

# Women Multiplied: A Divine Iconography in George MacDonald's *Phantastes*

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George MacDonald's *Phantastes: A Faerie Romance for Men and Women* (1858) has a timeless and dream-like quality, and influenced by such German Romantic writers as Novalis, the story dissolves the usual composition and allegorical framework of a traditional compact fairy tale. Yet, MacDonald takes advantage of the setting in Fairy Land and of fairy tale paraphernalia such as magic, a fairy god-mother, a wise woman, cottages, and a wood, to create his own theological visions in a fantasy world. Although MacDonald states that "[a] fairytale is not an allegory," he gives the reader the licence to "wake a meaning" from his texts ("The Fantastic Imagination" 7). While much study on MacDonald's works has been conducted, until recently few seem to have specifically questioned his re-evaluation of the nature of iconography, or the issue of divinity in his fantasy writings.<sup>1</sup> In this essay, I intend to show that MacDonald's divine iconography in *Phantastes* is predominantly maternal and this vision accompanies good and evil revelations through multiplied figures of women in the story, which is the origin of his imagination of a feminized God throughout his fantasy oeuvre. So what leads MacDonald to formulate the vision of a maternal God in *Phantastes* and how does it recur in his other fairy tales?

*Phantastes*<sup>2</sup> has been studied using diverse psychoanalytical approaches. Robert Lee Wolff's pioneering study is perhaps a good example of the earliest phase of Freudian reading, interpreting it as the representation of MacDonald's own quest for his dead mother (Wolff 47, 54). Wolff's interpretation has met with a range of opposition from critics such as Richard Reis and William Raeper, who claim that MacDonald's works are more suitable for Jungian readings in the light of the universal elements in their use of mythical symbolism (Reis 88, Raeper 150). Raeper argues that the wise woman in *Phantastes* is a typical projection of Jungian anima: the feminine aspect in

man, one of the symbols in the ‘collective unconscious,’ the “psychic reservoir of the whole of mankind” (150-1).

However, Freudian readings have also developed from Wolff’s over the past three decades. David Holbrook sees MacDonald’s tales, especially *Phantastes*, as the acting-out of a prolonged mourning for the mother’s death and a desired reconstruction of an earlier relationship, lost by a sudden traumatic weaning (Introduction to *Phantastes* vii-xxv). While Jungian critics such as Reis criticize this reading, arguing that the application of the “repressed memory of childhood trauma” to MacDonald’s textual analysis “is at best questionable and perhaps even silly” (Reis *Review* 43), others such as William Gray contend that “it is difficult to resist Holbrook’s interpretation of the novel as a quest for the beginnings of being or identity” – “the primary maternal matrix”(Gray 10). While I have briefly outlined the major paradigms of psychoanalytical studies using Freudian and Jungian approaches, it is not the purpose of this study to vindicate one school over another since I believe both would be helpful for dealing with the psychic representations in MacDonald’s fantasy oeuvre. Yet, for the purpose of understanding the powerful quest for the maternal figure in *Phantastes*, the Freudian interpretation of the work as the expression of a complicated psychological need repressed in the unconscious seems to be more rewarding. What I wish to illustrate is that *Phantastes* is a complex mixture of MacDonald’s psychological quest for a maternal figure with his theological explorations.

*Phantastes* has prefatory mottoes quoted from Novalis, whose own work (such as *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* [1802]), interweaves fairy tale elements and mystic dream visions, and who appears to have directly inspired MacDonald. In one quotation Novalis declares that “A fairy story is like a disjointed dream-vision,”<sup>3</sup> and this concept is reflected in the later writer’s fairy romance. However, what caught MacDonald’s interest in Novalis is not merely the romantic mode of composition of his works. MacDonald also seems to have felt a keen sympathy with his precursor on the subject of death as well as the loss and pursuit of an ideal, apotheosized woman; though for Novalis the woman was his betrothed, Sophie von Kühn, who died at the age of fifteen, and for MacDonald it was his mother who he lost when he was only eight. The absence of a mother deeply penetrates *Phantastes*, reverberating on through his other fairy tales, and this theme accompanies his unique vision of a maternal

God.

