg (1772-1801), known by the pseudonym "Novalis." Novalis was a poet and writer of fairy tales whose literary fantasy and philosophy MacDonald read intensely and sometimes translated. His works play an important role in *Phantastes*. Before the beginning of the first chapter of the novel, MacDonald includes a long quotation (likely his own translation) from Novalis and quotes from his works at several other points in the story. In this first quotation, we encounter a view of the dualistic nature of the imagination similar to that of Böhme and Coleridge. Novalis says: "In a genuine fairy-story, everything must be miraculous, mysterious, and interrelated; everything must be alive, each in its own way. The whole of Nature must be wondrously blended with the whole world of the Spirit" (3). In this passage, Novalis takes the conception of the imagination as the collaboration of spirit and matter a step further to apply it to the art of literature in general and to fantasy literature specifically, saying that, in order for a fairytale to function successfully as a work of fantastic literary art, it must embody the interplay between spirit and matter that characterizes both what it means to imagine and what it means to be human. By imagining, the reader can reconnect with the spirit and experience the "blend" or *balance* between spirit and matter (nature) within him/her that characterize his/her ideal state. In a

list of his sayings and observations called “Pollen,” Novalis characterizes the imagination and its symbolic language as the representation of the inner reality of the individual:

Imagination represents the afterlife either on high or in the depths or in metempsychosis. We dream of journeys through the universe, but is the universe not within us? We do not realize the profundities of our spirits. Inward is the direction of the mystic path. Within us or nowhere is eternity with its worlds of past and future. (66)

According to Novalis in this passage, the imagination is self-revealing in two ways. First, it represents the inner reality of the individual. And because the imagination speaks in the language of symbols, all symbolic forms the individual encounters in the imagination embody this reality within him/her. Second, his portrayal of the imagination denotes an eternal, timeless quality of this inner reality. The term “afterlife” indicates that Novalis considers this reality to be spiritual or supernatural in nature because it will continue to live long after the physical/human aspect of the individual has ceased to exist. For Novalis, the imagination embodies the individual’s connection to the roots of his/her identity and to the greater maturity and self-realization that are yet available.

Maturity, in MacDonald’s philosophy, is not possible without first realizing the child within oneself. For MacDonald, ideal childhood is the closest the human being can come to complete, actualized divinity and self-realization. In “A Child in the Midst,” he says, “the Lord has the heart of a child” (105) and “Childhood belongs to the divine nature” (109), indicating that he believes that God and the child share some aspects of their nature. The child within the individual is the natural, creative and insightful self.

MacDonald best characterizes the ideal child in comparison to a primrose in his essay “Wordsworth’s Poetry”:

You are walking in the woods, and you find the first primrose of the year. You feel almost as if you had found a child. You know in yourself that you have found a new beauty and a new joy, though you have seen it a thousand times before. It is a primrose. A little flower that looks at me, thinks itself into my heart, and gives me a pleasure distinct in itself, and which I feel as if I could not do without. The impassioned expression on the face of this little outspread flower is its childhood; *it means trust, consciousness of protection, faith, and hope.* (257-58, emphasis mine)

According to this passage, MacDonald believed that childhood was not necessarily an age, although he did think that it was most often found in young people. In “A Child in the Midst,” he laments that “there are children who are not childlike” (100). Rather, one could call MacDonald’s idea of childhood “the joy of simply *being*” that is characterized by the italicized descriptions in the above “Wordsworth’s Poetry” citation. We see a similar portrayal of childhood in William Blake’s “Infant Joy” from *Songs of Innocence*:

I have no name

I am but two days old. –

What shall I call thee?

*I happy am*

*Joy is my name, --*

Sweet joy befall thee! (ll. 1-6, emphasis mine)

In this passage from the poem, the child has no name or gender that associates him/her with society's expectations. He/she is named what he/she *is*—i.e. "Joy." This joy stems from the parent's delight in the child as he/she sings while the child smiles (ll. 10-11). It also comes from the hope the parent inspires by blessing the child with "Sweet joy befall thee!" (ll. 6, 12). This exhortation indicates the parent's hope that the infant will continue to experience the joy of childhood in the future.

Romantic portrayals of childhood likely influenced MacDonald's views of the ideal child, as they did Victorian ideas of childhood in general. Penny Kane says in *Victorian Families in Fact and Fiction* that a "prevalent view of the child's relationship with God in the mid-nineteenth century was that children were innocent and untouched by the wickedness of the world" (47). She attributes this Victorian view of childhood to the influence of the Romantics, pointing out its presence in the following lines of Wordsworth's "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" (1807):

Not in entire forgetfulness  
And not in utter nakedness,  
But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God, who is our home:  
Heaven lies about us in our infancy! (ll. 62-66, qtd. 48)

MacDonald's son Greville MacDonald later quotes the line last cited from the above poem in the biography *George MacDonald and His Wife*, referring to his father's conception of the child's connection with the divine (339). Responding to his father's

philosophy, Greville attributes to the child a kind of mystic vision, enabled by the “heaven about him” to see the divine both within himself and in the world (339), a quality that George MacDonald called “childlike insight.”

In George MacDonald’s fantasy novels, we see children often portrayed as both divine and the possessors of imaginative insight. In *Phantastes*, MacDonald places a little boy with a kaleidoscope into the path of Anodos as a symbolic revelation to him of the divine nature of ideal childhood. MacDonald describes the boy as follows:

Once, as I passed by a cottage, there came out a lovely fairy child, with two wondrous toys, one in each hand. The one was the tube through which the fairy-gifted poet looks when he beholds the same thing everywhere; the other that through which he looks when he combines into new forms of loveliness those images of beauty which his own choice has gathered from all regions wherein he has travelled. Round the child’s head was an aureole of emanating rays. (59-60)

In this passage, MacDonald combines the figure of the child with images of divinity and imaginative creativity. One could even compare the boy’s “two wondrous toys” to the primary and secondary imaginations from Coleridge’s *Biographia Literaria*. The first is the tube through which the poet/artist, gifted with insight from the spiritual, or supernatural realm, perceives the similarities of pattern and essence in the world around him. We may compare this toy to the primary imagination in its faculty of perception of realities. The second toy is similar to Coleridge’s secondary imagination in its function of combining the images from the primary imagination “into new forms.” The shining aureole around the child’s head associates him and his toys with the divine. MacDonald

goes on to explain that the child is just “a commonplace boy” wearing a straw hat and carrying a multiplying glass and a kaleidoscope (60). But by comparison to the passage from “Wordsworth’s Poetry,” it is evident that the “wonder and delight” (60) Anodos feels on seeing this child is similar to MacDonald’s experience of the primrose. He is encountering the glory of childhood in the child.

Drawing from his extensive reading of works by German and British Romantic writers, MacDonald establishes his own views concerning the nature and function of the imagination and its association with ideal childhood. For him, the imagination reveals the dual nature of spirit and human within the individual. It causes the individual to transcend the symbolic forms encountered in order to experience the divinity of his/her spiritual identity. Characterized by the figure of the child, this spiritual identity serves as the object of Anodos’s search for significance in *Phantastes*.

## CHAPTER TWO EXPERIENCING GOD THROUGH FANTASY

One of the most prominent themes in the fantasy works of George MacDonald is unity, or oneness. In *Phantastes* (1858), he fuses together different combinations of the child, mother and father archetypes to portray the nature of spiritual experience of the personhood of God through the symbolic forms in the imagination. Through his depiction of the tiny fairy woman, the mother and daughter in the cottage, the fairies among the flowers and the farmer's family, MacDonald characterizes the spiritual experience of what he believed to be the ideal state of oneness with the divine parent God as spontaneous, multi-faceted, beautiful, self-revealing, nurturing and instructive. He emphasizes that Anodos must undergo encounters with these characters if he is to recognize what MacDonald believed to be "spiritual truths" of *being* the child in relation to the mother archetype of the woman in the island house and *acting* as the child in his service to the father archetype of the knight.

Of the archetypes Carl Jung identifies in his essays on depth psychology, the three that are the primary focus of this paper are the figures of the child, mother and father. The reason for the emphasis on these archetypes is that MacDonald identifies the unity between parent and child as central to his religious philosophy. In his sermon "Freedom," he states, "Upon this truth—I do not mean the dogma, but the truth itself of Jesus in relationship to his Father—hangs the universe." He goes on to reiterate in the next paragraph: "*I and the Father are one* is the center-truth of the universe" (150). MacDonald considered this oneness between parent and child to be the ideal state of humankind, both in human relationships and in relation to the divine. In "The Creation in

Christ” he asks, “What is life in a child? Is it not perfect response to his parents, through oneness with them?” (41). This notion of oneness, or unity, depends upon a common theory in Western philosophy also frequently expressed in the British and German Romanticism that influenced MacDonald: that the parent/God is Other to the individual/child. MacDonald states, “Of no oneness comes unity—there can be no oneness where there is only one. For the very beginnings of unity there must be two” (*ibid.* 48). In MacDonald’s philosophy, Jesus served as the human example of spiritual maturity, or “sonship,” because of his oneness with God due to his willingness to recognize and acknowledge God as Father. MacDonald says, “while God is the father of his children, Jesus is the father of their childship” (*ibid.* 43). He remarks in “Abba, Father!”: “None but a *child* could become a *son*. The idea is a spiritual coming of age. *Only when the child is a man is he ready and fully a son*” (170). Similarly, he says later in the essay, “The childship is the lower condition of the upward process toward the sonship. It is the soil out of which the true sonship shall grow. It is the former without which the latter would be impossible” (*ibid.* 171). MacDonald considered this sonship to be the spiritual goal of the individual, since he believed it is his/her natural spiritual state. But first he believed that the human being must realize his/her identity as a child in relationship to the divine parent.