MacDonald offers a radical reinterpretation of Christian theology in his fairy tales through the imagination of God as maternal, and *Phantastes* provides key materials for the origin of such a vision of the divine. Within Catholicism, the Virgin Mary has taken on a quasi-divine role as the Mother of God and it is believed that “Mary reveals the tender, gentle, comforting, reassuring, “feminine” dimension of God” (Greeley 17). However, MacDonald was not a Catholic but a Protestant preacher. Even if we consider the possibility that his theology is influenced by Celtic mythology in which the deity is often depicted as maternal or feminine, it is unusual and even heretical to portray the divine as feminine in Protestantism; certainly, it is not compatible with the teachings of the Congregational ministry in his homeland. In his books of sermons,<sup>4</sup> he generally writes in a standard theological mode, which hardly ever suggests any trace of maternal quality in God. But intriguingly, his fairy tales principally represent the divine as feminine. Was MacDonald aware that he was creating such a vision? A hint for the possible answer to this question may lie in his family religion.

One factor for MacDonald’s re-imagination of such a divine quality may be the reaction to the theological doctrine of Calvinism with which he grew up. In nineteenth-century Scotland, Christianity was very strongly identified with this movement, and “[i]n MacDonald’s own family Calvinism assumed a strict, hatred-of-the-world aspect which was virtually indistinguishable from the evangelical movement at its worst” (Michalson 76-7). His grandmother was a fanatical Calvinist and once burned her son’s violin as she believed that music-making was a pleasure-seeking and therefore a sinful, act (Raeper 19). This belief in a God who demands hard stoicism led to the construction of a fiercely masculine image of God. Raeper comments that the image of a motherly and feminine goddess in *Phantastes* is “the obverse of the harsh Calvinist male God whom MacDonald repudiated” (150), being transformed into an image of the divine as possessing maternal and tender qualities. However, the representation of God in *Phantastes* is not quite as simple as this because it also carries within it evil undertones, as I will go on to illustrate. The protagonist Anodos’s subconscious pursuit of the maternal ideal accompanies the reworking of the images of the divine through his encounters with multiple female figures during his journey in Fairy Land.

The maternal image cluster in the story may seem elusive and disconnected because of the loose structure of the narrative: Anodos appears to travel without any clear sense of destination. Colin Manlove writes that “the whole book appears to have been created in a series of dislocated imaginative bursts” (Manlove 75), although he notes that the image of the White Lady of Marble, along with Anodos’s Shadow, has some connective element throughout the story (76-7). A question is raised, however, as to why there are so many female characters in the tale in addition to the Lady of Marble: Anodos’s great-great-grandmother, four different women in each cottage (whom Anodos encounters one after the other), the beech, the Maid of Alder, the wicked old woman in the underworld, the lady in white in a mirror in the story of Cosmo, and so on. Are they merely fragmentary existences in the narrative or do these figures relate to each other within the fuller context of the story? I would argue that these female characters are the various incarnations of a dominant female figure in the protagonist’s psychological world, and that collectively they epitomize MacDonald’s vision of a maternal God.

Anodos’s great-great-grandmother is a key figure in the story, guiding him into the mysterious realm of Fairy Land. Diminutive in size, she pops out of his dead father’s old cabinet, and when she stands near Anodos she is a tall, handsome lady. She blames him for not knowing much about his maternal ancestors: “I dare say you know something of your great-grandfathers a good deal...but you know very little about your great-grandmothers on either side” (5). Anodos’s unconscious desire comes to the surface and he is drawn towards her by an irresistible attraction, stretching out his arms towards her. She reproves him for his action: “a man must not fall in love with his grandmother, you know” (5). But when he looks into her eyes, “an unknown longing” arises in him: “I remembered somehow that my mother died when I was a baby” (5). The longing for the maternal figure is dichotomized into corporeal desire on one side and spiritual ardor for maternal love on the other. His fairy grandmother summons in him the longing for his mother and this longing provides the subconscious energy he needs for his journey in Fairy Land. As his grandmother has promised, his room changes into a wood<sup>5</sup> the next morning and he approaches Fairy Land following the water which floods from the green marble basin. Already here we see the highly traditional image of the fairy godmother taking a particular and idiosyncratic form in the tale.

The motherly women appear one after the other as providers of comfort for Anodos. The woman in the first cottage on the border of Fairy Land has a motherly disposition and prepares dinner. She makes Anodos familiar with the strange realm, informing him that he also has fairy blood. The image of a mother-like woman in a cottage appears three more times in different forms in the story. In chapter VII, a kind woman in a farm house soothes Anodos who has just gone through the disillusionary and humiliating experience of being deceived by the Maid of the Alder. The second figure is seemingly mother-like, but turns out to be an ogress in a dark cottage in which Anodos finds his demonic shadow. And the third and last woman in a cottage is a tender, mother-like lady called the wise woman whom I shall discuss in more detail later on.

Other than the women in the cottages, we also encounter the personification of the beech tree who saves Anodos from the danger of the Ash, an evil monster which tries to attack Anodos. However, when the two soft arms of the beech are thrown around him, the Ash's hand is "suddenly withdrawn as from a fire"(33). When she hears that he is twenty-one years old, she exclaims "Why, you baby!" and kisses him "with the sweetest kiss of winds and odours"(34). Anodos remarks: "There was a cool faithfulness in the kiss that revived my heart wonderfully. I felt that I feared the dreadful Ash no more"(34). The beech plays the part of a mother substitute, and is also identified with divine fire. Anodos feels "as if I was wandering in childhood"(36) as she sings for him, as though she is singing a lullaby for her child.<sup>6</sup>

In contrast to the warm and soothing image of the growing beech tree, the Lady of White Marble is literally a stone - a cold and rejecting figure. Anodos is surprised to see the form of a reposing woman in marble under the moss in a cave, and on an impulse begins to sing for her. His song gradually brings about some movement in the marble body, and finally with a slight crashing sound "a white form, veiled in a light robe of whiteness, burst upwards from the stone, stood, glided forth, and gleamed away towards the woods"(46-7). Just as Pygmalion is crazed in love with his statue (one of the epigraphs of the chapter is an excerpt from Beddoes' *Pygmalion*), the beautiful image of the Lady of White Marble fills Anodos's brain. Perhaps the waking of the marble lady expresses the tension between sensual desire and spiritual love, as we also see in Chapter XVIII of MacDonald's *Lilith* when Mr.Vane bathes a naked woman

(Lilith) in a river to wake her from a coma (98-102). Karen Michalson rightly argues that “the White Lady is a symbol of God” in the sense that it symbolizes God’s ability to create through Anodos’s imagination in his singing, which then enlivens the art work, the marble statue (83). I would ask, however, why Anodos pursues her throughout the story and what the associations could be between her and the other female characters. The Lady of Marble is later identified as the lady Anodos meets in a realm accessed through one of the doors in the cottage of the wise woman, a maternal God, who seems, ultimately, to embody the final convergence of the images of all the other women. The wise woman herself also momentarily takes on some features of marble such as being “still as a statue” and “white as death” (236), and therefore her image may be linked with the Lady of White Marble chased by Anodos. Adrian Gunther neatly expresses that in *Phantastes* “the different female characters, as a whole, are deliberately blurred together as if they form a continuum of female experience” (44). I would suggest that these different and seemingly opposing images of the women are ultimately one, with consequent implications of the divine.