MacDonald assumed that all people have the same natural ability that he believed Jesus had to recognize the spiritual parenthood of God. But he thought that all human beings including himself had a tendency to reject this natural ability. He claims that, “The refusal to look up to God as our father is the one central wrong in the whole human affair.

The inability to do so is our one central misery” (*ibid.* 165). Later in the essay, he adds his belief that the child’s rejection of his/her identity does not mean that the identity does not belong to him/her:

However bad I may be, I am the child of God. And therein lies my blame. Ah, I would not lose my blame! In my blame lies my hope. It is the pledge of what I am and what I am not. It is the pledge of what I am meant to be, and what I shall one day be—the child of God in spirit and in truth. (*ibid.* 168)

According to the passage above, MacDonald believed that humankind was heading toward this ideal state of childhood—that all are, as he thought Jesus did, gradually becoming more their natural selves, more true sons and daughters. He says in “The Creation in Christ”: “The Christ in us is the spirit of the perfect child toward the perfect father. The Christ in us is our own true nature made to blossom within us by the Lord, whose life is the light of men, that it may become that life of men. Our true nature is childhood to the Father” (50). It is this ideal state of childhood, this *oneness* that MacDonald portrays as the symbolic ideal by combining archetypal figures of child and mother or father into the same spiritual experience for the protagonist Anodos in *Phantastes*.

An archetype, as Jung explains in “The Psychology of the Child Archetype,” is a psychological phenomenon that occurs in the collective unconscious and appears consistently in the consciousness as a symbolic figure. He states:

...the archetype is an element of our psychic structure and thus a vital and necessary component in our psychic economy. It represents or personifies certain

instinctive data of the dark, primitive psyche, the real but invisible roots of consciousness. (126)

Although MacDonald began writing his fantasy novels years before Jung ever put a pen to paper, we can trace some pre-Jungian elements in his fiction. The child is one of the most common archetypes to appear in MacDonald's works: Diamond and Nanny in *At the Back of the North Wind*, the "Little Ones" in *Lilith*, Princess Irene, Curdie and the goblins in *The Princess and the Goblin*, and Mossy and Tangle in "The Golden Key."

Jung discusses the child archetype:

Statements like "The child motif is a vestigial memory of one's own childhood" and similar explanations merely beg the question. But if, giving this proposition a slight twist, we were to say, "The child motif is a picture of certain *forgotten* things in our childhood," we are getting closer to the truth. Since, however, the archetype is always an image belonging to the whole human race and not merely to the individual, we might put it better this way: "The child motif represents the pre-conscious aspect of the collective psyche." ("The Psychology of the Child Archetype" 126-27)

He goes on to explain in the next paragraph:

Visionary experiences of this kind, whether they occur in dreams or in the waking state, are, as we know, conditional on a dissociation having previously taken place between past and present. Such dissociations come about because of various incompatibilities; for instance, a man's present state may come into conflict with his childhood state, or he may have violently sundered himself from his original

character in the interests of some arbitrary persona more in keeping with his ambitions. He has thus become unchildlike and artificial, and has lost his roots. All this presents a favourable opportunity for an equally vehement confrontation with the primary truth. (127)

MacDonald's philosophy is similar to Jung's theory on the nature of the child archetype in its assumption that the child represents the natural, pre-conscious state of the individual. He believed that the individual human being has become disconnected from that natural, pre-conscious self and has instead adopted a persona placed upon him/her by society. As I will demonstrate in my analysis of *Phantastes*, every encounter Anodos has with the child figure comes after or while he is experiencing this crisis or division of self.

The anima archetype differs from that of the child in the role she plays as a symbol in the hero's journey toward spiritual maturity. In Jungian depth psychology, the anima is what M.-L. von Franz describes in "The Process of Individuation" as:

...a personification of all feminine psychological tendencies in a man's psyche, such as vague feelings and moods, prophetic hunches, receptiveness to the irrational, capacity for personal love, feeling for nature, and—last but not least—his relation to the unconscious. (*Man and His Symbols* 186)

One of the most significant anima figures in the human psyche is the mother. In "The Dual Mother," Jung says, "the 'mother,' as the first incarnation of the anima archetype, personifies in fact the whole unconscious" or is "the gateway into the unconscious, into the 'realm of Mothers'" (*Jung On Mythology* 157). He goes on to say:

Whoever sets his foot in this realm submits his conscious ego-personality to the controlling influence of the unconscious, ... For regression, if left undisturbed, does not stop short at the “mother” but goes back beyond her to the prenatal realm of the “Eternal Feminine,” to the immemorial world of archetypal possibilities where, “thronged round with images of all creation,” slumbers the “divine child,” patiently awaiting his conscious realization. (157)

In MacDonald’s philosophy, the mother archetype always means more than just her motherhood as well. This “prenatal realm” she personifies is in MacDonald’s belief equated with the pre-conscious oneness between the child and the divine parent (mother *and* father) that he believed human beings once possessed and to which it is their natural goal to return. MacDonald’s philosophy is in agreement with Jung’s in its connection of childhood with pre-consciousness and the “world of archetypal possibilities.” But the return to this childhood requires conscious realization as well. For MacDonald it requires recognition of the divine parent. In “Abba, Father!” he says, “[God] would make such sons and daughters as shall be his sons and daughters not merely by having *come* from his heart, but by having *returned* thither” (173). As I will demonstrate in my analysis of *Phantastes*, the mother figure often (though not always) appears to Anodos in conjunction with the appearance of the child archetype as a personification of what MacDonald believed to be the reality of ideal oneness between the individual and the person of the parent God.

In *Phantastes*, the divine mother can be associated with spirituality in general and the Christian God specifically. It is important to note that although MacDonald referred

to God as “Father,” he compares God’s nature to that of both mother *and* father throughout his sermons and essays. In “A Sketch of Individual Development,” he asserts, “There is no type so near the highest idea of relation to a God, as that of the child to his mother. Her face is God, her bosom Nature, her arms are Providence—all love—one love—to him an undivided bliss” (44). In “Maturation and Education in George MacDonald’s Fairy Tales,” Dieter Petzold says of this type of figure in another of MacDonald’s fairytales “The Fairy Fleet, an English Marchen” (1866): “Without exhausting the rich symbolism of this figure—typical of MacDonald’s many grandmother-figures—we may safely interpret her as a representative of God and, at the same time, a personification of the imagination and the unconscious” (17). God as parent fills the role of both mother and father to MacDonald and it is this principle that he personifies in the parent/child relationships in *Phantastes*. In his sermon, “The Truth,” he claims, “I believe that every fact in nature is a revelation of God, is there such as it is because God is such as He is; and I suspect that all its facts impress us so that we learn God *unconsciously*” (379, emphasis mine). MacDonald does not elaborate on what he means by “unconsciously.” And because he wrote *Phantastes* many years before Freud and Jüing began publishing their theories on psychoanalysis and depth psychology, we cannot know for sure whether or to what extent MacDonald would have agreed with their definitions of the unconscious. But for the sake of argument in this thesis, let us assume that he and Jüing define the unconscious in the same way. In the essay “On the Psychology of the Unconscious,” Jüing says of the unconscious:

There are present in every individual, besides his personal memories, the great “primordial” images, as Jacob Burckhardt once aptly called them, the inherited possibilities of human imagination as it was from time immemorial. The fact of this inheritance explains the truly amazing phenomenon that certain motifs from myths and legends repeat themselves the world over in identical forms. (*Jüing On Mythology* 62)

Therefore, if we adhere to this definition of the unconscious and apply it to MacDonald’s statement from “The Truth” above, we may gather from the sermon passage that, when the individual encounters the unconscious, MacDonald believed that he/she encounters the spirit in general and the Christian God specifically. The association of the mother figure in *Phantastes* with the anima archetype denotes a spiritual experience of God as parent whenever Anodos encounters the anima in the form of the mother because he encounters through this archetype the “spiritual truth” of the oneness between child and divine parent that MacDonald believed one experiences unconsciously.