Chasing after the Lady of White Marble in the wood, Anodos encounters a dim white figure, the evil Maid of the Alder, whom he mistakes for the former. Anodos’s shocking encounter with the Maid who enchants him not only adds some excitement to the narrative, but also includes her as one additional element contributing to the image of the maternal God. The curious advice given by the motherly beech to Anodos before he encounters the wicked Alder should be remembered here. Having saved Anodos from the Ash, the beech says: “But there are some in the wood more *like me*, from whom, alas! I cannot protect you. Only if you see any of them very beautiful, try to walk round them” (35 emphasis added). This passage is suggestive of God imposing a test on Anodos, as though the bewitching figures who are dangerous are somehow likened to the image of the motherly and divine beech herself. Anodos is now fairly caught in the trap of the Maid of Alder disguised as his White Lady of Marble. This enchanting white maiden is reminiscent of Fouqué’s Undine, the water nymph, who is both alluring Circe-like figure and also mysteriously divine. The Alder seduces Anodos into a little cave where he sees her through a flaming light: “Almost it seemed as if the light of the rose-lamp shone through her” (54), so appearing to create an aura of holiness about

the Alder. At the same time, she arouses a vague, early memory in Anodos in which he is with his young mother as an infant:

It is strange that I cannot recall her features; but they, as well as her somewhat girlish figure, left on me simply and only the impression of intense loveliness. I lay down at her feet, and gazed up into her face as I lay. She began, and told me a strange tale[...] I lay entranced. It was a tale which brings back a feeling as of snows and tempests; torrents and water-sprites; lovers parted for long, and meeting at last; with a gorgeous summer night to close up the whole I listened till she and I were with the tale; till she and I were the whole history. And we had met at last in this same cave of greenery, while the summer night hung round us heavy with love. (54-5)

Anodos gazes up her face as if he were a child looking up at his own mother's face. Here the necessarily vague memory of his young mother is implied as well as his faint sexual desire for her, expressed in the images of "intense loveliness" as well as by the reference to "lovers". Yet, his longing is beyond the sexual since the passage evokes his infantile experience with the mother (these are surely not mutually exclusive). The epic dimensions of the Alder's tale ("snows and tempests; torrents" and "the whole history") connects her to the divine power in Nature, in which the Alder and Anodos's imaginary reunion with his loving mother are mysteriously fused.

However, while the Alder is shown to be both divine and motherly, MacDonald also turns her into an evil woman, an accomplice of the Ash, the monster who tries to attack Anodos. The reason for this sudden change seems, perhaps to stem from Anodos's experiences as a young child. As he says later in the story, he recalls "terrible dreams of childhood" (158) in the underground. There should be certainly a critical distance between the author and his work, but, as Holbrook does, throwing light on MacDonald's early traumatic experiences would not be irrelevant, and can contribute to our understanding of the imagery of the wicked woman in his fairy tales, especially in *Phantastes*. Throughout his life, MacDonald kept one of his mother's letters, written to her mother-in-law (his grandmother) about his forced weaning. She wrote that young George "cried desperate a while the

first night, but he has cried very little since and I hope the worst is over now . . .” (Greville MacDonald 32). Although MacDonald knew of his mother’s suffering and guilt at weaning him, this traumatic experience of rejection by his mother might have contributed to the demonic image of a woman we see in the wicked Maid of the Alder; or for those who are doubtful of the effects of psychological diagnosis in literary criticism, we could go one step further from the biographical reading and say that MacDonald capitalized on this experience of the seeming wickedness of female rejection and turned it into a witch in his work for the characterization of women in *Phantastes*.

This image of a bewitching woman continues to appear in MacDonald’s work. There is the beautiful lady in white in the story of the student of science, Cosmo, which Anodos reads in the library at the marble Fairy Palace. In this story, which lies within the outer tale *Phantastes*, Cosmo (a Faustian figure), is drawn to a mysterious mirror with a curiously intricate frame at an antique shop. The lady in white tantalizes him by appearing in the mirror every night, which kindles his self-destructive desire for her. Although this episode vividly parallels Anodos’s subconscious desire for the Lady of White Marble, we could understand in the mirror motif a premature relationship with mother. Holbrook draws attention to the “mirror role” of the mother presented by the psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott for the discussion of similar motifs in MacDonald’s writings: “when we look into the mother’s face, and into her eyes, in infancy, we are seeing ourselves, and as she handles us she is putting us together in our own sense of ourselves, our body shape, and our sense of gender and reality” (Holbrook *Image* 21). The mirror is the mother’s face as well as her eyes out of which the child gathers his or her own reflection and vaguely realizes his or her own existence. The image reminds us of the gaze of Anodos’s great-great-grandmother in the very first chapter; his adventure in Fairy Land begins when he looks into her eyes. My point here is that this bewitching woman in the mirror is also aligned with the evil Maid of the Alder in the sense that they both are associated with the image of the mother.

Along with the mirror imagery, music is an important connecting force in association with the mother throughout the narrative. In the Fairy Palace, Anodos sings again for the White Lady of Marble. What do all these songs in the tale represent? When one remembers the beech’s lullaby for Anodos discussed earlier, it becomes evident that the songs convey a longing for

maternal love and Anodos's reconstruction of that early existence protected by his mother. The spiritual ardor for the lady connoted by the music becomes, however, tinged with his physical desire (or his existential anxiety caused by the primeval trauma<sup>7</sup>), which is represented by his own shadow. In the Fairy Palace, Anodos experiences an inner conflict between the power of his songs and that of the demonic shadow. Echoing Cosmo's desperate longing for the white lady in the mirror which he has read of in the library, Anodos's subconscious quest for the Marble Lady is facilitated. He dreams about the white lady standing on a black pedestal in the hall of black marble, but on the next day he finds only "a vacant pedestal" (131) where the lady stood in his dream. He is obsessed with this unseen figure. The following night he finds "the faint glimmer as of white feet" (135) on the same pedestal. As he further sings for her, her body gradually materializes in front of him. Having stopped singing, he springs to her and flings his arms around her as if he would "tear her from the grasp of a visible Death" (148). Here, his corporeal desire for her becomes so intense, that it overcomes his spiritual ardour which at this point ceases to be able to sublimate his desire. The lady reproaches Anodos for touching her and cries: "Ah! You should have sung to me; you should have sung to me!" (149) The song would represent his spiritual love, a counter force against his physical desire for his mother. He follows her, but she disappears near "a great hole in the earth" (149) which leads to an underground realm.

The descent into the vast pit seemingly symbolizes Anodos's fall into Hell as a consequence of his immoral, unrestrained impulse for the lady. However, MacDonald's portrayal of the underground country is unusual in that he depicts it as a realm for the character's transformation. He reworks the representation of the underworld, presenting it not as the conventional Dantesque image of flaming Hell, but as a metaphor for a mother's womb to which Anodos returns; the descent into the earth – the Mother Earth.<sup>8</sup> As he gazes into the chasm, it gradually becomes visible in the sunlight:

At last I saw it was almost a perpendicular opening, like a roughly excavated well, only very large. I could perceive no bottom [...] I discovered a sort of natural staircase, in many parts little more than suggested, which led round and round the gulf, descending spirally into its abyss. I saw at once that this was my path. (150)

In the underground country, goblin creatures mock and tease Anodos. One of them ridicules his desire for the Lady of Marble and tries to arouse his jealousy saying: “You shan’t have her... he! he! he! She’s for a better man; how he’ll kiss her!”(153) But the next moment, something changes in Anodos:

The galvanic torrent of this battery of malevolence stung to life within me a spark of nobleness, and I said aloud, “Well, if he is a better man, let him have her!” (153)

This brave remark withers the vicious force of the goblins and they are left behind speechless. Although he passes through the goblins’ danger, another figure then disturbs his path: an old, ugly little woman who gives a deriding, “infernal laugh” (156). She tries to ensnare Anodos by turning into a woman of exquisite beauty who begs him to stay, but he does not yield to her sensual attraction: “a face of resplendent beauty, as it were *through* the unsightly visage of the woman, destroying it with light as it dawned through it” (155 emphasis original). This “light” is significant in understanding what is subtly implied in the final passage in this chapter of the story:

I may mention here, that although there was always light enough to see my path and a few yards on every side of me, I never could find out the source of this sad sepulchral illumination. (156)

Here, MacDonald suggests that in fact this evil woman is a different manifestation of the female divine who is the source of light; just as the princess Irene’s divine grandmother is called “Mother of Light”(51) instead of “Father of Light” in his later fairy tale *The Princess and Curdie*.