The archetype of the father plays a different psychological role than that of the mother, but it is still a gateway to the spirit in both Jüngian analysis and the philosophy of MacDonald. In “The Phenomenology of the Spirit,” Jüing says of the father archetype:

In dreams, it is always the father-figure from whom the decisive convictions, prohibitions, and wise counsels emanate. The invisibility of this source is frequently emphasized by the fact that it consists simply of an authoritative voice which passes final judgments. Mostly, therefore, it is the figure of a “wise old man” who symbolizes the spiritual factor. Sometimes the part is played by a

“real” spirit, namely the ghost of one dead, or, more rarely, by grotesque gnomelike figures or talking animals. (214-15)

Similarly, the father figure in the fantasy works of MacDonald is evasive and often divine, appearing at times as a bodiless voice and often in conjunction with the appearance of the child archetype. In his sermons, MacDonald refers to God as “Father,” thereby associating the father archetype in his fantasy works with spirituality. Jung says that: “In both sexes the spirit can also take the form of a boy or youth” (215). The father archetype is also personified as a boy or in conjunction with the child archetype in *Phantastes*. This chapter will discuss three separate occasions of this psychological phenomenon in *Phantastes* where the father archetype combines with the child archetype to create a spiritual experience for the character Anodos of what MacDonald believed to be the spiritual reality of oneness between the child and the divine father.

One of the first combinations of archetypes in the novel is the fairy woman who appears to Anodos at the beginning of the first chapter. Typical of an encounter with the unconscious and the spirit as Jung defines them, she is “a vision spontaneously experienced” (“On the Psychology of the Child Archetype” 124), whom Anodos suddenly encounters in the doorway to a cupboard he is exploring. MacDonald describes her as follows:

...a tiny woman-form, as perfect in shape as if she had been a small Greek statuette roused to life and motion, her dress was of a kind that could never grow old-fashioned, because it was simply natural: a robe plaited in a band around the neck, and confined by a belt about the waist, descended to her feet. (*Phantastes* 7)

To Anodos, the most important and arresting feature of the woman initially is her size. The effect is so startling to him that the first words of response out of the woman's mouth are, "Anodos, you never saw such a little creature before, did you?" to which he replies, "No...and indeed I hardly believe I do now" (7). In Jungian depth psychology, dwarfish figures often appear in consciousness as a variant of the child archetype ("On the Psychology of the Child Archetype" 124). The woman's size makes her this type of figure, thereby associating her with the child.

The tiny woman's appearance at this point in the novel is not accidental. She appears at the time of an identity crisis in Anodos's life. Not only is it his twenty-first birthday, the day he officially becomes an adult, but he has just inherited the legal rights to a set of keys to a secretary that holds his late father's papers. Access to this secretary is very important to him because his father's personal history has remained unknown to him so far (*Phantastes* 6) and he believes that the papers will bring some of the facts of that history to light. Anodos's ignorance of who his father was and what he believed indicates a lack of personal identity, regardless of the general knowledge he has about his family's social and economic history. The lady tells him, "I dare say you know something of your great-grandfathers a good deal further back than that; but you know very little about your great-grandmothers on either side" (8). It is evident from this passage that Anodos knows very little about the paternal figures in his family and even less about the maternal figures. Significantly, the tiny fairy woman also reminds Anodos of the fairy story he had been reading with his sister the night before, revealing that the supernatural realm has

already been encroaching on Anodos's waking world. The woman's presence here is in answer to his question regarding the way to enter fairyland.

In this scene, MacDonald makes the reader very aware of Anodos's ignorance concerning the personal characters of his parents and other ancestors, revealing his lack of knowledge of his own origins. It sets the tone for the rest of the novel, demonstrating that Anodos's wanderings through fairyland are actually a search for the parent (the mother and the father) to determine the roots of his own identity, although it will take most of the novel for him to realize this. Instead of finding the answers through his father's papers which would likely disclose his physical, social and economic origins, he will enter the imaginative world of symbol where he will find the elements of spiritual mother and father that reside in his unconscious.

In answer to Anodos's disbelief in both her existence and her power, the child archetype of the fairy woman transforms herself into the anima, the hidden, unconscious side of Anodos's own self:

So saying, she leapt from the desk upon the floor, where she stood a tall, gracious lady, with pale face and large blue eyes. Her dark hair flowed behind, wavy but uncurled, down to her waist, and against it her form stood clear in its robe of white. (7-8)

Several scholars, including David Holbrook, identify the "tall, gracious lady" as the anima in MacDonald's mind. In *A Study of George MacDonald and the Image of Woman*, Holbrook discusses the anima archetype:

Once one begins to explore such symbolism [the facets of the woman figure], it is possible to see why, in the fantasies of George MacDonald, woman is pursued through faery lands, as if there were some meaning to be found from her, of a spiritual kind, since this woman who creates, who is the object of our love, and who absorbs us in death, seems to hold the mystery of the universe in her being.

(13)

In the *Phantastes* scene, the anima's tall stature, dark flowing hair and white robe prefigure the appearance of the symbolic character North Wind, who serves as a mother figure for the child Diamond in MacDonald's *At the Back of the North Wind* (1871). Edmund Cusick also calls this type of figure the "anima" in "George MacDonald and Jüng" (68) and what he calls "her more benign aspect" (67) can be traced throughout MacDonald's fantasy works as a benevolent guide, appearing as Lona, Mara and Eve in *Lilith*, Great-Grandmother Irene in *The Princess and the Goblin* and *The Princess and Curdie*, and the woman Tangle calls "Grandmother" in "The Golden Key."

In the first chapter of *Phantastes*, the newly-transformed fairy woman's beauty and Anodos's initial response to her as lover also identify her as the anima. He originally mistakes her for the lover: "Overcome with the presence of a beauty which I could now perceive, and drawn towards her by an attraction irresistible as incomprehensible, I suppose I stretched out my arms towards her" (8). Innately attracted to beauty, Anodos desires unity with the figure of the anima, the representation of his unconscious, indicating a need to bring balance between the conscious and unconscious aspects of his psyche. His desire to touch the woman along with her warning that he should not fall in

love with her indicates that he confuses this kind of psychological unity with sexuality. But she stops him, correcting the misperception by revealing that she is his grandmother. She redirects his view of the anima as lover to the more correct understanding of her as mother. He claims that she is not his physical grandmother, showing that he misunderstands his experience as physical rather than spiritual. But he will gradually gain this understanding through his episodic experiences in the novel until he finally reaches the island house and recognizes the woman as “mother.” By then, he will have learned to respond to her as a child, rather than as a lover.

Following his encounter with the fairy woman, Anodos comes to the border of fairyland where he encounters the woman in the cottage and her daughter. This mother/daughter pair is one of two in the novel where MacDonald combines the mother and child archetypes as separate figures together into a single episode—the other being the farmer’s wife and daughter. Anodos encounters the mother/daughter pair in much the same way that he encounters the tiny fairy woman: he experiences their presence spontaneously. The daughter suddenly appears before him, coming from the depths of the “darkest portion of the forest” (11) that signifies the unconscious. Anodos finds the mother when he spots smoke from her chimney drifting over the tops of the trees (12). As with the tiny fairy woman, the suddenness of the appearance of the mother and daughter indicates their identity as symbols of the unconscious that spring unexpectedly into the conscious imagination.

Like most of the symbolic figures Anodos encounters during his wanderings, the mother and daughter remain nameless, which shows both their symbolic nature and the

unity of identity between them. Unlike the tiny fairy woman, the mother and daughter are not child and mother in one figure, but in two. MacDonald demonstrates their parent/child unity, however, by leaving them unnamed so as not to further distinguish them from one another. There is also no verbal communication between the two that would emphasize their individual autonomy as completely separate characters. When the daughter enters the cottage, she and her mother never speak to each other. The only interaction between them during Anodos's stay in the cottage is the smile of mutual understanding they exchange when the daughter comes through the door (15). After that, they both set about the same task of performing household duties, almost acting as one character in trying to make Anodos feel at home.

MacDonald also shows the parent/child unity between the mother and daughter by having them serve the same function in Anodos's wanderings through fairyland. The mother and daughter both serve as the "wise woman guide" that Jungian mythologist Joseph Campbell identifies as the spiritual factor in the first stage of the hero's journey in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (71). Their position in the story at the beginning of Anodos's adventures is a factor that places them in this role. Anodos's encounter with the mother and daughter as guide is both self-revealing and instructive, associating these characteristics with the experience of the child/mother combination. When he first stumbles upon the daughter walking through the forest, she gives him advice about which of the forest trees to trust and which to avoid (11). Her warning to "shun the Ash and Alder" is particularly significant because, although Anodos allows himself to be seduced by the disguised Alder maiden later in the novel, he is able to recognize her when she

takes her true form and tries to hand him over to the Ash tree. Because of this advice, he also recognizes the Ash and escapes before he is attacked (46-7). Back in the cottage, the girl's mother elaborates on her advice (14, 16), making Anodos even more aware of the urgency in avoiding these particular trees.

Another aspect of the mother and daughter figures as a two-person "wise woman guide" is the way in which they reveal facets of Anodos's identity that have so far been unknown to him. As soon as he enters the cottage, the mother says to him, "You have fairy blood in you" (13). Traditionally, fairies and other magical creatures are associated with the realm of spirit and the supernatural. This statement that Anodos is a spiritual creature descended from spiritual creatures reinforces the assertion made by the tiny fairy woman who claims to be his grandmother and reminds him that he is ignorant of the history of the women in his family. By the time Anodos reaches the cottage, MacDonald has established for the reader that Anodos's grandmother has fairy blood. But Anodos's surprised response to the mother in the cottage shows that he is not yet convinced of this. Because the "wise woman guide" traditionally provides the hero with invaluable information and help as to the nature and object of his journey, the fact that this woman must remind Anodos of his fairy ancestry even after he has seen the grandmother figure, reinforces the object of his journey as a search for the divine parent and his own spiritual identity.

Anodos's experience with the child archetype takes on a different character when he encounters fairies that live among the flowers along the path into fairyland. The difference between this scene and those previously discussed is that several child figures

appear here and they are all connected with the disembodied voice of the father archetype. Like all of Anodos's encounters with archetypes thus far, the experience is spontaneous:

They seemed to inhabit [the flowers], as snails in their shells; but I was sure some of them were intruders, and belonged to the gnomes or goblin-fairies, who inhabit the ground and earthy creeping plants. From the cups of Arum lilies, creatures with great heads and grotesque faces shot up like Jack-in-the-box, and made grimaces at me; or rose slowly and slyly over the edge of the cup, and spouted water at me, slipping suddenly back... (23)

The sudden, spontaneous nature of the fairies' appearance connects them to the unconscious and associates them with Anodos's encounters with the tiny fairy woman and the mother and daughter in the cottage. The reader is likely beginning to notice a pattern in Anodos's experiences at this point. Later in the novel, Anodos will not be able to enter a chamber where thousands of statues are dancing in the moonlight unless he experiences a spontaneous urge to peek behind the curtain. If he makes any plans to catch the statues dancing, he will only find still, solid statues in the chamber. By that point in the novel, he will have become aware of the sudden nature of unconscious and spiritual experience and will be able to use it to his advantage to find the one statue he seeks among the many (110-11). But it will take several episodes of spontaneous spiritual experience of symbols for him to become conscious of its underlying pattern.

The encounter with the flower fairies also reveals the great need for spiritual identity that makes Anodos's journey through fairyland and his encounters with the

parent and child archetypes necessary. As MacDonald demonstrates through the previous encounters with the child and mother archetypes, Anodos is ignorant of the spiritual and unconscious inheritance from his parents and is uncertain of his own identity. The revelation that he has supernatural fairy ancestors reveals that his identity is not what he assumed before his journey into fairyland. Due to his education by society, Anodos's ego has been divided, with characteristics that do not fit (spirituality and childhood, for example) being forced back into his unconscious. In "The Psychology of the Child Archetype" Jung states:

Where, for instance, numerous homunculi, dwarfs, boys, etc., appear, having no individual characteristics at all, there is the probability of a *dissociation*. ... But if the plurality occurs in normal people, then it is the representation of an as yet incomplete synthesis of personality. The personality (viz., the "self") is still in the *plural stage*, i.e., an ego may be present, but it cannot experience its wholeness within the framework of its own personality, only within the community of the family, tribe, or nation; it is still in the stage of unconscious identification with the plurality of the group. (130)

There are many similarities between this passage from Jung and Anodos's scene with the flower fairies in *Phantastes*. Here we have what MacDonald identifies as a combination of both fairy children and "goblin-fairies." All Anodos sees is a multitude of faces peeking around the flowers. There is no distinction between each child/goblin figure. And like the mother and daughter in the cottage, not one is named.

It is no coincidence that Anodos encounters the flower fairies immediately after he leaves the cottage where the wise woman guide has told him she sees traces of fairy blood in him. At this point, Anodos may have begun to associate spirituality with his ancestors, but he has still not reached the point of claiming it as part of his own selfhood. His self is still in the “plural stage” because his ego has always associated itself with the identity he adopted in order to fit into his society in the waking world. The woman in the cottage makes a significant statement after observing that he has fairy blood when she says, “from your education and the activity of your mind, you have felt [the need to be near fairyland and eat of its food] less than I” (13). The new revelations of spiritual ancestry bring other facets of Anodos’s self into his consciousness. The result is this “incomplete synthesis of personality” where repressed elements embody themselves in his conscious imagination as the plural child archetype, with many of the elements that have been consciously repressed to his own psychological detriment likely taking the more menacing forms of the goblins.

Although the presence of the father archetype in this scene is not as obvious as the presence of the anima in the tiny fairy woman and the mother and daughter at the cottage, it is nevertheless very much a part of Anodos’s encounter with the flower fairies and his spiritual journey as a whole. There is a striking similarity between Jung’s “grotesque gnomelike figures” from his “The Phenomenology of the Spirit” essay and MacDonald’s gnomes and goblin-fairies. This comparison identifies the flower fairies as the father archetype in addition to the archetype of the child. The similarities go further to include the authoritative, disembodied voice in this scene: “I heard them saying to each other,

evidently intending me to hear, but the speaker always hiding behind his tuft, when I looked in his direction, “Look at him! Look at him! He has begun a story without a beginning, and it will never have any end. He! he! he! Look at him!” (*Phantastes* 24). Even though the voice is jovial and somewhat mocking, the speaker says something true about Anodos’s situation in this episode. Anodos does not know who he is or exactly what he seeks. Therefore, his story in this sense has no beginning—no roots. Toward the end of the novel, the woman in the island house tells two young warriors that she will send Anodos on a mission to help them because throughout most of the novel, “He is wandering now without an aim” (149). In the scene with the flower fairies, his aimlessness is clear. The voice of the father in this episode provides Anodos with insightful self-revelation and the challenge and motivation to find a purpose in his journey. But it will take most of the novel for Anodos to find the father figure in the knight and discover the aim of his search.

In the episode where Anodos visits the home of a farmer and his family, MacDonald demonstrates how he is educated concerning the correct nature of the parent/child relationship when he sees a “right” relationship in contrast to a “wrong” one. Again, the way in which the farmhouse suddenly appears before Anodos at the edge of the forest associates it with the unconscious (48). In the house, MacDonald sets up the mother as the true spiritual parent for her daughter because of her recognition of the unconscious spirit world. Like the woman in the cottage early in the novel, she gives Anodos advice and counsel concerning his wanderings and troubles in fairyland, acting as another form of the “wise woman guide.” Anodos even compares her to the woman in

the cottage: “I thanked her warmly for her solution [to his concerns about being betrayed by the Alder and Ash trees], though it was but partial; wondering much that in her, as in the woman I met on my first entering the forest, there should be such superiority to her apparent condition” (49-50).

Like the mother, the daughter also believes in fairyland and she demonstrates the like-mindedness with her mother that characterizes the ideal parent/child relationship to such an extent that her wonder at the world and knowledge of her origins emanate from her. Anodos has been doubting the reality of his experiences in fairyland since he first left the forest. But he only has to look into her eyes and there is no question that what he has seen is real (50) and he “believe[s] in Fairy Land again.” He confesses to the mother: “When I looked out of the window this morning ... I felt almost certain that Fairy Land was all a delusion of my brain; but whenever I come near you or your little daughter, I feel differently” (53). The daughter is also very aware of her familial roots in fairyland. She reminds her father that her mother is descended from the fairy princess in the fairytale “The White Cat” (51). In addition, the mother and daughter have access to a bedchamber that looks out onto the forest of the unconscious and serves as a stopping place for many supernatural figures from fairyland. That this chamber is a place for sleeping and dreaming and has a view of the forest associates the mother and daughter with the world of dreams and the unconscious.

Standing in sharp contrast to the mother and daughter is the father/son pair of the farmer and his son. Unlike his wife, the farmer does not believe in fairyland, even though his house sits right on the border between fairyland and the waking world. He says to

Anodos: “For although I have lived on the borders of [fairyland] all my life, I have been too busy to make journeys of discovery into it. Nor do I see what I could discover. It is only trees and trees, till one is sick of them” (52). The farmer reveals to Anodos that, due to his lack of insight into the world of spirit (the forest of the unconscious), he is not the spiritual parent. Rather, he represents the waking world of “sense” both the “common sense” of his society and the belief that something is only true if he can perceive it with his senses and understand it with his reason. His wife laments, “He cannot believe beyond his [senses], which give him no intimations of this [supernatural] kind” (49). The fact that his house is on the border of fairyland is significant because it shows that, even though the farmer does not believe it, he actually inhabits two different worlds: the physical world and the world of the spirit/unconscious. Like Anodos at the beginning of the novel, however, he identifies only with the physical world of sense and disowns the spiritual one, making him an unbalanced figure who fails in his role as spiritual parent because he cannot achieve balance between the conscious and unconscious aspects of his psyche.