So we could see Anodos’s transformation as his rebirth into a womb-like realm, and this oceanic sensation is conveyed in the next scene as a return to the sea, the origin of life, or the amniotic fluid in the mother’s uterus. After Anodos has been transformed underground from a man of unrestrained desire into one endowed with spiritual nobility, he eventually finds a gateway out of there. The transition from the subterranean world to a heavenly realm is worth noting. It creates a sense of tranquility in Anodos. Coming through the

underground, he eventually reaches the end of a promontory and “plunge[s] 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 into 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 to-morrow. (160)

Sinking deeper and deeper into the ocean and not returning to the earth suggest his death and rebirth (death is alluded several times in the story, and does not seem to be one final phenomenon). In the passage MacDonald suggests that Anodos’s “hope deferred” might be identified with eventual reunion with his mother, perhaps in heaven.

On a little island to which he is brought by a boat, Anodos arrives at the cottage of another woman, who is the culmination of all the other female figures in the story and seems to represent his maternal ideal. This figure, who is later called the wise woman, has “the sweetest voice” he has ever heard and feeds him “like a baby” (165). Yet, MacDonald conveys not only her motherly features but also her divine element through the motif of the fire burning beside her, while her spinning wheel is “a symbol of [God’s] cosmic creativity”(Raeper 326). MacDonald suggests that the wise woman is like God waiting for Anodos in Heaven, where his heart can return any time and where, one day, he will go to be blessed. Anodos says that the way to go back to the woman’s cottage is “through my tomb” upon which her “red sign” (237), the sign for admission, is visible. The last epigraph in the final chapter of *Phantastes* from Chaucer’s ‘The Pardoner’s Tale’ reinforces the image of this reunion with the maternal divine figure after death: “And on the ground, which is my modres gate,/ I knocke with my staf, erlich and late,/ And say to hire, Leve mother, let me in”(315).

In discussing the significance of these female figures, one may point out that there are also important male and paternal characters such as the Ash and the knight Percival. One might also point out that in 1858 (the *Phantastes*’ year of publication) one of MacDonald’s brothers and his father died,

traumatic losses which had a considerable impact on him. However, in the story, the death of Anodos's father is a trigger to arouse the longing for the memories of his mother buried somewhere deeper in his mind when the fairy grandmother emerges from the cabinet of his dead father. The presence of women is more dominant than these male figures, and women seem to have more power of signification, whether for good or for evil, in the tale.

At the end of the novel, in its penultimate sentence, MacDonald writes as follows: "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" (237). When we re-examine the story with this notion of evil in mind, the wicked female characters in the tale can be linked with the motherly and benign ones. Together with the evil little woman who attempts to bewitch Anodos in the underground, the Alder could be the other dark side of the feminine God who gives him ordeals for his maturity and education. Holbrook also identifies two opposite natures in the divine mother figures in MacDonald's works:

[...] we may begin to see the origins of the idolisation of woman, and its obverse. On the one hand, woman is the mysterious creator of our powers to find the world. But if we can conceive of her in this role, the all-creator, we can also conceive of her as failing in this, or becoming the potential all-destroyer, the witch. (Holbrook *Image* 23)

This witch-like image in MacDonald's fantasy could therefore be seen to originate out of primitive fear in infancy, as we have seen earlier. As Holbrook points out above, in MacDonald's tales, these opposing qualities of the divine appear to coexist in his women. Although the evil female figures in *Phantastes* are entities physically separated from the benevolent women, they are all, finally, incarnations of the maternal God in MacDonald's vision, which posits that this force is a combination of the divine with either fairy godmother or wicked fairy. The image of the woman is both like Cinderella's fairy godmother, who offers benevolent help for the girl, and like the wicked fairy in *The Sleeping Beauty*, who curses the princess with an evil spell.