Another way in which the farmer falls short of the ideal parent of MacDonald’s philosophy is that he thinks he is of one mind and will with his son, although it is apparent that just the opposite is true. Not only does the son know the right path back into fairyland (54) —which shows that he has explored the realm of the unconscious before— he pretends to laugh along as his father makes fun of a time his mother demonstrated her supernatural powers. But Anodos notices that, to some extent, the boy still believes in fairyland. He says, “I watched him [laugh], and saw that, as soon as it was over, he

looked scared, as if he dreaded some evil consequences to follow his presumption” (51). It is clear that the son’s laughter is affected and he does it only to gain his father’s approval. Unfortunately, Anodos does not stay long in the farmer’s house before he begins to behave in the same way.

Anodos’s encounter with the farmer as a wrong parent figure causes him to revert temporarily to the disbelief in fairyland that he exhibited at the beginning of the novel, and all of his spiritual growth and self-realization seem to have momentarily been erased. Instead of identifying Anodos with the childhood that MacDonald believed was essential for spiritual maturity into sonship, the farmer appeals to Anodos’s pride and associates him with the adult world, saying: “you speak like a sensible *man*, sir” (51, emphasis mine). With his very presence, the farmer causes Anodos to doubt his identity as the spiritual descendant of spiritual beings, making him pass fairyland off as an illusion in order to be accepted. As soon as Anodos sees the farmer’s face, he begins to doubt the truth of what he has experienced in fairyland:

... [the farmer’s face and manner] produced such a reaction in me, that, for a moment, I could hardly believe that there was a Fairy Land; and that all I had passed through since I left home, had not been the wandering dream of a diseased imagination, operating on a too mobile frame, not merely causing me indeed to travel, but peopling for me with vague phantoms the regions through which my actual steps had led me. (50)

The effect of the farmer on Anodos’s belief in his own spiritual and unconscious ancestry stands in sharp contrast to the experiences with parent figures he has had thus far in the

novel. It also has the opposite effect from that of the daughter's face, which inspires Anodos once again to believe in fairyland when he looks into her eyes. The fact that the farmer calls Anodos "sir" and "man" instead of "boy" or "child" invokes false, prideful feelings of autonomy within Anodos and causes him to forget his place as son and grandson in a spiritual family line. He is not yet ready to become a man, or the spiritually mature *son*, because he has not recognized his identity as a child.

The farmer's wife, in contrast, demonstrates her identity as true spiritual parent and reminds Anodos of his own identity as spiritual child through the way she addresses him while he is at the house. She says, "Ah, my poor *boy*, you have come from the wood!" (48, emphasis mine), and "It is no wonder [the Ash and Alder] could delude a *child* like you" (49, emphasis mine). Because it is Anodos's twenty-first birthday, he, like the farmer's house, is actually on a border: he between childhood and adulthood, the farm between fairyland and the physical, waking world. He could only live as a "sensible" adult if he allied himself solely with the physical world of the farmer. But if he is to follow MacDonald's philosophy that a man must be a child to become a spiritually mature son, he must first recognize the child within himself. In the episodic experiences up until this point, Anodos has been learning this principle, however imperfectly he may be retaining it. That, I believe, is why, when the farmer's wife calls him "boy," he responds positively: "I should have ill endured, the day before, to be called *boy*; but now the motherly kindness of the word went to my heart; and, like a boy indeed, I burst into tears" (48). In this scene, Anodos sees what MacDonald considered to be a "spiritual truth" of his own identity as child in a parent/child relationship. He realizes that, in his

natural self, he is still a child in relation to a spiritual parent. And for this moment, he is not afraid to make himself vulnerable by weeping before the farmer's wife and relating to her as "mother."

Anodos finally recognizes the child within himself and becomes reconciled to the mother figure as the source of his spiritual identity when he encounters the anima archetype in the woman in the island house. In the chapter before this scene, his fruitless, obsessive love for the Lady of the Marble has taken him away from his original search for the divine parent and through a wasteland of parched, rocky earth and severe weather, where he is so weary and hopeless that he wishes to die. When he finally dives into the waters of the unconscious, he glimpses that pre-conscious "realm of mothers," which the anima archetype personifies. Anodos recalls:

I stood one moment and gazed into the heaving abyss beneath me; then plunged headlong into the mounting wave below. A blessing, like the kiss of a mother, seemed to alight on my soul; a calm, deeper than that which accompanies a hope deferred, bathed my spirit. I sank far in the waters, and sought not to return. I felt as if once more the great arms of the beech tree were around me, soothing me after the miseries I had passed through, and telling me, like a little sick child, that I should be better tomorrow. (126)

Here we see the waters of the unconscious comfort Anodos like a mother and make him temporarily forget his troubles. This scene can even represent the womb, where Anodos's old life and self-understanding die, and he is born into the island house to the mother who awaits him there. As the anima figure, this woman belongs to the unconscious. Her house

even sits on an island in the middle of the sea of the unconscious, and it disappears back beneath the waves as soon as Anodos returns to the main shore. When Anodos is born as a new child into her house, he is born into the unconscious and experiences his childhood and the nature of the divine mother. The reader can associate the water with the sea Anodos saw in the tiny fairy woman's eyes that initially drew him to fairyland at the beginning of the novel (8-9). What happens in the house on the island is the culmination of that initial vision of the waters of the unconscious.

Anodos associates the woman herself with the mother figure of the anima archetype. When he first sees her, he notices: "Over the fire hung a little pot, and over the pot bent a woman-face, the most wonderful, I thought, that I had ever beheld. For it was older than any countenance I had ever looked upon" (129). Her age and association with the household tasks of the Victorian mother figure associate her with the mother archetype and the grandmother figure of the tiny fairy woman. Her eyes—traditionally associated with the spirit and with the seas of the unconscious in the tiny fairy woman's eyes—reveal her to be a supernatural creature whose true being is ageless. Anodos recalls:

But the moment I saw her eyes, I no longer wondered at her [sweet, young-sounding] voice: they were absolutely young—those of a woman of five-and-twenty, large, and of a clear gray. Wrinkles had beset them all about; the eyelids themselves were old, and heavy, and worn; but the eyes were the very incarnations of soft light. (129)

In her eyes, this mother figure's embodiment of the "Eternal Feminine" is evident. She is both old and young, full of aged wisdom and youthful sweetness—the embodiment of the ideal mother to MacDonald.

After all of the experiences Anodos has had with the anima archetype so far, he has finally learned to recognize his own identity as child in relation to this mother figure. MacDonald describes Anodos's response to her as follows:

A wondrous sense of refuge and repose came upon me. I felt like a boy who has got home from school, miles across the hills, through a heavy storm of wind and snow. ... I could not help laying my head on her bosom, and bursting into happy tears. She put her arms round me, saying, "Poor child; poor child!"

As I continued to weep, she gently disengaged herself; and, taking a spoon, put some of the food (I did not know what it was) to my lips, entreating me most endearingly to swallow it. To please her, I made an effort, and succeeded. She went on feeding me like a baby, with one arm round me, till I looked up in her face and smiled: then she gave me the spoon, and told me to eat, for it would do me good. I obeyed her, and found myself wonderfully refreshed. (129)

The way the farmer's wife addresses Anodos as "child" prefigures this scene in the island house. Anodos is not afraid to identify this woman as "mother," to be vulnerable enough to cry in her presence, and to let her feed him a food that is unfamiliar to him. After she begins to sing, he says of her: "I felt as if she could give me everything I wanted; as if I should never wish to leave her, but would be content to be sung to and fed by her, day after day, as years rolled by" (134). The "motherly care" of the mother as anima figure

awakens the “divine child” within Anodos that Jüng speaks of in “The Dual Mother” (157) and causes him to associate it with his own being, thereby making the experience of her motherhood a revelation of his own identity as the child.

But Anodos’s search for the spiritual parent is not over, even when he realizes his childhood in relation to the divine mother in the island house. He has become a spiritual child in the presence of the mother. But his journey has indicated that he searches for the divine father as well. Reconciliation with the father is why the woman in the island house sends him onward on his journey. Anodos recalls this parting:

Then putting her arms around me, she held me to her bosom; and as I kissed her, I felt as if I were leaving my mother for the first time, and could not help weeping bitterly. At length she gently pushed me away, and with the words, “Go, my son, and do something worth doing,” turned back, and, entering the cottage, closed the door behind her. (144)

In “Death’s Ecstasies: Transformation and Rebirth in George MacDonald’s *Phantastes*,” Joseph Sigman remarks on this moment in the novel: “Anodos’s separation from the Wise Woman as her island, like Atlantis, sinks into the sea at the end of chapter 19 begins a whole new phase of his development” (217). The parting is that of a mother sending her son—who is on the cusp of adulthood—from the Victorian female sphere of the home out into the male sphere of the adult world, where he will learn to identify with the father as well. Realizing his own identity as child in relation to the divine father will set him toward the goal of self-realization and sonship that MacDonald identifies in his philosophy as spiritual maturity.

Anodos finally meets the divine father in the figure of the knight whom he once considered his rival for the love of the Lady of the Marble. It is significant that in *Phantastes*, the hero's journey does not end when he recognizes his identity as a child in relation to the mother. The child must mature into a son. And the fact that the episode where Anodos chooses to serve the knight comes after his visit to the mother in the island house indicates that the same relationship of unity between father and son is essential to his process of growth toward self-realization.

The first characteristic that identifies the knight as the father archetype in *Phantastes* is his voice. Like the voice of the father archetype, the knight's voice is bodiless at first. However, it does not remain bodiless like the voice of the father in the flower fairies episode. Rather, in this scene the solid form of the father accompanies the voice into Anodos's consciousness. Anodos says of the voice, "It was a full, deep, manly voice, but withal clear and melodious. Now it burst on the ear with a sudden swell, and anon, dying away as suddenly, seemed to come to me across a great space" (*Phantastes* 167). The "great space" through which the voice carries to reach Anodos characterizes the outdoors of the father's sphere and differs from the small space of the mother's island house. The knight is dragging the body of a dragon behind his horse, which shows him to be already ahead of Anodos in matters of heroism, valor and self-sacrifice (marks of sonship). It is clear from his appearance that the knight is one from whom Anodos can learn how to become a son in his own right.

Anodos's response to the knight indicates that he is finally ready to relate to him as father, not through the passivity of being as a child to the mother, but through the

activity of service and self-sacrifice. He decides to “wait upon [the knight] as a squire, for he seemed to be unattended” (168). After the knight agrees, he follows him “beside and a little behind” (169). When the knight says, “Knight and squire must share the labour” (170) and Anodos agrees, this resolution makes them one in mind and deed, thereby demonstrating that Anodos is beginning to achieve the oneness he sought with his father. Then the knight as the father archetype gives him one of the most important pieces of counsel he receives during his journey through fairyland:

Somehow or other ... notwithstanding the beauty of this country of Faerie, in which we are, there is much that is wrong in it. If there are great splendours, there are corresponding horrors; heights and depths; beautiful woman and awful fiends; noble men and weaklings. All a man has to do, is better what he can. And if he will settle it with himself, that even renown and success are in themselves of no great value, and be content to be defeated, if so be that the fault is not his; and so go to his work with a cool brain and a strong will, he will get it done; and fare none the worse in the end, that he was not burdened with provision and precaution. (170-71)

Not only does the knight’s wise counsel identify him as Jung’s father archetype, his advice and kindness inspire Anodos to feel admiration and respect toward him. As a squire, Anodos serves the knight in a position normally occupied by a boy, thus accepting his identity as a child in relation to the knight. He identifies the knight as father as the ideal embodiment of the qualities he will like to have as a spiritually mature son. Anodos makes the resolution: “This,” I said to myself, “is a true man. I will serve him, and give

him all worship, seeing in him the imbodiment of what I would fain become. If I cannot be noble myself, I will yet be a servant to his nobleness” (174). This is the last observation Anodos makes of his relationship with the knight before he must demonstrate his growing self-realization and spiritually mature sonship.

When a great evil takes the throne in fairyland and threatens to corrupt all of its inhabitants, Anodos demonstrates his growth into sonship by becoming MacDonald’s ultimate example of spiritual maturity: a Christ figure. In “A Sketch of Individual Development,” MacDonald says:

[The child of man] is capable not of being influenced merely, but of influencing—and first of all of influencing himself; or taking a share in his own making; of determining actively, not by mere passivity, what he shall be and become; for he never ceases to pay at least a little heed, however poor and intermittent, to the voice of his conscience.... (48)

Anodos describes the warning from his conscience—the “unaccountable conviction that here was something bad” (176)—when he spots the evil figure on the throne. He acts on this conviction “quite indifferent as to [his] own fate” (178) and attacks the evil monster in order to save the inhabitants of fairyland. In so doing, he answers the challenge of the voice of the father archetype in the scene with the flower fairies that says his journey has no beginning or end. He “grows up” in the sense that he follows the advice of the father/knight to “better what he can.” In finding the beginning of his journey in the roots of his relationships with the divine mother and father, he creates an ending where he can be proactive as a mature son. Anodos recalls that moment:

My anxious hope was, that, even after they had killed me, they would be unable to undo my grip of his throat, before the monster was past breathing. I therefore threw all my will, and force, and purpose, into the grasping hand. I remember no blow. A faintness came over me, and my consciousness departed. (*Phantastes* 179)

It is through this sacrifice that Anodos finally achieves the state he has been longing and searching for. He dies and finds that he has come to Jung's pre-conscious "realm of mothers" where he is "surrounded by images of all creation." In "The Circle of Imagination: George MacDonald's *Phantastes* and *Lilith*," Colin Manlove says, "In [Anodos's] death, however, which is the product of a fully 'adult' decision and sacrifice, he enters that higher childhood of union with earth, of solid self with solid self, which the earlier mothers have in part prefigured" (66). In *Phantastes*, Anodos remarks on his experience in this "afterlife":

If my passions were dead, the souls of the passions, those essential mysteries of the spirit which had imbodyed themselves in the passions, and had given to them all their glory and wonderment, yet lived, yet glowed, with a pure, undying fire. They rose above their vanishing earthly garments, and disclosed themselves angels of light. But oh, how beautiful beyond the old form! I lay thus for a time, and lived as it were an unradiating existence; my soul a motionless lake, that received all things and gave nothing back; satisfied in still contemplation, and spiritual consciousness. (*Phantastes* 180)

It is only through the realization of himself as child in relation to the spiritual mother and father of the woman in the island house and the knight that Anodos achieves that balance between consciousness and unconsciousness that Jung believed is essential for the realization of the self. And most importantly for MacDonald, he reaches the point where he can love unselfishly: “for now I could love without needing to be loved again” (181). He achieves the state that MacDonald identifies as spiritually mature sonship because it is the nature that most closely resembles the divine parent (“The Creation in Christ” 40).

Through Anodos’s encounters with the child, anima and father archetypes in *Phantastes* MacDonald communicates his belief that unity or oneness with the divine is the ideal state of self-realization and spiritual maturity for humankind. By depicting the tiny fairy woman, the mother and daughter in the cottage, the fairies among the flowers and the farmer’s wife and daughter as the ideal state of oneness between parent and child and showing its contrast to the farmer and his son, MacDonald takes Anodos on a journey of spiritual growth toward his ideal unity with the divine mother and father in the characters of the woman in the island house and the knight. By doing so, he emphasizes the importance of realizing the child within oneself as essential to the attainment of spiritual maturity.

### CHAPTER THREE IDENTIFYING THE READER

Anodos's journey through fairyland and his encounters with the child, mother and father archetypes reacquaint him with his own inner identity as a spiritual child. But what is the purpose of the *reader's* experience of Anodos's story? What might MacDonald have hoped to accomplish by creating a work of fantasy literature? In a later work, *What's Mine's Mine* (1886), MacDonald describes the characteristics of the ideal response a reader would demonstrate toward his works. The characteristics include the desire for spiritual experience, the mirroring of the spiritual self in what one sees, and the ability to see beyond the surface meaning of symbols. Ideally, the combination of these qualities would produce feelings of awe within the reader toward what he/she perceives and would have a lasting emotional impact that would influence the understanding of his/her own spiritual identity. If we take the qualities from *What's Mine's Mine* and apply them to *Phantastes*, I believe that we will find MacDonald attempting to incite the same type of reader response to the story of Anodos and his search for the spiritual parent. MacDonald endeavors to generate this response by portraying Anodos as an example of the ideal reader. For the purposes of this chapter, I will focus on three of Anodos's most significant instances of reading fantasy stories within the novel: reading a fairytale with his sister, encountering the farmer's daughter as she reads a fantasy story, and reading the story of Cosmo.

In the first paragraph from *What's Mine's Mine*, MacDonald lists the qualities of what he considers to be the ideal approach to the reading of his text. First, he asks his reader to imagine him/herself leaving the abundance of food and company at a table in

favor of the imaginative reverie he/she will have by looking out a window. This action of the ideal reader signifies a desire to retreat into solitude and exchange the waking world of society for the Romantic world of nature and the imagination. Then MacDonald says:

...if he be such a one as I would have for a reader, might I choose—a reader whose heart, not merely his eye, mirrors what he sees—one who not merely beholds the outward shows of things, but catches a glimpse of the soul that looks out of them, will stand, for more than a moment, speechless with something akin to that which made the morning stars sing together. (<<http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext04/whatc10.txt>>)

The qualities MacDonald describes in this passage characterize an ideal attitude, rather than a level of education. The act of “mirroring” is for MacDonald symbolic of a state of oneness between what mirrors and what is being mirrored. It is a state of receptivity, rather than reflection. In “The Mirrors of the Lord,” he shares what he believes to be the nature of mirroring, based on his reading of the writings of the Apostle Paul, saying, “Paul never thought of the mirror as reflecting, as throwing back the rays of light from its surface. He thought of it as *receiving*, taking into itself, the things presented to it—in this case, as filling its bosom with the glory it looks upon” (232). If we give the ideal reader’s “[mirroring] of what he sees” in the *What’s Mine’s Mine* passage the same definition as the mirror MacDonald describes in “The Mirrors of the Lord,” then we can characterize the reader as a mirror as receiving, or internalizing, the beauty of the landscape he/she looks upon and consequently embodying its beauty in his/her own being. Therefore, when MacDonald says that the ideal reader’s heart, rather than his/her eye, mirrors what

is seen, I believe he is saying that the self of the ideal reader appropriates the beauty experienced into his/her inner being and begins to exhibit the beauty internally.