The duality of good and evil nature in the maternal divine figure recurs and evolves in MacDonald's other fairy tales, most notably in *The Princess and the Goblin* and *The Princess and Curdie*, in which the absence of the

princess's mother is clearly indicated. The little Princess Irene's divine grandmother is a maternal and tender authority, but MacDonald alludes to her evil side as a witch-like figure. Kerry Dearborn discusses MacDonald's motherly images of God in the *Princess* books, observing that the grandmother "encourage[s] one to draw near to be embraced" (114), and states that the miners in *The Princess and Curdie* "misjudge her...to be cruel" (108). The grandmother's divine nature, however, seems to be more intricate than this. Isn't the evil and cruel side of Irene's grandmother actually perceivable in the stories? The point here is that MacDonald's maternal God has both nurturing and evil aspects since the divine iconography involves a complex psychological quest for a loving, and simultaneously inexorable image, of mother which alludes to the duality of God imagined as a consuming fire. Likewise, North Wind in *At the Back of the North Wind* is motherly and kind on the one hand (holding the child Diamond tenderly), but has a dark side (being cruel enough to sink a ship) on the other. North Wind tells Diamond: "the other me you don't know must be as kind as the me you do know," "only it doesn't look like it" (54). The "other me" or the devilish side of her face appears to be evil, but her cruelty leads to something which eventually turns into good.

So this hybrid of the divine – fairy godmother and evil witch – pervades MacDonald's fairy tales, originating in Anodos's psychological quest for his mother in Fairy Land in *Phantastes*. MacDonald makes use of psychological expressions in fairy tale fantasy to project the protagonist's primeval fear and anxiety that stem from his relationship with the mother. Ultimately MacDonald presents an image of a maternal and loving God in his fairy tales, but he does so using intricate, even apparently perverse representations.

### Notes

1 For a discussion of unchristianized deities in *Phantastes*, see especially Fernando Soto, "Chthonic Aspects of MacDonald's *Phantastes*: From the Rising of the Goddess to the *Anodos* of Anodos" *North Wind* 19 (2000) pp.19-49. Most recently, Bonnie Gaarden examines goddess types observed in MacDonald's fantasy in her book *The Christian Goddess: Archetype and Theology in the Fantasies of George*

MacDonald (2011). She offers an insightful cross-cultural reading of goddess figures which are the Great Mother and Terrible Mother archetypes (see chapter one and two). The aim of my present essay is rather a detailed analysis of MacDonald's characterization of female divine figures and their relationships grounding its focus on the text of *Phantastes*.

2 *Phantastes* (1858) begins with an epigraph from Fletcher's *Purple Island* about Phantastes, one of the personifications of the mental quality, the Fancy. This epigraph implies that what follows is to be the psychological world of the protagonist, Anodos.

3 This quotation is from the prefatory motto in *Phantastes* edited by David Holbrook.

4 *Unspoken Sermons*, vol. I (1867), II (1885), III (1889); *The Miracle of the Lord* (1870); *The Hope of the Gospel* (1892).

5 The wood is a classic symbol of the unknown region of the mind, and is also a maternal symbol.

6 Roderick MacGillis comments that for MacDonald, childhood "is a state of being which everyone must aspire to," which is different from Wordsworth for whom "childhood is bound by time; it passes," so, "[i]n this sense he is more akin to Novalis and Blake than Wordsworth" (152).

7 In this sense, as David Robb points out, the shadow in *Phantastes* can be read not as merely confined to sexual drive, sense of guilt or selfishness but as the protagonist's dejection, since the motto of chapter nine is from Coleridge's 'Dejection: An Ode.' See Robb, pp.83-4.

8 MacDonald might have gained a hint for his underworld from Goethe's the Realm of the Mothers in *Faust*.

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