The ideal reader's ability to "catch a glimpse of the soul" in the world around him/her in the *What's Mine's Mine* passage indicates the presence of what MacDonald identifies as "childlike insight." When the individual perceives the childhood of the beauty of the primrose that we discussed in the first chapter, he/she sees the inner reality of the flower, or what MacDonald calls, "its truth." In his essay "The Truth," MacDonald says, "The truth of the flower is, not the facts about it, be they correct as ideal science itself, but the shining, glowing, gladdening, patient thing throned on its stalk" (380). He goes on to say, "the truth of a *thing*, then, is the blossom of it, the thing it is made for. Truth in a man's imagination is the power to recognize this truth of a thing" (380). In *What's Mine's Mine*, if we consider that the ideal reader is simultaneously seeing the soul in what he/she perceives and mirroring it, then we may assume that what MacDonald calls the "truth" the reader perceives in the environment is being mirrored in him/herself. The ability to recognize that he/she is part of the truth he/she perceives in the world characterizes the reader as a person of childlike insight. MacDonald says in "The Imagination: Its Functions and Its Culture" that, "we dare to claim for the true, childlike, humble imagination, such an inward oneness with the laws of the universe that it possesses in itself an insight into the very nature of things" (12-13). By seeing "into the very nature of things," the ideal reader, in MacDonald's belief, is also seeing into his/her own inner reality, or the "truth" of his/her own being. MacDonald says earlier in the essay:

For the world is—allow us the homely figure—the human being turned inside out. All that moves in the mind is symbolized in Nature. Or, to use another more philosophical, and certainly not less poetic figure, the world is a sensuous analysis of humanity, and hence an inexhaustible wardrobe for the clothing of human thought. (9)

Thus, the ideal reader in the *What's Mine's Mine* passage not only receives the beauty of the landscape through the senses, he/she sees the “truth” of the landscape that is clothed by its beauty and recognizes it as an inner reality within him/herself.

When a person reads a fantasy novel, MacDonald believes that he/she also encounters the inner reality of his/her identity as a child through imagination. According to MacDonald, there are certain “laws of the spirit,” that he does not identify or define in his essays, but which he thinks are present in everything the individual perceives, whether it is through the imagination or an encounter with nature. In “The Fantastic Imagination,” he says, “The laws of the spirit of man must hold, alike in this world and in any world he may invent” (316). In the passage cited above from “The Imagination: Its Functions and Its Culture,” he declares that the childlike imagination naturally follows these laws. When the individual imagines, MacDonald indicates that he/she is able to perceive childhood or “truth” in the world and within him/herself because he/she recognizes the spiritual laws inherent in everything. MacDonald says in “The Fantastic Imagination”: “Law is the soil in which alone beauty will grow; beauty is the only stuff in which Truth can be clothed; and you may, if you will, call Imagination the tailor that cuts her garments to fit her” (315). In the fantastic imagination, the garments the imagination

cuts are symbols, which may or may not completely resemble figures the individual sees in the waking world. The imagination enables the individual to perceive the spiritual truth those symbols embody because he/she can recognize aspects of their forms that obey the same laws that are within him/herself.

The final characteristic of the ideal response that MacDonald hopes his reader will demonstrate toward the text is the lasting influence it will have on him/her long after the reading experience has ended. MacDonald considered it the duty of the author not to tell the reader what to think or how to interpret the text. Rather, he hoped that the text would influence the reader emotionally and spiritually and thus cause him/her to ponder the meaning of his/her own identity and the relationship to the divine that he/she experiences unconsciously. In “The Fantastic Imagination,” MacDonald says:

The best thing you can do for your fellow, next to rousing his conscience, is—not to give him things to think about, but to wake things up that are in him; or say, to make him think things for himself. The best nature does for us is to work in us such moods in which thoughts of high import arise. (319)

What MacDonald claims he most wants to “stir up” in his reader is his/her spiritual identity: the reality of his/her oneness with the divine parent. In his essay “Opinion and Truth,” he says, “I seek but to stir up your hearts, as I would daily stir up my own, to be true to that which is deepest in us—the voice and the will of the Father of our spirits” (209). If we apply these goals of the author from the passages above to our analysis of *Phantastes*, we can say that by communicating the story of Anodos’s search for his own

identity and the divine parent, MacDonald strives to awaken the reader's realization of what he believes to be his/her own spiritual identity as well.

In *Phantastes*, MacDonald portrays Anodos as an example of his ideal reader whose reading experiences help him on his journey of spiritual maturation. Three times in the novel, MacDonald brings him into contact with fantasy stories. Each time, they either precede or appear in conjunction with the parent figure, which indicates that the fairy stories in the novel bring Anodos into an encounter with his unconscious and consequently with the spirit of the divine parent. The first character to mention Anodos's experience of reading fantasy is the tiny fairy woman in the first chapter of the novel. Her reminder to Anodos that "Your little sister was reading a fairy-tale to you last night" (8) immediately follows her warning that he knows nothing about his parents or grandparents and is therefore ignorant of his own identity. MacDonald's placement of this statement in the scene is significant because the fairy woman says it after she has transformed from the child figure into the anima. Anodos's unconscious speaks to him through the figure of the anima, making him aware that the fairytale can provide him with answers in his search for self-realization. Reading the fairytale causes "thoughts of high import to arise" in the minds of Anodos and his sister, causing them to ponder whether or not fairyland exists and where one might find the way into it. We could also say that reading the fairytale at least in part prompts Anodos to search for the roots of his identity in the papers in his father's secretary, although there appears to be no direct correlation between these events in the novel. It is the experience of reading the fairytale that causes Anodos

to ask questions about fairyland, and it is the questions that bring the wise woman figure of the anima into his consciousness and send him on his journey of self-discovery.

Anodos's second experience with the fairytale occurs in the home of the farmer and his family. He has just been talking with the farmer's wife about his near-death experience with the Ash and Alder trees in fairyland the night before, when the farmer walks into the house. One look at the farmer's face causes Anodos to question the reality of his experiences in fairyland and leaves him wondering if they are not just "vague phantoms" or "the wandering dream of a diseased imagination" (50). The farmer's identity as wrong parent forces Anodos to question his spiritual identity and his experience of the supernatural. But when Anodos spots the daughter reading a fairytale, he is once again convinced that his experiences in fairyland were real. He says, "the next moment my eye fell upon a little girl who was sitting in the chimney-corner, with a little book open on her knee, from which she had apparently just looked up to fix great inquiring eyes upon me. I believed in Fairy Land again" (50). Later in the paragraph, he reveals that the book is a fantasy story called *The History of Graciosa and Percinet*. The daughter as the ideal child in relation to the divine parent of the mother symbolizes for Anodos the ideal childlike imagination. If we apply the characteristics of the ideal reader from *What's Mine's Mine* to the passage, it is evident why looking into the girl's eyes affects Anodos in this way. The girl's eyes as "windows to the soul" reveal the "truths" of fairyland that she reads in the book because the story and fairyland operate under the same spiritual laws that are within both Anodos and herself. She serves as a mirror of the spiritual realities in the story and fairyland and hence in Anodos as well. When Anodos

looks into her eyes, he sees the realities that she has received, or taken in from her reading experience, and they confirm that his experiences in fairyland are real.

Once again, the fairytale acts as a motivation to Anodos in his journey toward self-realization. It is because he looks into the eyes of the girl who has been reading the fairytale that he is prompted to shy away from relating as a child to the wrong parent in the farmer. The experience helps him to identify the divine parent in the farmer's wife and stirs up in him a longing to return to fairyland and continue his journey.

Likely the most influential experience Anodos has with fantasy is his reading of the story of Cosmo in the library of the great marble hall in fairyland. For the purposes of this chapter, I will focus primarily on the paragraphs of Anodos's response that frame the story, rather than on the story itself. The placement of the Cosmo story within the novel is significant because it occurs right before Anodos realizes that the anima as lover is not who he seeks when he frees her from the marble in the hall of dancing statues. After that, he finds his way through the sea to the woman in the island house where he comes to the full realization of his identity as child in relationship to the divine mother.

Anodos demonstrates that he is MacDonald's ideal reader in the pages immediately before he relates the entire story of Cosmo. The story itself mirrors his efforts to enslave the Lady of the Marble to his love through its portrayal of Cosmo's conflicted desire to keep the lady he loves trapped in the mirror. MacDonald's use of the mirror as the Cosmo story's primary symbolic figure serves as a symbol of the story's function as a mirror of Anodos's own struggle to relinquish his love for the Lady of the Marble. In reading the story, Anodos literally holds the mirror up to his own face and

sees a symbolic embodiment of his own inner reality. He says, “Of course, while I read it, I was Cosmo, and his history was mine” (84). Earlier in the scene, he describes his experience of seeing himself in the fiction he reads in the marble hall library:

Mine was the whole story. For I took the place of the character who was most like myself, and his story was mine; until, grown weary with the life of years condensed in an hour, or arrived at my deathbed, or the end of the volume, I would awake, with a sudden bewilderment, to the consciousness of my present life, recognising the walls and roof around me, and finding I joyed or sorrowed only in a book. (76)

The last two lines of this passage are ironic in that the fairytale is not “only a book” to Anodos. Like fairyland itself, the fantasy story is a revelation of his own identity that momentarily seems as real as the world he eventually “awakens” into. Taking on the story of the character most like himself is an act of mirroring. He not only enjoys the story, he receives it into himself and makes it his own.

Anodos also demonstrates his ability to “see into the soul” of the symbols in the story of Cosmo. In the beginning paragraph of his response, he says of the story: “It glowed and flashed the thoughts upon the soul, with such a power that the medium disappeared from the consciousness, and it was occupied only with the things themselves” (84). MacDonald is unclear in this paragraph whether Anodos refers to the images in the story as the medium or to the text itself. But Anodos’s ability to see beyond whatever medium that conveys the meaning identifies his response with that of the ideal reader in *What’s Mine’s Mine*. He recognizes that the meaning of the symbols and the

text goes beyond the surface and he gets glimpses of that meaning through the experience of reading.

Lastly, Anodos shows that he responds to the books in the hall as MacDonald's ideal reader in that his mirroring of the stories and his ability to see into the soul of the texts cause the books to have a lasting influence on him. In the paragraph immediately following the Cosmo story, he discusses what he gains from his reading experiences:

And I trust I have carried away in my soul some of the exhalations of [the books'] undying leaves. In after hours of deserved or needful sorrow, portions of what I read there have often come to me again, with an unexpected comforting, which was not fruitless, even though the comfort might seem in itself groundless and vain. (104-5)

The way portions of the stories remain with Anodos is reminiscent of the internalization, or mirroring, of the thing perceived that characterizes Wordsworthian memory. In "The Two-Part Prelude of 1799," Wordsworth speaks of his memories of experiences in nature in very similar terms:

There are in our existence spots of time  
Which with distinct preeminence retain  
A fructifying virtue, whence, depressed  
By trivial occupations and the round  
Of ordinary intercourse, our minds  
(Especially the imaginative power)  
Are nourished and invisibly repaired.

Such moments chiefly seem to have their date

In our first childhood. (ll. 288-96)

The memory, or “spots of time” described in this passage—and the memory in the similar passage from *Phantastes*—is often considered to be one of the characteristics of the maturing Wordsworthian imagination. In *Romanticism and Transcendence: Wordsworth, Coleridge, and the Religious Imagination*, J. Robert Barth, S.J. says:

The spots of time are a bit like the wall markings made over the years to chart the progress in a child’s growth: they are discernible and memorable moments in the continuum of time—not outside it but demonstrably part of it. They are too, of course, sustaining moments, moments that give one strength to continue the journey along the line of time. (44-45)

That Anodos has reached this level of imaginative ability indicates his growth toward self-realization. It also demonstrates his developing skill and receptivity as MacDonald’s ideal reader. Even though he still has much to learn on his journey, he is becoming more insightful. His reading is preparing him for the rebirth ahead in the island house where his insight will help him to finally realize his identity as a child in relationship to the divine parent of the mother.

Further evidence that reading fantasy has awakened Anodos to greater understanding of his own inner spiritual reality is the music that he makes after he leaves the library. He says in the chapter following the Cosmo story that “It seemed to me strange, that all this time I had heard no music in the fairy palace” (*Phantastes* 105). But after he finishes reading the stories in the library, he is often seized with the desire to

sing. He recalls: “Entrancing verses arose within me as of their own accord, chanting themselves to their own melodies, and requiring no addition of music to satisfy their inward sense” (106). That the music comes from within Anodos, rather than from without, indicates that the fantasy stories he has been reading have successfully influenced him. By simply presenting the images and avoiding telling him what to think of them, the stories in the library awaken the creative, insightful self within him and he is able to use his imagination to create art. MacDonald asserts in “The Fantastic Imagination”:

If a writer’s aim be logical conviction, he must spare no logical pains, not merely to be understood, but to escape being misunderstood; where his object is to move by suggestion, to cause to imagine, then let him assail the soul of his reader as the wind assails an Aeolian harp. If there be music in my reader, I would gladly wake it. (321)

The fantasy stories have successfully influenced Anodos so he can sing and free the Lady of the Marble from her imprisonment. But they are only successful because of his growing desire to realize his identity apart from the expectations he has adopted from society. He approaches them with childlike humility and a receptive imagination and is able to grasp meanings much deeper than the surface images of the symbols.

By portraying Anodos as the ideal reader of fantasy, MacDonald makes him an example to the reader of *Phantastes* by demonstrating the potential power of literature to have a lasting impact on his journey toward self-realization. As Rolland Hein says in *The Harmony Within: The Spiritual Vision of George MacDonald*, “Anyone who entertains

an ideal and expends his energies pursuing it will find that Anodos's experiences serve as a mirror, showing much about oneself" (87). Similarly in "*Phantastes* as Metafiction: George MacDonald's Self-Reflexive Myth," John Pennington asserts that MacDonald meant Anodos to serve as an example to the reader: "The reader, MacDonald hopes, will read *Phantastes* as Anodos reads the books in fairyland—MacDonald wants the reader to participate in the story" (29). By intertwining scenes of reading with encounters with the child, mother and father archetypes, MacDonald demonstrates his belief that fantasy can be instrumental in realizing one's spiritual identity. When he shows the ways in which the fairytales in the novel mirror Anodos's spiritual journey, he challenges his reader to model his/her reading of *Phantastes* on Anodos's approach to reading: to hold the mirror of the text up to his/her own face in order to realize his/her own spiritual identity in relationship to the divine parent and achieve the desired state of spiritual maturity.

## CONCLUSION

An interpretation of George MacDonald's novel *Phantastes* through the lens of Carl Jung's depth psychology shows that MacDonald's symbolism can, in fact, be regarded as consistent with his religious beliefs. Using the imaginations of both his protagonist Anodos and his reader, MacDonald appeals to the reader's access to the collective unconscious by portraying the divine as present in familiar archetypes and in the experience of reading. In so doing, he causes *Phantastes* as a novel to mirror what he believes to be the reader's own journey toward spiritual maturity and self-realization.

MacDonald's Romantic approach to the imagination identifies it as a vehicle for spiritual experience. This conception of the imagination's nature and function provides the basis for my analysis of *Phantastes* as a spiritual experience because the novel was written out of the imagination of the author and appeals to the imagination of the reader. MacDonald also associates the imagination with the figure of the ideal child, identifying childhood as the state of mind in which the individual is most receptive to the spirit and is most in tune with the inner reality of his/her natural self.

According to MacDonald, the ideal child is in his/her most perfect state when he/she is unified with the divine parent—the mother *and* the father. He demonstrates this belief in *Phantastes* by bringing Anodos across several combinations of the child and mother or father archetypes who have this ideal relationship. Anodos's encounters with these archetypes and his growing willingness and ability to relate to the mother and father as a child characterize his journey toward spiritual maturity and self-realization.

Through the story of Anodos's spiritual maturation in *Phantastes*, MacDonald also attempts to influence the reader's sense of personal identity. Three times in the novel, he describes Anodos's experience with fantasy stories and shows him to have the qualities of an ideal reader later outlined in the work, *What's Mine's Mine*. The act of reading fantasy furthers Anodos's spiritual growth in that the experiences of reading often coincide with and prepare him for encounters with the child, mother and father archetypes. Through his desire for spiritual experience, mirroring what he sees in his heart, and perceiving the meaning beyond the surface of the stories, Anodos functions as both an example to the reader of *Phantastes* and as a mirror of the reader's own inner reality and his/her ability to experience the spirit through the act of reading.

According to Richard H. Reis in the biography *George MacDonald*, MacDonald considered himself to be first and foremost "a teacher and preacher" who was responsible for the spiritual growth of what he believed was a literary congregation (47). Like MacDonald's sermons and essays, *Phantastes* is meant to serve as a spiritual lesson. It is meant to function as a means through which the reader may "learn God unconsciously" ("The Truth" 379). Rather than tell the reader what to think and how to act, MacDonald teaches by suggestion through the medium of the fantastic imagination, attempting to lead the reader into self-realization. In this way, he believed that the reader, like his/her mirror Anodos, can come to maturity through the personal experience of reading. The reader can realize his/her childhood in relationship to the divine parent and can grow from there into the state of ideal sonship, which MacDonald believed is his/her true identity.

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